

Brauns find help in Farm Rescue

BY CHRIS ERICKSON

One local family has recently been touched by the positive effects of an agricultural nonprofit organization after facing two battles with cancer this year.

Lila Braun's family found unexpected help through the organization Farm Rescue recently, when the organization sent resources to her farm to help with the hay cutting.

The help came after Lila traveled to Minnesota to help her daughter Natalie's family as Natalie went through cancer treatment. This all came after Lila's husband Arno lost his own battle with cancer this past April.

After hearing about Farm Rescue initially through Hospice at Sakakawea Medical Center, Lila spoke with her son Jerry about it and she decided to give them a call.

"I heard about it through the bereavement counselor," she said. "After that I called the organization to see if they could help us."

Although the organization couldn't step in and help because of Arno's death, they were able to offer support for the Brauns because of Natalie's ongoing battle with cancer.

Although work was slow to pick up initially thanks to

“It was a blessing that they were able to help out. It was a huge help for us and I'm glad they were able to come out and do what they did. I think that these young guys volunteering away from their homes is really a great thing.”

Lila Braun

weather, equipment donated by RDO and two volunteers helped Lila's sons get nearly half the hay crop cut by last weekend.

According to Jerry, he came home and tried cutting, but the weather wasn't cooperating right away.

"Then the organization showed up with a lowboy trailer, tractor and baler and parked it in the yard," he said. "So far so good."

At that point Jerry was able to get work moving ahead. He was joined by



Photo by Chris Erickson

Lila Braun, with sons Dan, left, and Jerry, right, at the family farm south of Beulah.

his brother Dan and later, the two volunteers. Work started at the roughly 300 acres at the family farm.

"I figured that if we could get this done at my folks' place that would help a lot," he said. "The weather wasn't the greatest for a few days, but we got some work done."

"[Volunteer] Quenten [Lau] had to leave, and was replaced by another volunteer who worked over the fourth of July," Lila said. "Jerry had called him and told him that the hay was ready to bale. I think they got everything but 6-7 acres out of 300 near the farm."

Farm Rescue got its start

in 2005, helping its first family in western North Dakota the following year.

Founder/President Bill Gross originally came from a family farm near Cleveland. After leaving home and taking part in mission trips overseas he decided to do things back in his home state that paralleled his work abroad.

"I'm gonna get myself a big John Deere tractor and be a good Samaritan," Gross said. "A friend of mine said to think a little bigger and bring people together."

"The main reason that it started was me wanting to do good work for people here in the United States,"

Gross continued. "After talking to some people I decided to start this nonprofit. Once we started it we were able to keep it running with hundreds of volunteers throughout the nation."

Through nearly a decade of work, families in need of a little help have reached out to Farm Rescue. Now, the organization has helped 285 families thanks to a growing network of volunteers from throughout the country who come from all walks of life.

"I started Farm Rescue because there are fewer farm families nowadays, with less children," Gross said. "It's harder for neighbors to help each other when an unexpected crisis occurs. Farms are larger and farther between. Neighbors still help where they can. If they can't, we'll try."

According to Gross, the criteria for qualification include major injury, illness or natural disaster.

"The reason it's vitally important - tangible reason of a farm family meeting these qualifications is that they receive assistance when they

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Dozens of contestants turned out to compete last week at the Dodge Rodeo Grounds for the annual 4th of July event. Plenty of tents were set up around the arena to keep shade for audience members as they cheered on their family and friends through events such as barrel racing, pole bending, goat tail tying, keyhole racing, flag racing, steer riding and the breakaway.

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need it," Gross said. "That's what they need when they have the crisis."

Although the organization doesn't offer monetary assistance, they've lined up other organizations like RDO that will donate equipment. Farm Rescue's volunteer network consists of 700 people dedicated to helping others.

"They receive assistance during a crisis, which helps maintain their livelihood and makes it more likely that future generations of family farmers can continue," Gross added.

That tangible benefit to farm families could ultimately translate to intangible benefits farther down the line, which helped sustain farming communities.

"Farmers and ranchers

of America are the unsung heroes of our nation," Gross stated. "I think people might not realize that at times, Agri-business affects every other industry."

Through Farm Rescue's operations, they typically find themselves taking part in spring planting, followed by harvest and haying. This year all that accounts for 50 families total. The operations are funded primarily through sponsorships like RDO, Southwest Grain, Dakota Community Bank and Bank of North Dakota, to name a few of the 200 total. Other funding comes from grants or public donations. According to Gross, anyone needed to apply for assistance can do so through FarmRescue.org, where they can also volunteer or donate.

"It has grown much larger and muck quicker than I ever envisioned," he said.

"I initially only saw helping North Dakota farmers, but began getting requests from farmers and sponsors in other states. It's inspiring to see 700 volunteers from across the nation offer to help farm families in other regions. I think that's really cool."

Lila agrees.

"We are extremely appreciative for what Farm Rescue has done for us," she said. "It was a blessing that they were able to help out. It was a huge help for us and I'm glad they were able to come out and do what they did. I think that these young guys volunteering away from their homes is really a great thing."

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