



Cecile Wehrman -- The Journal

Farm Rescue volunteer Genita Limke photographs Marilyn and Tim Selle during a work bee in which members of the group seeded 1,000 acres of durum on the Selle farm south of Fortuna.

Farm Rescue to the rescue

Volunteers help Fortuna farmers seed 1,000 acres of durum

By Cecile Wehrman

Growing up, Jack Limke couldn't wait to get away from his family's farm near Carpio.

"I absolutely hated it," he said.

Today he lives in Kentucky and works as a pilot for UPS. But he spends several weeks each year volunteering for an organization called "Farm Rescue," bringing his wife Genita, and daughters, Megan, 11, and Anna, 9, with him.

Dave Sette is a heavy equipment operator from Grafton, Wis. He didn't grow up on a farm, but he has been around farming his whole life. His mom died of cancer 10 years ago. His way of honoring her is to help farmers who are dealing with illness or injury.

While some people might run a race for pledges to help raise money for cancer research, "This is what fits for me," he says. "This is my way."

The Limkes and Sette arrived Thursday at the Tim and Marilyn Selle farm, south of Fortuna, to put in 1,000 acres of durum. Tim only recently had a halo removed after suffering a broken neck in an accident. Marilyn has multiple sclerosis.

Their children convinced the Selles they are just the sort of people Farm Rescue is designed to help, so the Selles agreed to meet with a Farm Rescue representative a few months ago.

"They took one look at us and said,

"Yeah, we can help you," Marilyn remembers, even though a board of directors, still had to give final approval.

Farm Rescue was organized in 2006 by UPS pilot Bill Gross. Since that time, the organization has planted or harvested crops for over 100 farm families in need of assistance due to illness, injury or natural disasters.

The program would not be possible without the help of knowledgeable volunteers like the Limkes and Sette.

"We just hand them the keys," said Farm Rescue's Pam Musland, and they know what to do.

Though North Dakota remains filled with neighbors willing to help in a time of need, Jack points out that's becoming a more difficult proposition.

"The farms have gotten so big it's really hard for the farmers to take the time to help out," Jack said, not like decades ago, when his own grandfather had cancer and all of his neighbors turned out for a farming bee.

As Marilyn explains, even though neighbors have offered assistance, "It's hard to ask them to give up putting their own crop in when you don't know what the weather is going to be."

Even with the help of Farm Rescue, the Selles are not out of the woods. The organization will plant or harvest up to 1,000 acres per family, so Tim and Marilyn still need help from their son, Mike,

and sons in law, to finish the seeding.

Jack's wife, Genita, has become the unofficial photographer of "Farm Rescue" but she'll also help move trucks or fix a meal. Her daughters spent Friday afternoon playing with the Selle's granddaughter, Nicole, riding horses and frolicking in a hay yard.

"This is good for the girls because we don't have the land, the farm experience," Genita says.

She began home schooling the children a couple of years ago so that it would be possible to make these trips with their dad. In the process, they're learning lessons they could never get in school.

"We have a lot to share. We are so blessed," Genita says. "I think this has really helped them see we're here for a purpose."

It's a purpose the Selles certainly appreciate.

"We have a lot of help," said Tim.

After finishing up at Fortuna this weekend, the team planned to move to the Gene Anderson farm, near Dagmar, Mont. Gene's son just passed away and his wife is ill.

The operation is made possible through donations from corporate sponsors, businesses and individuals.

(For more information, go to www.farmrescue.org.)