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Ardell Hanson
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Farm Rescue comes to the aid of Jim and Audrey Ostlie

By Kimberly Miller

Jim and Audrey Ostlie have lived on their farm since 1971. They farm approximately 1300 acres each year. But this year Jim had an accident that could have been much worse than it was.

The end of March he was upstairs in the barn throwing bales down when the floor broke. Jim fell through, his head bounced on the rafters on the way down and he landed hard on the floor below.

His injuries were extensive in that he broke a bone in his neck, broke some in his shoulder and broke a few ribs as well.

Jim ended up laying on the floor for about three hours before his wife, Audrey, found him.

This was also during the time when the roads were washed out due to the heavy rain and melting of the snow. So it took quite a feat for the ambulance to reach him and get him to the hospital.

It was a Tuesday evening and he doesn't remember anything that happened between then and Friday.

"I could have been paralyzed from the neck down but I was very lucky," states Jim.

The immediate thoughts of the family were obviously of the injuries sustained by Jim. But it was Lyle Ness who had taken the initiative of contacting Farm Rescue in order to help them out.

The day after returning home from the hospital, Ness called the Ostlie's up and said he needed to come over right away and talk to them about something.

When he arrived he had the application ready and



Jim Ostlie and founder and president of Farm Rescue, Bill Gross.

thing in and within a few days they received a call stating that Farm Rescue would be able to help with planting some of their crops.

In the meantime, Shawn and Kevin, two of Ostlie's sons, were helping out as much as possible. Both with the lambing as well as taking care of getting the fields ready and planting seeds.

Unfortunately, during the interim of Jim trying to heal, he had another accident. While Shawn and Jim were working on side by side discs Jim was standing next to it looking to make sure they were joining up correctly when the equipment bounced and struck Jim in the head fracturing his skull.

But now back on his feet, Jim had the neck brace he had been wearing for two months taken off just last

And Farm Rescue has indeed supplied more of that hope by coming out and planting 250 acres of soybeans.

Farm Rescue provides planting and harvesting assistance to farming families who have had a major illness, injury or natural disaster happen in their lives.

Farm Rescue was founded in 2005 by Bill Gross, a former farm boy turned UPS 747 pilot.

Farm Rescue operates in all of North and South Dakota, eastern Montana and western Minnesota. They are entirely dependent on financial support from area businesses, organizations and single donors as well as the group of 22 volunteers who take time out of their own lives in order to help a family in need.

pany free of charge.

Each family can have up to 1,000 acres planted or harvested through this program



Dave Schwartz, first year volunteer.

and are responsible for the seed, fertilizer and fuel needed for the planting or the harvesting.

The Ostlie's are the 88th family that Farm Rescue has helped in it's short four years and it is projected that 100 families will have been served by the end of the year after the harvesting season is over.

Gross explained that they have received 50 applications this year but only 20 were able to be accepted. A large part of this is due to the financial aspect of it as they are completely dependent on the generosity of their sponsors. However, the board of directors also take into consideration whether the farm is a viable one, going into bankruptcy, or whether the family has enough wealth in order to hire outside help. All of this factors into the boards decision.

"We try to help the small to medium family farm. We come in not to do it all, but to fill a gap left by some sort of crisis in the family," states Gross.

Much of their support comes from businesses like Bremer Bank and Wal-Mart who each make a large donation each year.

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Dealers help by providing the trucks needed to travel from site to site.

Newman Outdoor Advertising comes in and provides billboards free of charge in order to get the word out about Farm Rescue.

Other sponsors include Ihry Insurance, Peterson Farms Seed, Ritchie Brothers, North Dakota Mill and Bank Forward all of whom provide financial or other means of support in order to keep the organization helping farmers in need.

Each year Gross takes his month of vacation that he receives to come out and help with planting and/or harvesting.

It is the help of the volunteers that is extremely appreciated. Whether that is working the fields or working behind the scenes, each one is particularly appreciated for the hard work they put in.

In the tractor and working the fields, Dave Schwartz, a first year volun-



A view from the inside of the tractor as the Farm Rescue steadily works to help the Ostlie farm.

gave them all the information that they needed in order to get the application together.

The next board meeting of Farm Rescue was only a couple of days away and they wanted to be sure to get the application in before then. They were able to get every-

week and is feeling and looking great.

As Shawn talks about everything that has happened in the past few months he makes sure to mention that Lyle Ness gave them some hope when he brought that paperwork over.

The volunteers come from all over the country and they pay their own transportation to the location of need. Once there Farm Rescue provides lodging and meal assistance and the John Deere equipment is graciously provided by RDO Equipment Com-