

Alcester Union & Hudsonite

• The hometown newspaper of Edward Osterkamp •

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CONTACT US:

You can contact the Alcester Union & Hudsonite office in any of the following ways:

- **Mailing Address:**
Alcester Union & Hudsonite
PO Box 227
Alcester, SD 57001-0227
- **Street Address:**
110 East 1st Street
Alcester, SD 57001
- **Telephone:** 605/934-2640
- **Fax:** 605/934-2096
- **E-mail:** parapub@iw.net
- **Website:**
www.ahenews.com

Helping 'neighbors' in need

BY PAUL BUUM
Editor/Publisher

While many people work fifty weeks a year and then hop on an airplane to travel somewhere on vacation, Bill Gross does just the opposite. When he's working he can be found flying back and forth across the Pacific Ocean as captain of a United Parcel Service 747 cargo jet based out of Anchorage, Alaska. When he takes a vacation he spends all of his time planting and harvesting crops for complete strangers – for free.

This past Sunday and Monday he, along with a handful of other volunteers, were in the Alcester, Hudson and Hawarden areas helping to get crops in the ground for two area farmers.

So why does a North Dakota farm kid who flies jumbo jets for a living end up spending part of his vacation in southeast South Dakota planting crops? It's simple really. He's a farmer at heart.

Gross is president of Farm Rescue, a non-profit organization he started to help family farmers in crisis get their fields planted and harvested free of charge. In 2008 Farm Rescue helped 36 farmers who experienced a major injury, illness or natural disaster, nearly doubling the number of families helped in 2007.

Farm Rescue volunteers spent Sunday and Monday planting crops at the Scott McKee and Regan Homandberg farms while both men continue to recuperate from auto accidents they were



A large John Deere tractor and planting equipment sowed soybean seeds in a field farmed by Scott McKee of rural Hawarden on Sunday afternoon. The crop was planted by Farm Rescue, an organization that plants and harvests crops for farmers who are sick or injured.

(Photo by Paul Buum, Editor/Publisher)

involved in this past winter.

Gross grew up on a cattle ranch east of Bismarck, ND. Over the past several years he noticed that there were fewer and fewer family farms with fewer children being raised on farms, which makes it more difficult for neighbors to help neighbors during a crisis.

Seeing that trend he began recruiting

volunteers and sponsors to start Farm Rescue, based in Jamestown, ND.

"There is only so much that neighbors can do to help each other and the Farm Rescue program is designed to come in and fill that gap to ease the burden on family farmers that have experienced a crisis," Gross said, adding that Farm Rescue is really just an exten-

sion of neighbors helping neighbors.

"The farmers provide the seed and fertilizer and we come in and get it planted for them, or in the fall we help with the harvest," Gross said, adding that they typically plant between 500 and 1,000 acres at each farm they visit. "We don't give any money to farmers

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Homandberg, 3200 relay, medley relay qualify for State Track Meet

Homandberg holds fastest time in the state

BY MIKE KEZAR
Sports

Katie Homandberg, the girls' 3200 meter relay team and the girls' medley relay teams all qualified for the state track meet by besting the state qualifying standards.

Homandberg qualified in the 3200 meter run with her best time of the season, 12:18.4, as she took first in the Canton Lions track meet. Homandberg had qualified in earlier meets but with her time at the Canton meet, she now has the best time in Class B in the 3200 meter run.

The 3200-meter relay team also qualified for the state meet by breaking the state's qualifying standard. The girls' ran the distance in 10:13.3 for a first place finish. The 3200-meter relay team has the second best time in Class B. The runners on the 3200 relay team were Lexi Liston, Mikayla McConnell, Sarah Haisch and Jessica Wegh.

In addition, the girls' medley relay team of took second in 4:33.6 also beating the state's qualify-

ing standard. The runners on the medley were Lexi Liston, Lindsey Terpstra and Jessica Wegh. The 1600-meter relay team placed third in a time of 4:21.4 with being the runners.

In individual events, Britanni Liston took second in the 400-meter dash in a time of 1:07.4. Mikayla McConnell placed third in 2:41.6 in the 800-meter run.

The boys' 3200-meter relay team and the 1600-meter relay team both placed second with times of 8:46.6 and 3:47.5.

In individual events, Kelly Haisch took third in the 800-meter run in 2:11.4 and Austin Skoglund was fourth in the 800-meter run in 2:12.2. Ty Schoellerman took third in the 3200-meter run in a time of 11:19.3.

Earlier in the week, the Cubs track teams participated in the West Sioux track meet with Katie Homandberg taking first in the 3000-meter run in 11:30.0. Shenja Doering was fifth in the 1500-meter run in 6:00.25. Sarah Haisch was second in the 400-meter hurdles in 1:14.96.

In field events, Brittani Liston was tied for seventh in the high jump, clearing the bar at 4'4". Ashtin Scotting took 10th in both the shot put with a heave of 23'1" and in the discus with a toss of 71'6".

The girls' distance medley relay team took first in a time of 4:45.19 as Beth Gustner, Lindsey Terpstra, Sarah Haisch and Jessica Wegh were the runners. The 3200-meter relay team took third in 11:00.63 as Mikayla McConnell, Haisch, Wegh and Homandberg were the runners. The 1600-meter relay team placed third in 4:36.53 as Wegh, Haisch, Brittani Liston and McConnell were the runners.

Casey Skoglund took sixth in the 400-meter dash in 1:00.34 while Kelly Haisch placed second in the 800-meter run in 2:13.70 and Austin Skoglund was third in the 800-meter run in 2:13.72. Ty Schoellerman was third in the 3200-meter run in 12:07.15 and was sixth in the 1600-meter run in 5:31.33. Rick Heiman took seventh in the 110-meter hurdles in :22.5 and was

seventh in the 400-meter hurdles in 1:16.10. Austin Skoglund was fourth in the high jump, clearing the bar at 5'5". Dillyn Thompson was 8th in the long jump, going 14'6". Nathan Johnson placed 9th in the shot put with a heave of 32'2" and Barry Wood took 11th in the shot put at 30'9". In the discus throw, Dylan Christensen threw the platter 68'1" and Dylan Kratochvil had a throw of 54'6".

The boys' distance medley relay team was second in 4:20.01 with Casey Skoglund, Dillyn Thompson, Lance Merrick and Levi Merrick doing the running. The boys' 3200-meter relay team was second in 9:09.58 as Thompson, Casey Skoglund, Haisch and Austin Skoglund did the running. The 1600-meter relay team of Lance Merrick, Levi Merrick, Rick Heiman and Adam Hughes did the running in 4:19.22. Members of the weight field events, the shot put and the discus took sixth in the 400-meter relay team with Johnson, Kratochvil, Thompson and Wood doing the running in :58.77.

Local News

Farm Rescue: Helping 'neighbors' in need

Continued from Page 1

as a type of financial bailout, or provide this service to large farms with several thousand acres, or to farmers who are going through bankruptcy. We help out small- to medium-size farmers who need some help."

And their stories come in all shapes and sizes - open heart surgery, cancer, spinal cord injuries, broken bones, car accidents, strokes, injuries due to falls, and the list goes on.

Stories like farmer Richard Olson, who miraculously survived being caught up in a power takeoff that shattered his right arm and leg and left him virtually naked on the ground in minus-fifteen degree weather. He somehow managed to drag his broken body to his machine shed and call his wife for help.

Or the Damian and Martha Kappenman family who lost their entire farmstead to a spring tornado.

Scott McKee of rural Hawarden said he knew little about the Farm Rescue program until he saw their booth at the Sioux Empire Farm Show in Sioux Falls this winter.

"I hadn't heard of Farm Rescue before so I went over to their booth to see what it was about," McKee said. "They gave me a brochure that I started look through and then they began to ask me questions and encouraged me to apply."

McKee suffers from two bulging discs and a fractured vertebra as a result of being rear-ended in an auto accident this winter, as well as other medical conditions.

"I had to fill out an application and provide them with all sorts of paperwork," McKee said. "Then a person came to our farm and inter-

viewed us."

Gross says that because they cover such a large territory and have only a small window of opportunity to get crops in and out, the organization must be selective in choosing who they can provide their services for.

"We would like to help everyone that applies, but unfortunately we are unable to do that," Gross said. "After a person fills out an application and provides the required documentation we send a member of our board of directors to interview the farmer. We even go as far as to talk to their neighbors and others in the area to make sure their application is legitimate."

Farm Rescue operates almost exclusively on volunteers and donations to provide their services.

"With the exception of our two office workers who handle applications and solicit donations out of our Jamestown office, everyone else works as an unpaid volunteer, including myself," Gross said. "All of the equipment we use is donated or loaned to us by very generous sponsors. Without them we would never be able to do this."

RDO Equipment Company, Bremer Financial Services and Wal-Mart are Farm Rescues' three major sponsors, while dozens of other companies and individuals provide further equipment and financial support.

Farm Rescue serves North Dakota, South Dakota and western Minnesota. Two separate crews move from location to location to plant and harvest crops. Gross says he hopes next year they will be able to put together a third crew.

"We would like to add one more crew so we can help more farmers out, but I think it would be logistically impossible to expand our services outside of the Dakotas and western

Minnesota," Gross said.

The "South Dakota/Minnesota Crew" planted soybeans at the McKee farm on Sunday and the Homandberg farm on Monday, and will work their way north, ending up near Grand Forks, ND. The "North Dakota Crew" is currently traveling from farm to farm throughout North Dakota.

"Alcester is the first area we've been to this planting season," Gross said. "We made a stop in Bristol near Aberdeen on our way here to get some wheat planted for a farmer, but it turned out to be too wet there. We're going to try it again as we move north."

After finishing in the Alcester area the crew will help out farm families in Tea, Howard, Brookings, Clear Lake, Bellingham, MN, Hancock, MN, Starbuck, MN, Climax, MN, and finally Northwood, ND, near Grand Forks.

The North Dakota crew will travel to eleven different farms throughout the state.

The Farm Rescue organization has garnered local, regional and national attention. Coverage has included features on CNN's "Heros" program, the Today Show, Paul Harvey's News & Comment, the Ed Schultz Show, the Joel Heitkamp Show, RFD TV, Ag Day TV, America's Heartland TV news show, People magazine's "Heros Among Us", and a feature story in AgWeek magazine. Direct TV also began airing a documentary about Farm Rescue this week.

For more information about Farm Rescue and to watch the progress of the crews as they plant crops, visit their Web site at www.farmrescue.org.

Tax-deductible donations and volunteer applications are always accepted.



Ramblings...

By Paul Buum, Editor/Publisher

We're doing OK

Mark Twain once said, "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated."

Twain had a knack for the comical one-liner, but that quote can be applied to the state of the newspaper industry today.

For months now the major media outlets (mostly TV news) have been reporting on the demise of some of the largest and most storied newspapers in the country, while other large dailies are in deep financial trouble. They report that the entire newspaper industry is in serious trouble.

Well, I'm here to tell ya, it just ain't so.

Most of those large dailies simply over-extended themselves, trying to be all things to all people. And when advertising revenues from a lousy economy started to fall off, they were left holding large amounts of debt they couldn't cover.

Sure, revenues are down some for most of the weekly newspaper owners I talk to, but it's the same for everyone in just about any line of business. However, I don't know a single South Dakota publisher who plans on closing up shop for good anytime soon. I can tell you that most weekly newspapers in South Dakota are doing OK - not great, but holding their own.

Like every other small business on Main Street, newspapers are feeling the pinch of a stalled and even weakening economy. It's not the fault of poor management, or the Internet is not to blame. It's the economy.

Even some of the daily papers like the Sioux Falls Argus Leader and the Watertown Public Opinion are feeling the pinch, but they're not going away either.

I had a chance to talk to Argus Leader publisher Randall Beck

at the newspaper convention last month, and he said his numbers are down, but they'll survive.

So how can the newspaper industry - or at least the small newspapers - be so confident of their future? Because our readers won't let us die, simply because we offer what no one else can. Local news, as only a small weekly newspaper can.

There was a lot of talk at the newspaper convention concerning the Internet. While most newspapers have Web sites, very few if any are making money on them. There was a push by some that said newspapers had to be on the Internet to survive. I disagree.

Giving your newspaper content away for free doesn't make for a very good business model. Besides that, I don't know of anyone over the age of about 30 who wants to sit in front of a computer to read how the Cubs did against the Watchdogs, or what was decided at the last school board meeting, or who had coffee with whom.

Most everybody I know would rather hold an actual newspaper in their hands while relaxing in the recliner, or sipping a cup of coffee at the kitchen table.

Local and regional news is all we do. You won't read stories about what's going on in Paraguay or Berlin. You'll read about what's going on in Alcester and Hudson, and maybe even Beresford or Canton or Elk Point. Stories you can't find in any other newspaper.

I know we'll be around for a long time. Why? Because every time I'm late getting the newspaper to the post office I hear about it. "Where's my Union!" "I didn't get my paper!" "Why isn't the paper in my mailbox yet?"

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