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Becky Fortune taking it 'one day at a time' after cancer diagnosis

By Sheila M. Schlechter

You can see by the look on Becky Fortune's face as she watches the Farm Rescue planter roll through one of her and husband Rod's spring wheat fields that she would much rather be doing it herself.

Last week, the non-profit group that helps farmers with planting and harvesting during hardships, pulled on to the Fortune farm in northwest Hand County and helped plant 160 acres of spring wheat.

A few weeks ago Becky's hometown of Redfield sponsored a benefit for the Fortunes and this weekend, Miller, where she delivers mail, is also holding a benefit in her honor.

The Fortunes are extremely grateful for all of it, but they are still trying to wrap their brains around a diagnosis that left them reeling last winter.

It was on January 12 when Becky found herself in Rochester at Mayo Clinic facing a daunting diagnosis of stage four melanoma.

It was a frightening diagnosis that would bring most families to their knees, but Becky and Rod's deep-seated faith and pure stubbornness could just be their golden ticket out of this crisis.

Becky began treatments immediately following her surgery and her determination to beat this is evident in every step she takes.

"It's not a fast-paced race. It's one obstacle at a time," Becky stated in one of her "Caring Bridge" posts.

There are two other colossal reasons for Becky to win this fight...her two boys, Gus, who is five and Reed, who is three.

In typical South Dakota fashion, many of their friends and neighbors have stepped in to help out the Fortunes as best they could. They are amazed by the generosity, but everyone knows if the situation reversed, the Fortunes would also be there to help them out.



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CHARLES BARTSCH of Minot, ND, a two-year volunteer for the non-profit organization, Farm Rescue, steers the donated equipment across Rod and Becky Fortune's ground in northern Hand County. The organization planted 160 acres of spring wheat for the Fortune's to help them get caught up this spring after Becky's cancer diagnosis.



ROD AND BECKY Fortune in the Badlands last summer with their boys Gus and Reed.

Becky says she was amazed when some of their pheasant hunters came all the way from Wisconsin to the benefit in Redfield, while local people have been in and out at their ranch doing everything from bringing food to fixing fence.

"What would life be like without faith, family, God, friends and neighbors?" posted Becky, "NOTHING!!! Thanks for all the prayers you have given me."

Caught in the middle of two caring communities Becky says she is hoping to also be at the Miller Benefit this weekend.

Her friend Elaine Cary has been instrumental in making the benefit happen.

"At a time like this you are at a loss as to what to do for them. Becky is very much a contributing member of this community and I can't always be there physically or emotionally, so I am trying to help out financially. This is what friends and family are here for."

The treatments have done their best to get Becky down, making her extremely tired a couple of days afterwards, while taking all of her hair. She is one that was always comfortable wearing hats so she is adjusting to that condition relatively easy.

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"I really don't feel like I'm sick," says Becky after her first day back to work at the post office in Miller last week. Although she only put in a few hours she says it was good to get back in to it.

A couple of days later she was out on her horse helping sort pairs, proving her spirit is much stronger than the cancer that threatens to slow her down.

Becky had good news at her last appointment, as all but one of the tumors showed shrinkage, indicating they are on the right treatment plan.

As the community rallies around Becky and her family, her battle continues and she vows, "I am not going to give up. So far, I have overcome every obstacle. I will just take one day at a time."

The Miller benefit for Becky will be held this Sunday at the MHS Commons and will feature a potato bar dinner, silent auction, raffle, and bake sale. The event will begin at 11 a.m. with the drawing to be held at 2 p.m. All proceeds (up to \$1500) will be matched by Modern Woodmen of America and will help defray Becky's medical expenses. Contact any of the following people for dinner/raffle tickets or to donate: Elaine Cary, Tammy Gnat, Jerry Johnson or Verna McMahon.