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Farm Rescue

By ROGER KASA/PLAINSMAN

Two Heartland Region farmers were given a boost by Farm Rescue of Jamestown, N.D., Friday with the planting of cropland for soybeans and wheat.

Melvin and Alice Eckmann, who farm about one mile south of Huron, had 150 to 160 acres of soybeans planted and 250 acres of wheat was planted for Jeff and Renee Clement of St. Lawrence. Eckmann is being helped because of a heart problem and Clement has two broken ribs.



Farm Rescue of Jamestown, N.D., planted 150 to 160 acres of soybeans on the Melvin Eckmann farm, located one mile south of Huron, Friday. The planting was done by Bill Gross, founder and president of Farm Rescue, right, and Ted Smith of Brookings, left. In the center are Alice and Melvin Eckmann.

Eckmann underwent open heart surgery 10 years ago and is on blood thinner. However, the medication has been giving him problems.

He also has another 300 acres of corn that will be planted by neighbor, Matt Micheel.

Clement suffered two broken ribs when a fence gate was hit by a cow and it struck him.

Gross, who founded the Farm Rescue group six years ago, has a number of volunteers from across the country who assist him. He does most of his planting in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana.

He is an airline pilot, working for UPS Airlines. He doesn't receive any money for his volunteer work.

"I just thought there should be an agency to turn to when farmers suffer an injury or disaster," he said.

The volunteers who assist come from Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Texas, Florida, Colorado, South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Kansas and Nebraska.

"We don't give any money to the farmers," he said. "We simply help them when they are down." Since the agency was formed, Gross said they have helped 135 families.

After Friday's plantings, Gross said they will work the Joe and Kathy Zorc farm at Lemmon and the Arthur and Melanie Nehlich farm near Ipswich. He will plant 600 acres of corn at Ipswich and 1,000 acres of wheat at Lemmon.

Zorc broke his leg working with cattle and Nehlich underwent colon surgery.

From Lemmon, they will move to North Dakota where he will work another 15 farms.

RDO Equipment of Aberdeen donates the John Deere tractors that Gross uses for the work on the land. Other sponsors are Farm Credit Services of America, South Dakota Wheat Growers Association, North Central Farmers Elevator in Ipswich, and Dakota Bank in Aberdeen.