

Farm Rescue Stops By Naadens

Reprinted with permission from the Napoleon Homestead.

By Jessica Wald (Napoleon Homestead)

It was a shocker; and not a good one. On February 27, 2013 when Mark Naaden of Braddock went in for a scheduled colonoscopy exam, he learned the doctors found a tumor. "I was very surprised," he noted. After the tumor was removed and tested, Naaden learned he had cancer in his lymph nodes and would need treatment.

"It's always scary to hear the word cancer," said Mark's wife Tami, who lost her dad to cancer when she was only 18. Sounding hopeful, Tami said she felt she missed a lot not having her dad around and doesn't want that for her children, but "technology has come a long way since then."

With spring's work just around the corner, South Central Grain (Farm Rescue sponsor) General Manager Jeff Mehl suggested Naaden contact Farm Rescue, a nonprofit organization, which helps farm families in crisis. Naaden made the call, filled out the application and within a week was approved to receive help with planting his crops. "It was weight off my shoulders; I didn't know how treatments were going to affect me," he said. Naaden's treatments include six weeks of chemotherapy (in Bismarck once every two weeks), then radiation (in Bismarck every day for six weeks) and again six weeks of the chemo treatments. Currently, Naaden is finishing his first round of chemo to fight his battle with colon cancer. "They take a toll on me," he said, as he has experienced nausea and stinging sensations when around anything cold. Some changes he has endured includes drinking only room-temperature water, wearing gloves a lot and only working a couple hours before nausea sets in. He also said he stepped down as the Braddock Fire Department chief. "It was kind of hard to step down, but I know it's in good hands."

Farm Rescue Regional Operations Manager Faron Wahl said the nonprofit organization is able to function because of two main aspects: volunteers and sponsored equipment to do the job. He said the volunteers come from many numerous lines of work and are from the region or distant places. Three to four volunteers are needed to help at each location and there are three or four Farm Rescue workers throughout the nonprofit who oversee the operations.

He said they have three RDO planting units, with one unit being used at each location. Wahl said they have about 30 locations set up to plant this year, but because of the late spring season less than 10 have been completed so far.

Last Wednesday, May 8 Farm Rescue volunteers were at the Naaden farm northwest of Braddock helping plant his spring wheat crop. "It's been great; they are a great group of guys. It's like it's a calling for them to come do this." said Mark. With his only son, Theo about to graduate from high school, Naaden said Theo would have had to work quite a bit harder and longer if Farm Rescue wouldn't have helped. He noted the help will save about 10-12 days of the planting schedule and "it's a difference of getting the crop in at an optimum time and not losing yields." The volunteers are planting several hundred acres for Naaden and were scheduled to finish last Friday, pack up and move to another location to help another family. "They have been very efficient and very helpful for farm families in need," he said. Tami added, "It's a great program and it's a big relief to have help coming in," she said as her husband was worried about the timely planting season.

Although Wahl has been with Farm Rescue for only nine months, he said the job is very gratifying. "Knowing we are playing a role in helping to keep a family farm viable in their crisis so they can keep doing what they do, it's extremely rewarding." Wahl grew up on a farm operation in South

Dakota and wanted to farm all his life but in the 80's decided it was not possible.

After being a paramedic for 21 years the opportunity arose to work for Farm Rescue. "My heart and love is with farming and I'd do anything to be involved," he mentioned.

He said the job does come with its challenges; good challenges, that is. "There are hundreds of busy details to bring it all together; to make sure we are doing our very best; seeing it through so the farmer can continue with the operation next year." He also said this year's issue, with the late season, is to get crops in the ground in a timely and safe manner.

One volunteer who is helping out on the Naaden farm, Jerry Krueger (Aberdeen, SD) said, "There is a lot of self-reward when volunteering; to see the smile on farmers' faces," he said. Krueger is a retired farmer and a four-year Farm Rescue volunteer. He said he chose to help because he loves to volunteer. "The love of farming is in our blood."

Dave Sette (Grafton, WI) and six-year volunteer is a heavy equipment operator back home, but takes vacation to help out the organization. "I first saw a story on Farm Rescue on the Today show and having lost my mom to cancer, I wanted to volunteer in her honor." He also noted the volunteers make great friends by meeting the families.

First year volunteer, Mark Baumgarten (Bettendorf, IA) is a retired employee of John Deere and is originally from Casselton. "I wanted to help the farmers out," he said as he has enjoyed volunteering so far.

All three volunteers said it's amazing how the whole process has been put together. They noted how much more they appreciate their own health, as they hear some pretty overwhelming stories.

Wahl noted the nonprofit does not give cash to the farmers, but rather they bring equipment and do the physical work. He said the farmer provides all the inputs such as seed, fuel and fertilizer. He said the organization

does planting or harvesting for the families in need, typically one or the other in the time of need. He said applications for the program are looked at by a board of directors. The applicant must first qualify by meeting the criteria (illness, injury or natural disaster), be in the geographical area designated for Farm Rescue and the organization must have the funding to help the farmer. "We strive to get the job done and do it well; to help every farm family we can assist." He noted over half the cases are referred by neighbors or friends, but can also be the family themselves. For more information on Farm Rescue, visit www.farmrescue.org or call the office in Jamestown at 701-252-2017.

Mark said he is grateful for the help he has received and looks at the nonprofit way differently now. "I definitely want to help sponsor it somehow," he said.

Naaden also strongly suggests people go get a colonoscopy exam done. As his grandfather died of colon cancer, he said, "It should have been a red flag." As a result of his diagnosis, he suggested an exam for all his siblings and close cousins. One cousin was supposed to go in every 10 years and get an exam, but due to Mark, he went in at year five. "If he would have waited the ten years, he would be in the same shape I'm in," said Mark, as the cousin's result came back with five polyps, which can be removed before turning into a tumor or cancerous. Mark stressed, "Go in early," as it could help prevent another case.

Picture cutlines:

farm rescue1: Farm Rescue volunteers surround Mark Naaden (middle) and his son Theo Naaden (second to left), during their stop by Nadden's farm to help seed. Volunteers (l-r): Jerry Krueger, Mark Baumgarten and Dane Sette.

farm rescue2: Faron Wahl, Farm Rescue Regional Operations Manager, was in charge of organizing planting at the Naaden farm last week.

farm rescue3: The Farm Rescue team rolls along, as they plant spring wheat in one of Mark Naaden's fields near Braddock last week.

Thanks,

-Jessica Wald-
Reporter/Graphic Designer
Napoleon Homestead
PO Box 29, Napoleon, ND 58561
754-2212





