

Nonprofit assisting area farmer

By Joe O'Sullivan, Staff Writer

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CORONA — Farm Rescue will be doing just that outside of Corona today.

The nonprofit firm helps farmers who have endured illness, injury or property destruction by donating time and labor to plant or harvest their fields.

According to Farm Rescue founder Bill Gross, the Jamestown, N.D.-based group, a nonprofit organization, will be helping to harvest soybeans at the Brett Seehafer farm. Gross said Seehafer was injured in an incident with a bull.

The assistance to the Seehafer farm will be the last new project for the year, Gross said. In all, Farm Rescue helped 36 farmers this year, an increase over 2007's 28.

Lowell Rothmann, a volunteer with the organization, said helping other farmers has become compulsive for him.

“It's like trying to eat one potato chip,” Rothmann said. “You can't eat just one.”

Rothmann, a retired farmer from Washburn, N.D., became involved with the program when he had a neighbor with a combine fire who was seriously burned. Rothmann helped cut 1,000 acres for the neighbor and thought that it would be a good way to spend his retirement.

“It was something constructive to do,” he said.

Rothmann said his favorite part about the work is sharing camaraderie with the other volunteers, as well as with the people Farm Rescue helps.

“They say 'Thank you so much, we couldn't have gotten by without you.' They're so grateful for the assistance,” he said.

Volunteer Gene Spichke says Farm Rescue is needed now more than ever.

In the old days, Spichke said neighbors could band together more easily to help each other if needed.

Before, he said, “When a neighbor was sick, we'd get together and help. Now with farmers few and far between, and such large acreage farmed, a program such as Farm Rescue is really necessary,” he said.

Spichke, a retired farmer from Kies, N.D., said he has enjoyed his time working with the

organization.

“I signed up for two weeks . . . well that turned out to be two years,” he said.
Farm Rescue assists farmers in four states: Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Gross says the organization's operations in South Dakota have so far primarily been in the northeastern part of the state, but he is hoping that will change.

The organization “wants to help cases throughout all of South Dakota,” Gross said.