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## Angels at Farm Rescue swoop in to help first family of 2015



Farm Rescue volunteers Gary Deckert and John Andrews begin seeding canola on the Buckmeier farm north of Scranton, N.D.

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SCRANTON, N.D. – Another year of helping farmers struck by illness, disability or natural disaster is under way for Farm Rescue, an all-volunteer organization.

“Angel” volunteers swooped in to help George Buckmeier, a farmer near Scranton, and began seeding spring wheat and canola for him in the first 2015 operation for Farm Rescue.

On Friday, April 17, while volunteers Gary Deckert of Bismarck, N.D., and John Andrews of Waukesha, Wis., were out planting, George was undergoing major shoulder surgery in a Bismarck hospital.

“We were so glad to see Farm Rescue. We’re small farmers and it’s just not possible to hire help,” said Susan Buckmeier, George’s wife. Susan works full-time at Scranton Equity and still helps on the farm when she can. The volunteer “angels” immediately pitched in and started seeding operations, she said.

Later, Susan explained what happened to her husband and how that led to Farm Rescue assistance.

“We were preg-checking our cows last fall and running them down a lane to be checked. The last cow decided she didn’t want to go that direction,” Susan explained.

The cow changed direction in the middle of the lane and started running back out, “bouncing” George off the lane and injuring him on his side as the cow ran out.

“I thought he dislocated his shoulder,” she said. But George shrugged it off and went on with their ranching duties. George did go to the clinic, and eventually he was sent for an MRI.

While it had taken a few months, the MRI finally showed that he had torn his rotator cuff in his shoulder. Because it had taken so long to find the injury and the surgeon was booked up, surgery didn’t happen until this spring, right as seeding was starting.

Thank heaven for angels – especially ones that can climb into a brand new planting system and go right to work, she said.

Bill Gross, president and founder of Farm Rescue, said the Buckmeier case is their 301st case, and the organization is in its 10th year of operation.

“We’re seeding for about 20 farm families this spring and there is room for a few more,” Gross said.

The cases are in eastern Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa. Anyone who knows of someone who needs Farm Rescue’s help can go on their website (<http://www.farmrescue.org>) and fill out an application, he said.

“We’re honored and privileged to help these farm families maintain their livelihood,” Gross said.

Farm families that they will get help this spring have had cancer, heart attacks and other major illnesses, injuries from livestock, and other accidents that have kept the main farmer in the family from being able to seed.

Farm Rescue has been fortunate to have sponsors both big and small that have kept them going for nearly a decade. Some of the sponsors include Southwest Grain, Dan’s Supermarket, Bremer Bank and WalMart. But there are many, many more, Gross said.

RDO Equipment Co., always lends them equipment, he said.

“We have two John Deere planting systems and one JD corn planting system running this year, all donated by RDO Equipment Co.,” he said, adding that later, RDO will donate haying equipment and harvesting equipment.

Some 40-50 volunteers come to help from all over the country, according to Gross. Volunteers do everything from seeding, haying or harvesting, running to town for equipment, parts, fertilizer or fuel, helping cook for the farm families and other volunteers, transporting equipment, and maintaining farm equipment.

The town where the farm family lives near often helps with fuel and supplies. Susan said when a volunteer, Carol Andrews, went to town and bought food for the volunteers, the store paid for all their groceries. On another day, a person in the store paid for the groceries.

Local co-ops often provide fuel or other supplies for the farm family in their area.

“So many businesses and individuals want to help these farm families,” Gross said.

The farm families provide their own seed and fertilizer, and on this first case, the Buckmeiers opened up their farm house so the volunteers could stay there.

“We live in Scranton, and the house is usually only used for hunters in the fall,” Susan said.

Meanwhile, Gross said after planting, Farm Rescue will be haying for farm families this year.

“We are now taking applications for haying,” he said, adding they usually start haying in mid-June.

In August, Farm Rescue volunteers will help with harvesting crops for farm families.

“We try to help a total of about 50 farm families a year with seeding, haying and harvesting,” he

said.

Anyone wishing to donate to Farm Rescue can send funds to Farm Rescue, P.O. Box 28, Horace, N.D., 58047.

“Farm Rescue has been important to a lot of farm families – it is a big impact to farm families who can’t continue to farm without our help,” Gross said.

He added the volunteers have been “wonderful” over the years and have made a big difference in the lives of the farm families that have been helped.

For more information on Farm Rescue, email at: [info@farmrescue.org](mailto:info@farmrescue.org) or phone: (701) 252-2017.

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