



Farm Rescue expands to Kansas; Hinrichsen leads state effort

By Donna Sullivan, Editor

You can take a man off the farm, even put him in the pilot's seat of a Boeing 747. But as he gazes at the farms and ranches 40,000 feet below, his heart will return to the land that helped shape him into who he became. In the deep recesses of his mind will be the memory of his father worrying about what would happen to their North Dakota family farm if a debilitating accident or illness were to befall him.

So when, during a long flight over the Pacific Ocean, a fellow pilot asked Bill Goss what he was going to do when he retired, the answer came quickly. "I'm going to be this Good Samaritan that buys a tractor and goes around helping farm families plant their crops when they have a major illness or injury." The pilot laughed... until he realized Goss was serious, then issued this challenge: "Well, why wait until you retire?"

Challenge Accepted

In 2005, Goss rose to that challenge, starting Farm Rescue, a non-profit that connects farm families in crisis with volunteers eager to help see them through. It was a humble beginning – a card table at a farm show to be exact, but the vision that began with Goss quickly caught on as donors, sponsors and volunteers took up the mission.

"Farm Rescue gives families a chance to continue their livelihood by providing the necessary equipment and manpower (free of charge) to get the job done," they write on their website.

Kansas Joins the Farm Rescue Family

Initially Farm Rescue served the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana and Nebraska. Thanks to a sponsorship from Anheuser-Busch, they were able to expand into Kansas. John Deere is their leading sponsor, working through PrairieLand Partners here in Kansas. The Landoll Corporation in Marysville is another high-level sponsor.

Leading the effort in the Sunflower State is a face familiar to many in the ag community, Lynne Hinrichsen, a Pottawatomie County rancher who, prior to coming to Farm Rescue, had been the state director for USDA Rural Development, and before that worked at the Kansas Department of Agriculture. In all of her former positions, including owning a staffing company along with her husband Ron, Hinrichsen saw a common thread of bringing hope to people. "At the staffing service, we said we were givers of hope because we helped people



Pottawatomie County rancher and former state director of USDA Rural Development Lynne Hinrichsen serves as development officer for Farm Rescue, a job that includes finding the families that need assistance, organizing the volunteers and soliciting donations for the non-profit organization.

Courtesy photos



A Farm Rescue combine harvests a field of wheat in Lindsborg for a farmer undergoing chemotherapy treatments. They will be returning soon to help with fall harvest.



This farm in Lindsborg and another in Rexford were assisted by Farm Rescue this year, as both farmers were fighting cancer.

find new jobs and get back into the workforce," she said. "At KDA I was really able to focus on ag businesses, either expanding or attracting them to the state. And when I was offered the position at Rural Development, the statement that hit me the most was when the secretary of ag Jackie McClaskey said, 'Just think, you'll be able to touch every component of rural Kansas.' And she was right; we did

housing infrastructure, business development, all things in rural areas that needed help keeping them sustainable and growing." "Now in this position, we're continuing the theme of hope," she went on. "That you're not all alone out there."

Hinrichsen says they are often referred to as the Angels in Blue, because of their dark navy blue shirts emblazoned with the Farm Rescue emblem. "We

swoop in and take care of them, then swoop out," she said. "To have that kind of purpose and know that you're doing good, I just can't think of a better position to have right now."

Hinrichsen's job as Development Officer for Farm Rescue is made up of three main components. The first is to identify the families in need of assistance. "As we all know, farmers and ranchers are very independent and one

Not just riding for the brand – local ranches honor the fallen

By Donna Sullivan, Editor

Thirteen riderless horses with folded American flags draped over their saddles – one for each of the U.S. service members killed in the attack on the Kabul, Afghanistan airport on August 26 – made a solemn procession in downtown White City on Sunday, September 19. In all forty-four horses and one mule lined up on the east side of town, led by Mandy Wainwright carrying the American flag. The Kansas flag and five military branch flags preceded the thirteen ponyed riderless horses. Midway they stopped and faced south as Taps was played.

Crystal Carson was the organizer of the tribute to

the fallen, and had no trouble finding ranches to ride.

"My first call was to Jan Olsen of Dwight," she said. "I could hear the emotion in Jan's voice as he explained a conversation he had with family about just that, as his own son is currently an active serviceman," Carson added.

"The J.K. brand would ride." Call after call to more than thirteen ranches in the Flint Hills followed the same pattern. "Many of the ranches have very close ties with loved ones who have served and are currently serving this great nation," she continued. "It's a busy time of year, we all know, all of us gearing up for welcoming spring calves, wean-

corn, planting wheat and pulling cows. There's always something pulling at the end of our rope. It just felt so right to do."

Also remembered and reflected upon was the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, as well as the 20-year war on terror that followed.

Along with the ranches that were represented, there were at-large ranch hands, the Morris County 4-H Horse Club and other local riders. A good crowd of patrons, active military and veterans turned out to show their respect, as well.

Carson appreciates the efforts of many to organize fundraising activities following the parade.

• Cont. on page 3



Farm Rescue staff members also include, from left: Dan Erdmann, Program Manager; Genita Linke, Volunteer Coordinator and Neil Simons, Field Operations Manager.

of the last groups of people to ask for help," she said. "But in turn, they are very grateful when it's brought to them." She said they have a valuable partnership with AgrAbility, a national program dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for farmers, ranchers and other agricultural workers with disabilities. "They've got boots on the ground and find out about crises that might be arising in a family's life," she explained. "It's been a great partnership because they can help us find these families and we can partner with them on some of the needs that might leave them with physical challenges. We can get things like a lift for their truck or other assistive equipment."

She also relies heavily on word of mouth. "We want to let people know we're here. We know there's a greater need than what we're seeing here, and I can't be everywhere. So if people can help spread the word, maybe fill out an application for a family, we can be there."

Secondly, she is tasked with finding sponsors and donors to keep the non-profit going forward. "It's such a noble need for big companies to be part of," she stated. "And small companies understand what it means to give back too, as well as individuals that might have some kind of affiliation with farming and ranching that might want to give back to an organization like this." She emphasized that no gift is too big or too small to keep the organization moving.

Lastly, she helps organize the volunteers that will show up on each project to help the family in need. "You kind of start with one, and then it blossoms out as they bring other people they know," she said. They currently have over 1000 volunteers in their data base, about 300 of which are active throughout the year, not just in the states they are serving. She said there is a gentleman in Florida who earmarks two weeks of his vacation each year and will fly, at his own expense, to wherever he

is needed. "Most are retired farmers and ranchers who still want to be involved and this is a great way for them to do it," she explained, adding they also have a good number of retired workers from John Deere and other equipment companies. "They know how to run the equipment, and how to fix it," she said. "So that's a great thing to have." She pointed out that not everyone has to know how to run equipment to be a volunteer. "If someone just has a heart for service, we will find them something to do on a project, whether it's running for parts or picking up lunch."

Local Farm Rescue Projects

Farm Rescue was wrapping up two projects just as Hinrichsen came on board, wheat harvesting in Lindsborg and Rexford, where in both instances, the fathers in the families were undergoing chemotherapy treatments for cancer.

"The family in Rexford was just starting their journey with cancer treatments," she recalled. "I was able to go out there as we were wrapping it up and saw him and his wife sitting on the tailgate of the pickup and heard him say, 'These guys took care of this field just like it was their own.' He felt like he could focus on his treatment and getting better." Farm Rescue will go back to both operations to help with fall harvest.

Applications for Farm Rescue

To fill out an application for themselves or a neighbor in need, people can visit www.farmrescue.org. You can contact Hinrichsen at 515-601-2801 or lynne@farmrescue.org. Each application undergoes a vetting process and they assist operations of all sizes, up to 1000 acres per crop. According to Hinrichsen the group is on track to help over 100 families this year throughout all their covered states, which was their goal. "In October we will help our 800th family since the program began," she reflected.



Flags draped over the saddles of 13 riderless horses honored the service members killed at the Kabul airport in Afghanistan on August 26, 2021.

Photo by Crystal Carson