



# An answer to prayers — twice

*This spring, Slope Electric Cooperative members **Alton** and **Tammy Lien** received assistance from the Farm Rescue program, after Alton was kicked by a calf and broke his arm. Volunteers seeded their first 500 acres of wheat. In this month's local pages, learn about Farm Rescue and how volunteers and donations are helping co-op members in need.*

PHOTO BY FARM RESCUE

Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc.

# OUTLOOK

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## In this issue:

- Celebrate National Cooperative Month
- Jerry Caron earns service award
- Time to prepare for winter now — by checking your standby generator
- Meeting minutes ... and more



PHOTO BY FARM RESCUE

Farm Rescue volunteers **Garry Deckert** from Bismarck and **Albert Lautenschlager** from Keene assisted **Alton Lien** with spring seeding. The volunteers brought their own equipment. Alton's wife Tammy says it's a sight to see — the equipment coming down the road, shiny and clean, and the Farm Rescue banner promoting help for farmers and ranchers who are experiencing a challenge.

## **'We are coming!'** **Farm Rescue answers prayers,** **assists Slope Electric members in need**

BY CARMEN DEVNEY

**I**t's been one of those years Alton and Tammy Lien wish would be over. Anxiety set in with the coronavirus in March. Then Alton got kicked by a calf and broke his arm, just before the wheat needed to get seeded. He received a helping hand from volunteers with Farm Rescue — only to lose the crop to hail in August. In three days, three combines harvested the damage for insurance purposes.

It's all part of farming, but that doesn't make a tough

year easier, Tammy says. They are already praying next year is better.

One blessing this year was Farm Rescue. From the moment Tammy contacted program staff to ask for help, to the time volunteers Garry Deckert from Bismarck and Albert Lautenschlager from Keene drove equipment into their yard, only a couple days had passed.

"That's what gets me most. I know they help people

who are in dire need, yet they took the time to help us with a broken arm,” she says. “I’ll never forget that night. I got a message: ‘Tammy, fill out the paperwork. We are coming.’ It was a prayer answered; a big relief for Alton and I.”

## Planting seeds and kindness

Slope Electric Cooperative members who live southwest of Regent, the Liens have been farming and ranching together for 37 years on the homestead once owned by Alton’s father and grandfather. The parents of grown daughters Heather and Amber, they grow mostly wheat and run about 60 head of Angus cows.

It’s nearly half the herd they used to own; they were forced to sell some in 2017 following a period of drought. That was the first time the couple turned to Farm Rescue.

Founded in 2005 by North Dakota native Bill Gross, Farm Rescue is a nonprofit organization led by volunteers who are dedicated to assisting farm and ranch families in the midst of a major crisis. They provide free planting, haying, harvest and livestock feeding assistance to farm and ranch families experiencing a major illness, injury or natural disaster.

Based near Horace, N.D., Farm Rescue provides services in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas.

Tammy was familiar with the Farm Rescue program because her uncle, Slope Electric Cooperative member Marvin Jorstad, had received assistance due to a medical challenge. She had also read stories about how they help farmers and ranchers in need — and she knew they needed help.

That year, help came in the form of hay. The Liens received a semi-load of bales from Minnesota. They paid for the hay, and Farm Rescue paid for the transportation.

“It would have cost us a lot of money [to haul],” Tammy says. “It was nice of them to do that.”

This spring was the couple’s second encounter with Farm Rescue. Alton was working at Stockmen’s Livestock Exchange in Dickinson when he got kicked by a calf and broke his arm. It was only the second accident he’s had on the job in more than 20 years.

Alton went to the emergency room, and Tammy called Farm Rescue knowing the wheat needed to be seeded.

The broken arm wasn’t an emergency, like when



PHOTO BY TAMMY LIEN

*Southwest North Dakota was affected by drought in 2017. Slope Electric members Alton and Tammy Lien were forced to reduce their Angus herd when grass and hay were scarce. Now instead of selling cows, Alton makes and sells hay. The couple still run about 60 head of cattle.*

grass was scarce and the cows needed food. But Alton still needed time to rest and heal.

With the organization having helped the Liens just three years prior, Tammy wasn’t sure if they would qualify for planting assistance. Farm Rescue staff assured her of their eligibility and encouraged Tammy to apply. As luck would have it, another regional co-op member had applied for assistance and volunteers would already be in the area. Within days, their first 500 acres of wheat had been seeded by strangers.

“The volunteers were the nicest guys around; I can’t say enough about them and the Farm Rescue program,” Tammy says. “They wouldn’t have had to help us out again, but they did. They are a great outfit.” ■

## Wanted: donations and volunteers!

Farm Rescue relies in part on donations that help cover the cost of food, lodging and transportation incurred by volunteers. The program also relies on volunteers who generously give them time to help people in need.

To give a donation or volunteer, call 701-252-2017 or go online and visit [farmrescue.org](http://farmrescue.org).

## Angels in Blue

BY DAN ERDMANN, PROGRAM MANAGER, FARM RESCUE

Farming is truly a profession of uncertainty. Every year is a unique journey, with its fair share of bumps along the way. The cost of inputs, the instability of commodity prices and frequent curveballs from Mother Nature create many challenges in planning for the future. Couple any of those factors with an unexpected injury, illness or natural disaster, and the result can be devastating to any operation. This is precisely why Farm Rescue exists.

Founder Bill Gross grew up on a family farm that, like so many others, was unable to continue viable operations. He would go on to become a pilot for UPS, but his heart never left the farm. One day, while chatting with a friend about future retirement plans, Bill mentioned his dream was to buy a tractor and travel from farm to farm, helping those in need. His friend responded with a simple question - "Why wait until retirement?" Soon after, Farm Rescue was born.

Since its first assistance case in 2006, Farm Rescue has helped more than 700 family farms and ranches bridge crises so they have an opportunity to continue viable operations. That effort is led by an army of volunteers.

These "Angels in Blue" represent 49 different states and come from all walks of life. They are pilots and pastors, retired farmers and law enforcement, military veterans and even a rocket scientist. These men and women give up vacation days and time with their families to help complete strangers in their hour of need.

Farm Rescue operations rely solely on the generosity of others. Volunteers serve as the organization's boots on the ground, but this massive assistance effort would not be possible without financial supporters, as well. They include individual donors, business sponsors and grantors (including many rural electric cooperatives), who recognize the importance of Farm Rescue's services within their communities and throughout rural America. Agriculture remains the lifeblood of our region and when a single farm or ranch family is struggling, those effects can be felt by many. Farm Rescue strives to create an outward ripple effect from the farms they assist. These family operations breathe life into the communities in which they reside, by supporting local businesses, organizations and civic programs. The harsh reality for many rural communities is the continued decrease in population. This makes every family farm a precious commodity and further illustrates the importance of Farm Rescue's efforts.

Mobilizing manpower and equipment across a 7-state territory is no small task and one that involves an enormous amount of coordination and expense. The five employees who comprise Farm Rescue's full-time staff are tasked with assembling the necessary machinery, volunteers, documentation and financial resources to assist farms and ranches in a timely manner. They also take great pride in their ability to stretch every donation dollar to its limit, in hopes of assisting as many families



as possible. Much like the nonprofit's volunteers and supporters, these staff members are deeply invested in the mission of the organization.

It has truly taken a village to bring this dream to life, but also to sustain it throughout the past 14 years. Many lives and communities have been touched through the Good Samaritan work of Farm Rescue, with many emotional stories along the way. Farmers and ranchers are very proud individuals who seldom ask for help, but when an unexpected crisis threatens their livelihood, it is comforting to know there is a place to turn. Farm Rescue exists to preserve legacies and ensure that future generations of farmers and ranchers have an opportunity to carry on a proud family tradition. With additional support, the organization feels poised to continue shining a light on some of the darkest days for farm and ranch families.

If you or someone you know could use their assistance, Farm Rescue is currently accepting applications at [farmrescue.org](http://farmrescue.org) or call 701-252-2017. Anonymous referrals are also welcome. To learn more about Farm Rescue, join their volunteer family or make a contribution to their mission, visit [farmrescue.org](http://farmrescue.org). ■

Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
2019 ANNUAL REPORT

**Lights.  
Comfort.  
Connection.**



## Annual Meeting Postponed

For the safety of our members and employees, the Slope Electric Board of Directors postponed the annual meeting.

The Board thanks you for your understanding.



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**1**  
VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP
- 

**2**  
DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL
- 

**3**  
MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION
- 

**4**  
AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE
- 

**5**  
EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION
- 

**6**  
COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES
- 

**7**  
CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

## #PowerOn with National Cooperative Month!

September marked the 25th anniversary of the seven Cooperative Principles being adopted as part of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity. This statement reads: "A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise." It also includes our values, as show in these icons. Members, this is YOUR cooperative, and we are here because of you ... and for you!

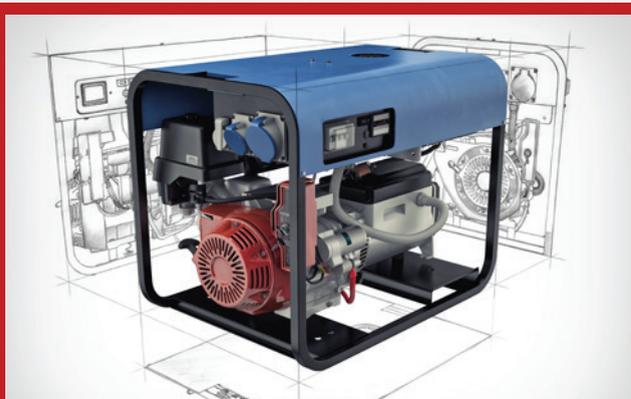
This month, we celebrate October is National Cooperative Month ... a time when cooperatives across the state and nation celebrate who we are and who we serve — our member-owners. This year's theme is, "Power On."

Slope Electric Cooperative is proud to power your tools and toys, work and volunteer in our local communities, and give back through scholarships, grants and more.

Together with our members, we are making a difference! ■

# Be prepared for winter's wrath

Slope Electric Cooperative strives to provide you with reliable, uninterrupted service every day of the year, but sometimes Mother Nature creates unavoidable power outages. Slope Electric Cooperative wants you to remain safe during severe winter weather, so consider preparing now for the possibility of power outages this winter.



## Operate generator safely

If your standby electric generator has been in storage since last winter, make sure it is still operating properly – before an outage occurs.

And always follow the manufacturer's recommendations on how to use your generator. Most important is the transfer switch that disconnects the farm or home from the power line and connects it to the generator. It must be a double-throw transfer switch which prevents the generator from feeding electricity back onto the power line. This protects the lineworkers who may be working to restore your service.

If you have additional questions, please call Slope Electric. We will be glad to work with you to make sure your generator is used properly.

## Stay away from downed power lines

Mother Nature isn't always kind to power lines. Winter winds, snow and ice often prove to be too much for utility poles and power lines. If you see a downed power line or utility pole, contact Slope Electric immediately.

Do not go near the line or the pole. Just because it's on the ground doesn't mean it's safe to approach.

## During an outage

To prevent an overload on the system while power is being restored, take these steps:

- Turn off every inside light except one.
- Turn down your thermostat.
- If the outage lasts more than 60 minutes, turn off your electric water heater.
- Make sure your kitchen range is off, both the surface and the oven.
- Turn off all unnecessary appliances and unplug sensitive electronic equipment.
- When power comes back on, slowly switch your appliances and lights back on and gradually return your thermostat to its normal setting.

**AUG. 27, 2020**

## Report from **THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- Approved minutes of the July 27, 2020, Board meeting, and the Aug. 7, 2020, and Aug. 14, 2020, Special Meetings.
- Approved two capital credit estate retirements.
- Approved special equipment and RUS form 219 inventories.
- Co-General Managers/CEOs gave an update on the past week's happenings regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the Cooperative. North Dakota seems to be entering a spike in cases across the state, and particularly in the Bismarck/Mandan and Dickinson communities. It was reported that most cooperatives are experiencing load decline anywhere from 5 to 30 percent as compared to 2019.
- Heard reports from Directors who participated or attended various meetings the past month.
- The Board approved the Board meeting dates for 2021.
- A presentation prepared by GDS Associates, Inc., on the Cost of Service Study was reviewed and discussed by the Board. This study outlined steps to a rate study and the Cost of Service process. The Board approved the Cost of Service Study.
- Reviewed and approved revisions to Board Policy 02-08 Board Governance - Election of Directors.
- The Board members were asked if they wish to partake in several upcoming meetings, with delegates and alternates selected for those meetings needing voting delegates.
- Senior Staff reports were attached to the agenda and reviewed, along with the financials for July 2020. The financials were accepted.
- The Board entered into Executive Session.
- A next Board meeting will be held Sept. 24, 2020.

## What should I report to my local co-op?



- **If you see a downed power line or utility pole, contact Slope Electric Cooperative immediately.**
- **If you see broken wires, cross arms or other equipment that may be damaged.**
- **If you hit any electrical equipment, such as poles or guy wires, while farming.**
- **If a tree is growing into a power line, call Slope Electric Cooperative to trim that tree before it causes a hazard for you or leaves you without power. Children climbing that tree can get shocked or killed; branches can break or fall onto the wire, causing an outage; or the wind can whip a limb into the line and cause an outage. But remember: When power lines are involved, always leave the trimming to professionals.**



PHOTO BY CLAIRE VIGESAA

## Director Caron honored for service

**J**erry Caron, a longtime board member for Slope Electric Cooperative who currently serves as treasurer, was recently honored by the Upper Missouri Electric Cooperative board of directors for his service on that board.

Claire Vigesaa, general manager of Upper Missouri, hand-delivered this award to Caron, who was helping his grandson put up hay around the Bowman Airport. Caron is from Scranton.

The plaque reads: “In grateful appreciation for 10 years of dedicated board of director service. We appreciate your thoughtful concern for the members and cooperative staff.”

Caron has represented Slope Electric and its members on the Upper Missouri board from 1997 to 2004, 2014 to 2015, and 2018 to 2020. He was re-elected to the board once again in April 2020.

Congratulations, Jerry, and thank you for your service! ■



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