



CURRENT

Serving Morton, Grant and Sioux counties

SEPTEMBER 2020

NEWS

Salute!

PHOTO BY JOHN KARY, NDAREC



Members, these Mor-Gran-Sou employees are here to serve you! From taking your calls and answering your questions, to building new services and fixing the occasional power outage, these folks are essential to powering your homes, tools and toys 24/7.

Thank you, Mor-Gran-Sou employees! You are essential to our members and our area communities, and we thank you for your time.

“This is for the one who drives the big rig, up and down the road

Or the one out in the warehouse, bringing in the load

Or the waitress, the mechanic, the policeman on patrol

For everyone who works behind the scenes

With a spirit you can’t replace with no machine

Hello, America! Let me thank you for your time”

~Forty Hour Week, Alabama

According to www.history.com, Labor Day pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers and is traditionally observed on the first Monday in September. It was created by the labor movement in the late 19th century and became a federal holiday in 1894.

What’s inside:

- **Farm Rescue assists Mor-Gran-Sou members**
- **Co-op holds virtual annual meeting**
- **Nominate a local hero for the final #whopowersyou contest**
- **Meeting minutes and more**



Farm Rescue assists members in the Mor-Gran-Sou service area

BY CARMEN DEVNEY



PHOTO COURTESY BILL MEUCHEL

Bill and Bonnie Meuchel are Mor-Gran-Sou members who live between New Salem and Mandan. They are the third generation of Bill's family to live on the farm where they grow wheat, corn, soybeans, barley, flax, field peas, and hay for the cattle. After Bill had an accident this spring sorting cow/calf pairs, he received help from a good neighbor and Farm Rescue. Two out-of-state volunteers seeded his soybeans.

All it takes is one ornery cow to change the course of a day, a month, a season.

For Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative member Bill Meuchel, one altercation led to an accident, work challenges, and gratitude for good neighbors and Farm Rescue.

Bill was sorting cow/calf pairs this spring when a cow got behind him on his four-wheeler. He turned around to get her, and she slowed down as he sped up. He accidentally bumped her with a tire. She walked away unharmed.

The four-wheeler flipped, and Bill thought he jumped clear. He landed on his right hip, and the four-wheeler landed on his left leg. A trip to the hospital confirmed a bruised body and crushed fibula that would later break.

The next day — wearing a cast — Bill figured he would start working on his air seeder. He and his wife, Bonnie, live between New Salem and Mandan, where they grow wheat, corn, soybeans, barley, flax, field peas, and hay for the cattle. Limping, he knew he had his work cut out for him.

“It’s really hard to calf and seed with crutches,” he says with a laugh.

Bill called a neighbor who had been helping him, and his neighbor called 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.

An employee with Farm Rescue contacted Bill and asked if he needed assistance. Bill initially declined.

“I said, ‘I got my walking boot on and I’m doing chores and I’m getting by.’”

The employee respected his wishes, but kept checking in since Farm Rescue volunteers and equipment were going to be in his area to assist another farmer in need. Bill decided to fill out the paperwork and submit it for review. Less than one week later, volunteers were in his field planting soybeans.

The out-of-state volunteers brought a tractor and seeder. They started on a Friday morning and seeded until 1 a.m.

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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 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. ■



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PHOTO COURTESY FARM RESCUE

Bill Meuchel

By noon on Saturday, they had finished about 400 acres and moved on to the next job.

When Bill asked what he owed, the volunteers said people normally give a donation to cover a portion of their food and lodging expenses.

For Bill, getting the help he truly did need was priceless.

As of August, his leg was healing slowly and his ornery cow was likely

on someone's dinner plate. Shortly after the incident, they parted ways at Kist Livestock Auction.

His soybean crop was fair to good, and some looked a little better than good. He plans to harvest in October.

When Bill reflected on the experience, he said he never thought he'd be in an accident, and he never thought he'd need the likes of Farm Rescue.

"It's really tough to swallow your pride and take help from strangers who you are never going to be able to help back," Bill concludes. "Thank you to a great organization!" ■



Emma Meuchel is the fifth generation of family to help care for the family's land and animals. Here, she poses next to her cow, Sparkles.

A humbling experience



PHOTO COURTESY FARM RESCUE

Clarence Roth, Jr., and his wife **Nola**, pose with Farm Rescue volunteer **Clyde Mermis** and his wife, **Marybeth**. Clyde and Marybeth traveled from Lawrence, Kans., to help Junior make hay. The Roths have been ranching about 35 years, and have children Sara, Nathan and Avery.

When the COVID-19 hospitalizations were down in Bismarck, Clarence Roth, Jr. figured he better schedule his hip replacement surgery. He knew he'd be recovering when he should be haying.

Junior and his wife, Nola, are Mor-Gran-Sou members who live near the Grant County/Hettinger County line. They run about 300-head of beef cattle and background calves over the winter. Nola is librarian and teaches fifth-grade English class in Elgin.

The couple knew other electric cooperative members who had received assistance from Farm Rescue, so Nola didn't hesitate to call and ask for help.

"That's what they are for,"

Junior says.

The weather was dry at the time, so

Farm Rescue sent volunteers from Iowa and North Dakota. When they arrived, it started raining.

"That was a blessing," Junior says, "because without it, the fields were deteriorating fast."

Too wet to make hay, the volunteers moved on to help a farmer south of Beulah. It didn't work for them to come back, so Farm Rescue sent another volunteer from Kansas who used Junior's equipment to hay about 400 acres.

Junior says he probably could have gotten the job done without help, but he appreciated having a break to give himself time to heal.

"They were good from start to finish. It's an excellent organization," he continues. "It's humbling to know people will drop what they are doing, and come and help." ■



Mor-Gran-Sou makes history by holding first virtual annual meeting



Mor-Gran-Sou Co-General Managers **Don Franklund** (left) and **Travis Kupper**

Thanks, members, for tuning in online and attending your first “virtual” annual meeting!

The Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative board of directors, management staff and employees thank you, our member-owners, for participating in the 73rd annual meeting of the membership held Aug. 20. It was broadcast live by

BEK TV.

Originally scheduled for Friday, July 17 at Prairie Knights Pavilion, the annual meeting was delayed and rescheduled virtually to keep everyone safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, Mor-Gran-Sou members were asked to vote for three seats on the board directors: one for the Grant County position, one for the Mandan-Area position, and one for the Sioux County position. In an uncontested race, Casey Wells from Carson retained the Grant County position. Incumbent Bob J. Leingang from Mandan retained the Mandan area position. New to the board is Rodney Froelich from Selfridge, who

was elected to fill the Sioux County seat formerly held by Lance Froelich. Lance chose not to seek re-election.

Mor-Gran-Sou welcomes these members to the board of directors, and thanks Stan Boehm from Mandan and Randal J. White Sr. from Selfridge for campaigning to serve our members.

Members also voted by mail to approve the 2019 annual meeting minutes.

To learn more about Mor-Gran-Sou’s virtual annual meeting, read a summary in the October local pages of *North Dakota Living*.

We appreciate the interest you continue to show in your electric cooperative. ■



Nominate a local hero for the fifth — and final — #WhoPowersYou contest

Members, this year marks the fifth, and final, #WhoPowersYou contest. Hosted by Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives nationwide including Mor-Gran-Sou locally, the annual contest celebrates people who inspire or make a difference in our local communities.

This year’s contest will be held Sept. 8 to Oct. 9. Winners will be announced in November, and the person you nominate could receive up to \$5,000.

Entrant/nominator or entrant’s/nominator’s immediate family (spouse or parent) or other persons residing in the same household as entrant/nominator must be a member of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.

To read additional eligibility requirements or enter the contest, visit www.whopowersyou.com, fill out a submission and submit a photo. Entries from our co-op will be featured in the local pages of *North Dakota Living*. ■

Electrical equipment is never in season!



As various North Dakota hunting seasons approach, please remember that electrical insulators, conductors and electrical equipment are **NOT** on the hunting season list.

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative encourages hunters to be aware of electrical equipment while enjoying the great outdoors this season.

Hunters and other gun owners should not shoot near or toward power lines, power poles and substations. A stray bullet can cause damage to equipment, could be deadly to the shooter, and potentially interrupt electric service to large areas.

Be aware of what's behind that big buck or it might cost big bucks. Repairs can be costly and damages cause outages to our members. As a nonprofit cooperative, owned by the members, we all share in this expense.

We recognize the majority of hunters practice safe hunting and understand the potential risks when discharging a firearm. We encourage experienced hunters who are familiar with the area to identify the locations of utility properties and equipment to young or new hunters in their group and remind them to avoid shooting toward these facilities. Enjoy the great outdoors. Just be sure to hunt only what's in season. ■

Hunting safety tips:

- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Damage to the conductor can happen, possibly dropping a phase on the ground. If it's dry and the electricity goes to ground, there is the possibility of electrocution and fire.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Do not use power line wood poles or towers to support equipment used in your shooting activity.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.
- Do not shoot at, or near, birds perching on utility lines. That goes for any type of firearm, including pistols, rifles or shotguns.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole besides utility equipment can pose an obstruction – and a serious hazard – to electric cooperative employees as they perform utility operations. ■



Work safely around grain bins

Make sure everyone, including family and employees, working around stored grain understands the hazards and proper safety procedures.

“Too many people ignore safety practices and suffer severe injury or death while working around grain,” says Ken Hellevang, North Dakota State University Extension agricultural engineer. Never enter a bin while unloading grain or to break up a grain bridge or chunks that may plug grain flow. Flowing grain will pull you into the grain mass, burying you within seconds. Use the “lock-out/tag-out” procedures to assure equipment will not start before entering the bin.

Bridging occurs when grain is high in moisture content, moldy or in poor condition. The kernels stick together and form a crust. A cavity will form under the crust when grain is removed from the bin. The crust isn’t strong enough to support a person’s weight, so anyone who walks on it will fall into the cavity and be buried under several feet of grain.

Determine if the grain has a crust before any grain has been removed. If work needs to be done with a crust, it must be done before any grain is removed.

To determine if the grain is bridged after unloading has started, look for a funnel shape on the surface of the grain mass. If the grain surface appears

undisturbed, the grain has bridged and a cavity has formed under the surface. Stay outside the bin and use a pole or other object to break the bridge loose.

If the grain flow stops when you’re removing it from the bin, a chunk of spoiled grain probably is blocking the flow. Entering the bin to break up the blockage will expose you to being buried in grain and tangled in the auger.

If grain has formed a vertical wall, try to break it up from the top of the bin with a long pole on a rope or through a door with a long pole. A wall of grain

can collapse, or avalanche, without warning, knocking you over and burying you.

Never enter a grain bin alone. Have at least two people at the bin to assist in case of problems. Use a safety harness and rope that prevents you from descending rapidly more than a couple of feet when entering a bin.

“Take time to think of all options before entering a bin,” Hellevang advises. ■

Grain bags are suffocation hazard

Never enter a grain bag, because it is a suffocation hazard. If unloading the bag with a pneumatic grain conveyor, the suction can “shrink wrap” a person so he or she cannot move and will limit space for breathing.

Bins require clearance from power lines

Our farmers work hard to get the job done, and sometimes it’s easy to forget all the necessary steps to take when practicing safe operations. Whether you are purchasing new grain bins or remodeling areas that contain existing ones, proximity to overhead power lines must be a considered factor.

- **Safe clearance.** The National Electrical Safety Code requires an 18-foot minimum vertical clearance from the highest point of the filling port of the grain bin to nearby high-voltage wires and a 55-foot minimum distance from the power line to the grain bin wall.

- **Filling grain bins.** Maintain an adequate high-wire clearance when using a portable auger, conveyor or elevator to fill your grain bin.
- **Moving equipment near grain bins.** When moving equipment, such as a hopper or a scaffold, be aware of nearby power lines. Remember to maintain a 10-foot clearance to ensure safety. Accidents can happen in a split second, which is why Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative reminds you to always use caution when working near power lines. If you are considering a plan for a new grain bin or reconstruction of an existing bin’s site, please contact Mor-Gran-Sou Electric and let us assist you in maintaining a safe environment for you and your family. ■

MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

board meeting highlights



Meeting date: July 17, 2020

- Approved the June 24, 2020, Regular Board meeting minutes
- Approved a special equipment capitalization
- Approved two work order inventories
- Reviewed the monthly director's financial report
- Confirmed Board review of the financial report for June
- Reviewed delinquent summary report
- Reviewed senior staff department reports
- Reviewed Safety Matters newsletter
- Heard planning update, and reviewed working agenda, for Mor-Gran-Sou's 2020 virtual Annual Meeting
- Heard legal counsel report
- Heard Co-General Managers/CEOs update, and reports on meetings
- Heard update on Innovative Energy Alliance Cooperative and Maintenance Solutions Cooperative Board meetings
- Heard update on Mor-Gran-Sou's Southwest Power Pool Annual Meeting
- Heard update on Cooperative's ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic
- Assigned voting delegates for upcoming virtual industry meetings
- Approved participation in Western States Power Corporation for 2021
- Held Executive Session

Upcoming regular board meeting date:

Sept. 23; location to be determined

Members may be welcome to attend board meetings. Due to COVID-19, plans can change quickly. Please call the office at 1-800-750-8212 or 597-3301 to confirm the meeting status you wish to attend.

To place an item on the agenda, please contact Board Chair Casey Wells or Co-General Manager/Chief Executive Officer Donald Franklund at 701-597-3301 at least one week in advance.

Members may obtain a copy of approved board minutes by completing and returning the "Request for Information or Data" form. You can find this form at www.morgransou.com, or contact the Flasher office to request a copy.



LOOK UP AND LOOK AROUND

POWER LINES AND POLES MAY BE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

For your safety, make sure you have at least 10 feet of clearance between power lines and your combines, grain augers, balers and front-end loaders.

Farming equipment is vulnerable to hitting power lines because of its large size, height and extensions. Newer, larger equipment is especially at risk.

Look for low-hanging lines when you enter and leave a field.

Keep in mind that uneven ground and shifting soil conditions can put you in

harm's way.

If your equipment does make contact with a power line, do not leave the cab. Call 911, tell others to stay away, and wait for help.

If you are a Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative member and you see a power line issue that may need attention, call us at 800-750-8212 or email safety@morgransou.com.

Your safety matters. Working together helps ensure the safety of all!



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UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATES
800-795-0555 OR 811

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Chair..... Casey Wells

Vice Chair..... Chad Harrison

Secretary-Treasurer..... Lance Froelich

Directors..... Mark Doll, Vernard Frederick,
Pam Geiger, Jay Larson,

Bob J. Leingang, Kathy Tokach

MANAGEMENT

Co-GM/CEO..... Donald A. Franklund

Co-GM/CEO..... Travis Kupper

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