

## Haxtun resident is grateful for small town loyalty

Written by Jes-c Brandt

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While the county was busy enjoying fair activities with friends and family from surrounding towns, Rick Potter, of Haxtun, had a reminder of his own of why living in a small town can really be great.

Seven weeks ago, Potter was working on the farm. While stepping over an auger, the heel of his left shoe was caught. After attempts to remove it were unsuccessful, he reached to pull his foot out. In the process, however, his left hand was caught, and he lost three fingers.

After being taken to Haxtun Hospital, Potter was taken by Flight for Life to Medical Center of the Rockies in Loveland. He was there for 26 days while doctors worked on his heel and his hand.

The weeks since the accident have been slow, but Potter has since made great progress. It's been refreshing to return to his own home and spend time outside, but perhaps the most welcome thing has been the assurance that his family, neighbors and friends are all there to lend a helping hand.

Monday, July 20, Potter found himself in a bind, needing to finish wheat harvest. After getting off to a late start due to rain and Potter's unexpected injury, they had not made the progress they needed to. By noon that day, though, several families from the Wages community had brought combines, grain carts, trucks and themselves to speed the process along.

By 8 p.m., said Potter, they had cut 550 acres of wheat, a task that could have easily taken them three or four more days by themselves.

At the front of the community effort was Potter's family. Parents Royce and Janet, as well as sisters and brothers-in-law Jen and Darren Salvador and Jill and Justin McDaniel put action to the belief that family should come first, all dropped what they were doing to be there to help.

Among those gathered at the Potter farm for harvest were Gary Sperber; Kent and Dick McDaniel; Lee, Damon and Del Struckmeyer; Joe Hofmeister; Harry Salvador; Bill Garretson; Rod Salvador; Dave Crossland; Duane Koch; and Bill Holcomb.

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Many of the people there, said Potter, are people he has known nearly all his life. For multiple generations, the families in the Wages community have been a tight-knit group, always willing to help one another when needed.

Years ago, when harvest took weeks instead of days, Potter remembers the families that finished first would go to help their neighbors complete their harvest. With the changing times, that isn't something they see much any more, but this experience was a good reminder that there is still a close sense of community.

Eager to get back to his usual routine, Potter joined the others in the field, driving his own combine. Not letting his injuries get to him, Potter said, "you've got to go on, and you've got to make the best of it."

Potter's Septic Service has been on hold while he heals, however, he noted he is starting back to business now. Doctors say he should be walking with a boot within the next few weeks, and he will be starting therapy to get him back to his usual self. While Potter knows he still has surgeries ahead and progress to be made, right now he's grateful for the things he has: family and friends.

"It's good to have people who help you," said Potter. "I would gladly do the same for any of them." That's just how the Wages community is. When someone needs help, a neighbor is there for them.