



GOING THE EXTRA

By Loran Cook

Jonathan Conger took on an Eagle Scout project that taught him that when you sow hard work, you reap blessings.



When his Scout leader asked Jonathan Conger, a priest in the Lundstrom Park First Ward, Logan Utah East Stake, if he wanted to plant and harvest a wheat field for his Eagle Scout project, Jonathan said, "Sure." Little did he know the immensity of the project before him. Only later did he realize how much he would have to rely on Heavenly Father and the community to help him achieve his goal.

Jonathan's Scoutmaster at the time, Edward Redd, first got the idea for the project while visiting the Cache Community Food Pantry. During his visit, Brother Redd asked what the pantry needed most, and they told him flour was always a much needed commodity.

When he first started thinking about Eagle project ideas,



10 Acres

Jonathan had been planning to paint some benches at his local meetinghouse. Then Brother Redd told him about 10 acres of land he owned that hadn't been planted yet. He suggested to Jonathan that they should plant wheat on the land, have it milled, and donate the flour to the pantry as his Eagle Scout project.

"I didn't really think about how big a project it would be, but it sounded good," said Jonathan. Planting and harvesting a 10-acre field is not an easy job. Jonathan and Brother Redd discussed how to grow the wheat, take care of the field, harvest the wheat, and find a mill to grind it.

First on the list was finding seed. This was where the first of many people came to Jonathan's aid. A member of Jonathan's ward had planted wheat the previous year and

had a silo filled with seed. He offered to give Jonathan the seed for planting the field.

Planting Seed

Now that he had seed, Jonathan had to wait until April for the field to dry out enough to be ready for planting. Looking ahead to the harvest, they searched for a mill that would handle the grinding of the wheat, and they eventually found a local mill that agreed to help. Jonathan told them that sometime around September they would bring the wheat to be ground into flour.

To prepare for planting, Jonathan first had to arrange for the field to be leveled so the seed would fall on even ground. They were given permission to use a tractor to



BE WILLING TO WORK

Do you have an Eagle Scout or service project on the horizon? Are you looking for something to do? Jonathan offers this advice.

“Be open to doing something difficult. You don’t need to always paint a park bench or put in a basketball hoop. Be ready to do whatever comes at you and do your best.”

That’s sound advice from a young man who is more at home playing the piano and preparing for medical school than pursuing a career as a wheat farmer.

level the field and pull the seed drill (used to plant the seeds). But the tractor broke. Luckily Brother Redd knew someone who could fix it.

“He took it home, fixed it, and brought it back to us,” said Jonathan. “He didn’t even hesitate. I told him what I was doing and asked him for help. He said, ‘Sure. Anytime.’”

The next step was for Jonathan to organize for the field to be fertilized and then, in July, to be irrigated. This became a challenge when Jonathan realized the irrigating was not automated. The pipes had to be laid and moved by hand. Watering the field took three days.

“It was kind of troublesome,” Jonathan said. “You set the pipes on the ground, and it was really muddy and gross because irrigating for a few days turns the field into a swamp.” Even though it was hard work, Jonathan has fond memories of the fun he had irrigating. Fortunately the natural weather took care of the rest of the irrigation needs as it was one of the wettest springs the area had seen in a long time.

“We were really lucky when we planted. It rained right afterwards, and if we had waited any longer, the ground would have been too

wet again. Everything fit in just right.”

Another set of challenges arrived with harvest time, but Jonathan found that when you’re in service to a good cause, others are always willing to help. A week before harvest, Jonathan checked in with the flour mill and found that the person he had made all the arrangements with was on vacation for the next week and had not told anyone of the agreement. Now the mill did not have room to take his wheat until a later date. Also, they faced the task of harvesting the wheat with a small combine that would take them many hours.



Wheat to Those in Need

The mill made the effort to clear a space for the coming wheat, and the farmer who had donated the seed just happened to be passing by in his combine harvester when they were about to begin harvesting. He had been on his way to harvest his own field and decided to help out again, harvesting the field in under three hours. In the tradition of helping hands, another farmer lent a trailer to the project to store the wheat for a few days until the mill could receive it. Yet another person helped to store the flour after it had been packaged and set on pallets at the mill.

The 10-acre field produced 23,000 pounds of wheat, 20,000 of which was given to the mill to grind. The mill kept some of the flour as payment for processing the wheat, but finally Jonathan was given 5,400 pounds of flour, enough to bake approximately 5,400 loaves of bread, all of which was donated to the food pantry. The rest of the wheat was kept, cleaned, and sold to cover the costs of fertilizer and herbicides. More people donated time and resources to again store the wheat and then help in loading the flour at the Cache Community Food Pantry, which opened its doors after hours specifically to receive it.

Jonathan is happy with the service he provided, and the flour's delivery signified the end of his project. But visiting the pantry made him realize what he had achieved. He knew that what he had done was going to benefit a lot of people.

"It felt good to help those people, and I was just glad I could help in the little way I did," Jonathan said. The Eagle Scout project left a good feeling, and Jonathan knows that it couldn't have been done without a lot of help from family, fellow Scouts, and other people who donated time and energy.



Jonathan feels that Heavenly Father's help in particular was important.

"Obviously God played a big part in guiding us while we were doing this, because at times things didn't work out very well, but then they came together all of a sudden," Jonathan said. "It may just seem like luck, but I think God was watching, and He knew this was a good project and He wanted to help me."

Jonathan Conger isn't planning to grow more wheat in the future. He's more likely to be found playing the piano, thinking about medical school, and preparing for a mission. But he will always remember his Eagle project and what it taught him about the law of the harvest. **NE**

Jonathan's Eagle Scout project took a lot of planning, planting, and participation. In the end, he and others harvested 23,000 pounds of wheat. Once it was processed, Jonathan donated 5,400 pounds of flour to his local food pantry.