

North Carolina Troopers Association Caisson Unit **Fund Raiser Information**

The North Carolina Troopers Association Caisson Unit was in need of a place to store hay and equipment. Realizing this, members from the Grantham and Brogden Granges along with other volunteers from Seymour Johnson AFB and other parts of Wayne County started putting together a plan to help with this effort. Construction began on July 18, 2020 and the project became a reality as it was completed on September 12, 2020.

The Caisson and the horses that pull it are kept on the property of Highway Patrolman Bennie Grady and his wife Pamela in the Buck Swamp community of Wayne County where the shelter was built. The Caisson unit performs funeral services for law enforcement officers and first responders who die in the line of duty. They provide this service for five (5) states, North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina. There are only three of these units in the United States, Arlington Cemetery at Washington, DC, Texas and North Carolina.

Having an opportunity to support the NCTA with building this barn has given the volunteers a way to stay active in their communities during these difficult times and enjoy the fellowship with each other and build new relationships.

The NCTA/NCSHP Caisson Unit is a partnership between the North Carolina Trooper's Association and the North Carolina State Highway Patrol. It receives no state funding for operation; instead the Unit relies solely on contributions. The North Carolina Trooper's Association maintains the horses and equipment. The North Carolina State Highway Patrol provides sworn and trained personnel to participate in carrying out the responsibilities of performing the funeral missions.

To help offset the expenses of this facility and provide much needed funds for the NCTA Caisson Unit when called upon to support a family of a loved one who has lost their life in the line of duty, the Grantham and Brogden Granges are planning a fund raiser to help meet these needs.

The Granges have set a goal of at least \$50,000. In order to accomplish this, we are looking for 50,000 people that would be willing to give at least \$1.00 each or more if they feel lead to do so and the goal will be met. Any and all contributions will be greatly appreciated. In the world that we live in today and the feelings that so many people have toward our law enforcement agencies, it's a way for us to let them know that we stand with them and support law and order.

Please make checks payable to NCTA Caisson Unit and mail to Grantham Grange, P.O. Box 133, Goldsboro, NC 27533. Our goal is to run this campaign through Saturday, December 12th. Thanks in advance for your support.

If you have any questions, please call either of the following:
John Crawford, President Grantham Grange, 919-922-9001 (cell)
Jimmy Martin, President Brogden Grange, 919-738-8988 (cell)
Mark Hood, Fund Coordinator, 919-920-5446 (cell)

Fundraiser will benefit Caisson Unit

BY STEVE HERRING
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A dollar doesn't go far in today's economy.

But if enough people are willing to give just a dollar, or maybe even more, it could help ensure that the North Carolina Troopers Association's Caisson Unit can continue performing funeral services for law enforcement officers and first responders who die in the line of duty.

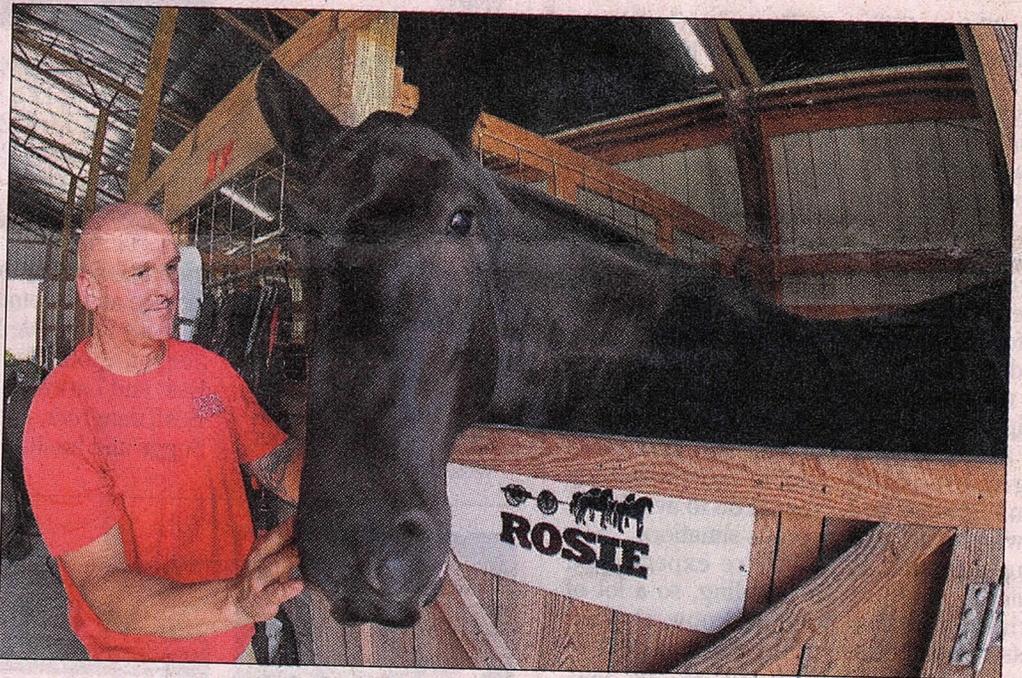
That is the goal of a fundraiser being sponsored by the Grantham and Brogden Granges.

The caisson and the horses that pull it are kept on the property of N.C. Highway Patrolman Bennie Grady and his wife, Pamela, in the Buck Swamp area of Wayne County.

The unit was in need of a place to store hay and equipment, and over the summer volunteers from Brogden and Grantham Granges, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and others held an old-fashioned barn raising.

Construction began on July 18 and was completed on Sept. 12.

Grange members decided not to stop there and to continue support of the unit



News Argus/STEVE HERRING

N.C. Highway Patrol Trooper Bennie Grady talks to Rosie, one of the two new horses that have joined the North Carolina Troopers Association's Caisson Unit that is housed on his farm. The Grantham and Brogden Granges have started a fundraiser to support the unit.

by sponsoring a fundraiser.

The Granges have set a goal of at least \$50,000. In order to accomplish this, the Granges are looking for 50,000 people who would be willing to give at least \$1 each or more if they feel led to do so, Grange members said.

It will run through Dec. 12.

Checks should be payable to NCTA Caisson Unit

and mailed to Grantham Grange, P.O. Box 133, Goldsboro, N.C., 27533.

"Our Grange kind of took that on as a project because we think it is a good project because he does not get any state funding," Grantham Grange President John Crawford said. "He relies on donations, and that has been kind of slow this year.

"Bennie and his wife work hard with this trying to provide this service. We are just proud to sponsor this."

Jimmy Martin, Brogden Grange president, said the Granges found out about the need when Grady spoke at a Grantham Grange meeting.

SEE FUNDRAISER/PAGE A3

FUNDRAISER

FROM PAGE A1

"He is working a full-time job and then having to run all over trying to find aid, discounts and paying for things out of his own pocket," Martin said. "We said, 'Guys, we need to get out and help him out.'"

"We wanted to keep them going for the services they do. Bennie has a good heart. That is just the kind of stuff the Grange likes to support — God, country and love of fellow man type thing."

The first thing was to help put up the barn, Martin said.

The Caisson Unit is a partnership between the North Carolina Troopers Association and the North Carolina State Highway Patrol. It receives no state funding for operation and instead relies solely on contributions.

The North Carolina Troopers Association maintains the horses and equipment. The North Carolina State Highway Patrol provides sworn and trained personnel to participate in carrying out the responsibilities of performing the funeral missions in five states — North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia.

The names of the fallen who

were carried to their final resting place by the Caisson Unit are listed on the side of the horses' trailer.

Formed in 2007, the Caisson Unit — six muscular jet black Percherons — had previously been stationed in western North Carolina.

It is one of only three in the nation, Arlington Cemetery at Washington, D.C., Texas and North Carolina, moving to Wayne County in July 2017 when Grady offered up a portion of his land.

Grady does not ask for money or donations. Instead, he has been creative, opening up the property to school groups and field trips.

He also makes presentations around the county to raise awareness about the Caisson Unit.

"I have it all," Grady said. "I run the unit, everything that the association owns dealing with the Caisson Unit is here on my property. Where the partnership comes in, the Highway Patrol provides the team members of troopers to perform these duties."

The state allows the troopers to get together as a team once every eight weeks to train.

"So, all the other needs come through donations and donations alone, so I've always said it would not even exist if it wasn't

for the community," Grady said. "It's the community that keeps the Caisson Unit active with the donations."

"This year is a horrible, tough year on us with everybody going through so much stuff. So, donations this year are so small and when we have to pull out a large amount of money to be able to tackle a project like this (the barn) and then the community wanted to come back in and to help out."

The worst thing would be for the unit to receive a phone call and not be able to go do its mission, he said.

"That would be a bad day," Grady said. "And thank goodness, since 2008 we have never had a request that has been denied."

Grady said he thinks people will give more than a dollar, but even if it was only a dollar, every dollar adds up, allowing the unit to do what it does.

"If everyone could have the opportunity to meet the members of the Caisson Unit as I have over the last two to three years and see the dedication/commitment that these men and women have to strive for perfection when called upon to carry out the last rites of one who has lost their life in the line of duty, they would understand why we are doing all that we can to support their efforts,"

said Mark Hood, a member of the Grantham Grange and fund coordinator.

"It's truly an honor for us to have this unit based right here in Wayne County and to have Trooper Bennie Grady and his wife, Pamela, two of the most compassionate people you'll ever meet, to care for these horses and still manage to work their full-time jobs, as well."

The Granges felt that doing something such as this fundraiser would make the Caisson Unit more visible to those who aren't as familiar with them and give the community and surrounding area an opportunity to show their support, he said.

"Any and all contributions will be greatly appreciated," Hood said. "In the world that we live in today and the feelings that so many people have toward our law enforcement agencies, it's a way for us to let them know that we stand with them and support law and order."

For more information, call Crawford at 919-922-9001; Martin at 919-738-8988; or Hood at 919-920-5446.

For more information on the local unit, there is a Facebook page for the NCTA Caisson Unit.

To schedule a presentation or field trip about the Caisson Unit, call 919-921-1546.