

AgrAbility Harvest

An ingathering of
helpful information
on disability in
agriculture

Summer/Fall
2010

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What AgrAbility Means to Me

has been a growing theme at the National AgrAbility Project. A few months ago, we decided to include a section by that name on our new website that would feature short video clips of AgrAbility customers sharing the impact of the program on their lives. At the same time, we've been developing a new AgrAbility public awareness video and have interviewed farmers and ranchers around the country about how AgrAbility helped them continue in agriculture.

Through these and other efforts, *What AgrAbility Means to Me* is becoming not just the name of a web module but also a motivation for us all to 'keep doing what we do.' We have been reminded that AgrAbility really *does* make a difference, thanks to the many dedicated, hard-working staff members with unique skills and backgrounds in our State and Regional Projects, even in the face of modest funding. When these professionals interface with determined agriculturalists who, even though facing life-shaking problems, are committed to keep working and doing what they love, the results can be dramatic.

We invite you to visit *What AgrAbility Means to Me* on our newly remodeled website (www.agrability.org) or on the AgrAbility YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/NationalAgrAbility). We think you'll find it an uplifting experience.

Perhaps you have your own story to share. Just email us at agrability@agrability.org or call 800-825-4264 to find out how to add your video clip (or written account, if you prefer). There's always room for another encouraging story of AgrAbility's impact. ■



A Closer Look

Quitting: Not an option

AgrAbility catches up with Dan DeBoer

Maybe it's his solid family background or his strong Christian faith. Perhaps it's his stubborn Dutch heritage. Probably all these and more have made Dan DeBoer an overcomer.

Readers of the former *Breaking New Ground Newsletter* may remember meeting Dan in 1991 via an article titled, "He Lost His Legs, But Not His Heart," reprinted from *Farm Journal*.¹ Recently, Paul Jones and Bill Field of the National AgrAbility Project had the chance to chat with Dan during one of his business trips to Lafayette, Indiana.



Dan DeBoer with Bill Field of the National AgrAbility Project

Deep Roots

Farming is a DeBoer way of life. Dan's grandfather homesteaded the family farm on the far south side of Chicago, an area known as Chicago Heights, and one that is becoming increasingly suburbanized. Originally a truck farm, the DeBoers eventually came to specialize in crops like tomatoes and onions. After graduating from Calvin College, Dan took over management of the farm, and his career path seemed firm.

A Heavy Blow – Followed by a Heavier One

Troubles don't always come one at a time. For Dan, the start of his troubles came in the form of a fertilizer cart. While working under it in May 1986, the cart fell on DeBoer, resulting in broken ribs, a collapsed lung, and the removal of a kidney and his spleen.

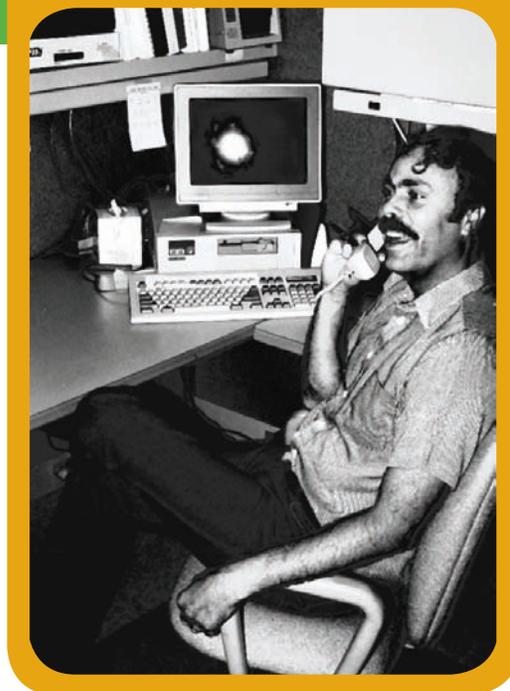
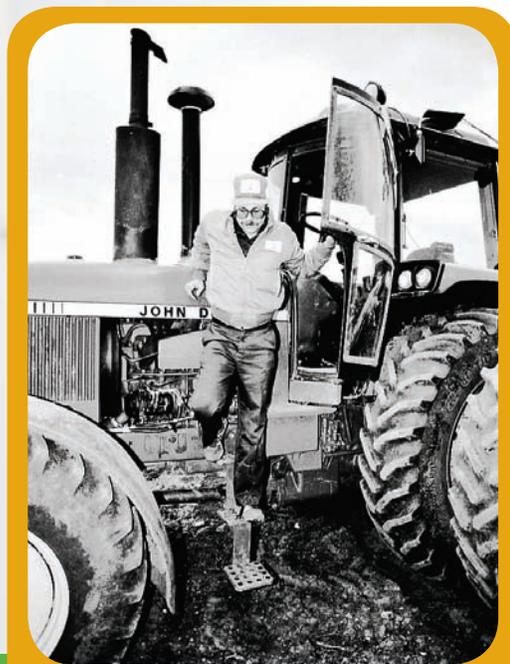
The spleen isn't an organ often heard of or thought about. However, when it is missing, the body loses an important barrier against disease, which Dan found out the hard way. In 1987, what he thought was merely the flu turned out to be a streptococcal infection. Without his spleen to help ward off the disease, and with limited blood-flow to his extremities, the devastating consequences for Dan were the amputation of his nose, several fingers, and both legs below the knee.

Facing the Unknowns

When disabling trauma strikes, many people grapple with similar, disheartening questions. "How will I be able to function again?" "Will I be able to support my family?" For Dan, his fears included what people would think about his hands, how to handle normal day-to-day tasks, and even how he'd eat a Whopper.

DeBoer counts it a blessing that he was able to recover at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, a facility commonly rated at the top of national polls. The therapy was challenging, but his recovery was rapid. Once fitted with prosthetic legs, Dan began walking with two canes and eventually progressed to using none.

¹ Darrell Smith, "He Lost His Legs, but not His Heart," *Farm Journal*, 1991.



(Above) Dan speaking at a recent event. (Right) Pictures of Dan from 1990s.

Overcoming by Innovating

On returning to farming, Dan faced several obstacles well beyond the anticipated challenges of farming with multiple disabilities. Severe drought gripped much of North America in 1988, an event now considered one of the costliest natural disasters in U.S. history. In addition, the DeBoers lost approximately \$120,000 in tomatoes to excessive rain in 1989.

In response to these catastrophes, Dan turned to commodities marketing (something he'd always been good at) to supplement the family income. After graduating from commodity school, he founded D.B. Marketing (www.db-marketinginc.com) and began building his client base—one farmer at a time. Twenty years later, he's still at it, following the markets full-time and advising clientele on the best price and time to sell.

Faith for the Future

Dan DeBoer has proven himself to be a man of faith and a shining example of an overcoming spirit. He has built D.B. Marketing into a prosperous enterprise, offering not only individual advice but also a seminar series during the winter. In addition, he's a husband of 28 years, a father of three, a grandfather, and a private pilot with a newly-purchased plane.

Of course, Dan still has his challenges, like the time that one of his prosthetic legs snapped in half while shopping. True to form, he just threw it in the shopping cart, leaned on the cart for support, and kept going—because for Dan DeBoer, quitting is not an option. ■

Hitching Up, Loading Up, and Getting Up into Your Pickup

Certain tasks involving pickup trucks can be quite challenging and exhausting for farmers with mobility or back impairments. Here are three and their possible solutions.



Hitching up a trailer often requires getting in and out of the truck several times to line up the ball and receiver. But with the **Swift-Hitch Back-Up Camera System**, the driver can ‘get it right’ on the first try. The system consists of a portable, wireless, color camera that’s positioned magnetically on the pickup’s tailgate, and a hand-held monitor in the cab. As he/she backs up, the driver sees both ball and receiver in the monitor, thus ensuring perfect alignment.

The system, which sells for \$310, is powered by rechargeable batteries and automatically converts to ‘night vision’ in low-light conditions. Being portable, it can be readily transferred to a tractor and implement. For further information, go to www.swifthitch.com.

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Another challenge is loading heavy or cumbersome items into the pickup. Addressing that problem is the **TK Loader**, which consists of a steel deck on tracks in the truck bed that rolls out then tilts down until it rests on the ground, forming a ramp. To load, the object (e.g., hay bale, crate, lawn tractor) is positioned at the foot of the tilted deck and



pulled onto it with a winch; the deck is then raised electrically to the level position, rolled back into the truck bed, and locked in place. Rolling the deck can be done manually or electrically, depending on the model. TK Loaders, with maximum carrying capacities ranging from 1,100 to 2,000 pounds, start at \$2,500. For more information, visit www.tkloader.com. Dan Caliendo of Kansas also wrote in that he has constructed a similar, homemade device from a couple of sections of barn door track and an electric winch.

Getting up into the bed of a pickup can also be challenging. The **Step-Up** is an added step attached to the category-2 hitch of a truck and can be used whether the tailgate is up, down, or removed. With tailgate down, one simply pulls the device’s spring-loaded pins and swings it out to where it locks in place. With tailgate up, the Step-Up swings to either side close to the bumper. To learn more, go to www.tebben.us. ■



*The authors assume no liability in connection with any use of the products discussed and make no warranty (expressed or implied) in that respect. References to products are not intended as endorsements to the exclusion of others that may be similar.

Resources for Success

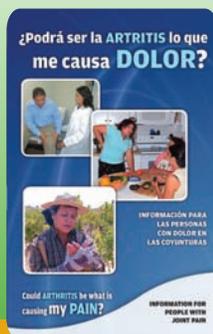
Spanish Fotonovela

A health resource that reads like a comic book? It may sound strange, but the *fotonovela* has become a popular and quite effective means of communicating health information to Latino populations. A cousin of the ‘telenovela’ (soap operas popular on Spanish-language television), *fotonovelas* tell a dramatic story via pictures, with minimal text.

When deciding how to communicate arthritis information to the Latino culture, especially migrant/seasonal farmworkers, the *fotonovela* seemed a logical choice to AgrAbility staff members. The result is *¿Podrá ser la Artritis lo que me causa Dolor? (Could Arthritis Be the Cause of My Pain?)*. The resource was developed in partnerships among the National AgrAbility Project, California AgrAbility, Indiana AgrAbility, Arthritis Foundation-Indiana Chapter, Transition Resources Corporation, and Western Center for Agricultural Health.

The *fotonovela* tells the story of a farmworker family, several members of whom have incurred arthritic conditions through years of work in the fields and dairies. The father, Angelo, is ultimately persuaded to visit a healthcare provider for diagnosis and treatment. Important facts about arthritis are woven into the story, with key points and resources summarized at the end.

For more information, or to order the *fotonovela*, contact Amber Wolfe at the Arthritis Foundation-Indiana Chapter (awolfe@arthritis.org or 800-783-2342.)



AT Assessment Tool

The National AgrAbility Project has developed an assessment tool designed to identify possible injury risks associated with assistive technologies (ATs) used—and often fabricated—by farmers and ranchers with disabilities so that those risks can be eliminated or at least minimized. Titled *Evaluating Assistive Technologies for Secondary Injury Potential*, it’s based on data from on-site case-study research plus input from rehabilitation professionals with AT assessment experience.

The resource’s five sections include: an introduction to the tool, its purpose, and component worksheets; steps in carrying out the assessment process; an explanation (with pictures) of 55 identified potential injury-causing items; an example of a completed assessment done on a specific AT; and a set of copier-ready blank worksheets.

Although it can be used independently, the assessment tool is intended as a follow-up companion to the Breaking New Ground publication, *Conducting Agricultural Worksite Assessments*, which provides a process for identifying workplace barriers and limitations that prevent those with disabilities from completing desired tasks.

Look for a downloadable version of the assessment tool, along with the computer program, available soon on our website (www.agrability.org).



New NAP Website

After a long development process, the new National AgrAbility Project website has been launched with features and resources based on user feedback and requests. Resources are included in multiple categories of importance to AgrAbility, including: Disability and Agriculture, Assistive Technology, Arthritis, Caregivers, Mental/Behavioral Health Issues, Youth, and Worksite and Vocational Issues.

As in the past, the contact information directory for all AgrAbility projects is maintained under the menu item Project Contact. A News section allows for frequent updates to inform about activities, announcements, and the inclusion of AgrAbility in national and local media. Finally, an extensive list of Frequently Asked Questions is maintained, encompassing many years of experience by AgrAbility staff members from around the nation.

The site was designed with accessibility and usability in mind, and is compliant with federal guidelines for users with disabilities. Please take time to visit the new site at www.agrability.org. We value your continuing comments and suggestions for improving the site. ■



Partner Updates

Our AgrAbility partner organizations have been busy during 2010 and have some exciting activities planned for the future. Here are some highlights:

Goodwill Industries International, Inc.



In mid-April, Goodwill hosted a training event in West Lafayette, IN, for AgrAbility that focused on new staff orientation and on worksite assessments. Some 20 staff members and related professionals from as far away as



Oregon and Maine took part in the three-day event. In addition to receiving an overview of AgrAbility and available resources, the participants got hands-on experience in

conducting a worksite assessment at Purdue University's agronomy and animal sciences farms. They then presented their assessment findings to a panel of vocational rehabilitation professionals for review.

On August 23-24, Goodwill's workforce professionals convened in Roanoke, VA, to explore effective strategies for improving employment outcomes in rural communities. Tom Seekins of the University of Montana's Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities shared his expertise on rural disability issues. AgrAbility was a featured part of the discussion, with presentations by Bill Field of the National AgrAbility Project, Bobby Grisso and Kirk Ballin of Virginia AgrAbility, and Ron Jester of Mid-Atlantic AgrAbility.

Goodwill, in conjunction with Oregon State University and an emerging Oregon AgrAbility stakeholders group is planning a two-day professional in-service training on February 24 and 25, 2011. Featuring information on how to conduct effective on-farm AgrAbility assessments, the event is scheduled for the Oregon State University campus in connection with the Oregon Small Farm Convention. Watch for further announcements and save these dates for an excellent training opportunity.

Arthritis Foundation, Indiana Chapter



So far this year, Amber Wolfe, the Foundation's liaison with AgrAbility, has conducted three Arthritis and Agriculture Workshops in partnership with the Vermont and Mid-Atlantic Projects.

The sessions, open to the public, included information on the signs and symptoms of arthritis, arthritis prevention and management, farm modifications, and more.

The Arthritis Foundation/AgrAbility Project newsletter, *Growing Pains*, made its debut in June. Its contents included: agricultural workers and arthritis, current events and workshops, and available resources, such as brochures, booklets, and videos.



Under Amber's leadership, a national conference, *Arthritis, Agriculture, and Rural Life: State of the Art Research, Practices, and Applications* is being planned for May of 2011 in Indianapolis. Professionals from many fields will be encouraged to submit proposals for session topics, will present research findings and intervention strategies regarding arthritis and agriculture, and will network with others involved in rural health.

A new *Rural Arthritis Curriculum* is in the works. Consisting of five lessons, this resource will address such topics as prevention of osteoarthritis in farm youth, pain management, and farm modifications. Among its intended users are AgrAbility or Arthritis Foundation staff members, farm organization leaders, Extension educators, and health care professionals.

New NAP staff member



The National AgrAbility Project recently welcomed Kylie Hendress as its new Engagement Coordinator. Kylie graduated in 2006 from Butler University with a degree in marketing and joined the NAP team in August after working in the seed and chemical industries for the last four years.

Kylie first heard of AgrAbility when her father incurred a serious farm injury in 2006 and became an AgrAbility customer. She saw what the program did for her family, and when the NAP job became available, she knew that she wanted to get involved to get the word out about AgrAbility.

Kylie's specific duties will include marketing, publications and newsletters, coordinating farm shows and events, and working with youth and service organizations.

Wisconsin team receives VR training grant

A consortium of organizations, including Wisconsin AgrAbility and Easter Seals Wisconsin, recently received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, to train vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors on working with agricultural populations.

VR is a major partner with AgrAbility, as it provides significant amounts of funding for assistive technology used by AgrAbility customers. The Wisconsin team is working to increase the capacity of VR counselors to provide knowledgeable, comprehensive rehabilitation and assistive technology services to achieve successful employment outcomes for farmers and farm workers with disabilities.

As part of their efforts, the team is slated to develop a variety of training materials, including an online distance learning course designed for VR professionals, and provide hands-on training in five states.

Arkansas and Maine join AgrAbility

AgrAbility welcomed two new states in the most recent round of grant funding. This will be the first time Arkansas has ever had an AgrAbility Project. Maine had been represented on a previous grant cycle under the Northern New England AgrAbility Project; however, during this cycle, Maine will have its own Project.

If you are interested in finding out more about these projects or would like services, the current contact information for these states is:

ARKANSAS
Jessica Vincent
jvincent@uaex.edu
(501) 671-2108

MAINE
Corrie Washow
corie.washow@maine.edu
(207) 353-5550
www.umaine.edu/agrability

AgrAbility NTW coming soon

The 2011 AgrAbility National Training Workshop is just around the corner. Each year, the workshop travels to a different AgrAbility state, and this year's event is set for Charleston, West Virginia, on October 11-14. Next year, the NTW is heading for Indianapolis on November 7-10.

In addition to a variety of breakout sessions related to disability in agriculture, the Charleston NTW features keynote speaker and musician Billy Altom of APRIL, an "unconferencing" session to tap the expertise of participants on a variety of topics, and a day tour to the Appalachian Farming Research Center and the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine.



AgrAbility Harvest

Breaking New Ground Resource Center
Purdue University
ABE Building
225 South University St.
West Lafayette, IN 47907

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ON THE HORIZON

Consider **Indianapolis** as your destination of choice for two great events in 2011. A first-time national conference - **Arthritis, Agriculture and Rural Life Conference: State of the Art Research, Practices, and Applications** - is planned for May, and the **2011 AgrAbility National Workshop** is slated for November.



Photo provided by the Indianapolis
Convention Visitors Association;
visitIndy.com



October 2010

11-14	AgrAbility National Training Workshop	Charleston, WV	www.agrability.org
19-21	Sunbelt Ag Expo	Moultrie, GA	www.sunbeltexpo.com
21-24	National FFA Convention	Indianapolis, IN	www.ffa.org/convention
31-November 1	APRIL Annual Conference	Overland Park, KS	www.april-rural.org

February 2011

16-19	National Farm Machinery Show	Louisville, KY	www.farmmachineryshow.org
25-26	Mid-South Farm & Gin Show	Memphis, TN	www.southerncottonginners.org

April 2011

14-17	AOTA Annual Conference and Expo	Philadelphia, PA	www.aota.org
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May 2011

TBA	Arthritis, Agriculture and Rural Life Conference: State of the Art Research, Practices, and Applications.	Indianapolis, IN	www.arthritis-ag.org
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November 2011

7-10	2011 AgrAbility National Training Workshop	Indianapolis, IN	www.agrability.org
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