

AgrAbility Harvest

An ingathering of
helpful information
on disability in
agriculture

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Welcome to the inaugural issue of *AgrAbility Harvest*, a newsletter published by the National AgrAbility Project, which is hosted by Purdue University's Breaking New Ground Resource Center.

The purpose of this new semi-annual publication is to highlight the activities and impacts of AgrAbility — a USDA-supported program that provides assistance to farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities.

Through the *AgrAbility Harvest*, we will share success stories, tell you about available resources, announce and/or report on special events, discuss current and emerging assistive technologies, and cover various other topics we think would be of interest to you. Whether you're an agricultural producer, AgrAbility staff member, rehabilitation specialist, agriculture professional, educator, legislator, or just someone with an interest

in the agriculture and disability arena, we hope you'll find something of value in each issue.

For more information about the AgrAbility program, its services, and helpful resources, including an electronic version of this newsletter, visit us at www.agrability.org. Also, on page 7, you'll find a listing of all the current AgrAbility Projects. If you live in state that has a Project, feel free to contact them about the services they provide; if your state does not currently have a Project, contact the National AgrAbility Project at 800-825-4264 or agrability@agrability.org.

We invite your comments and suggestions regarding *AgrAbility Harvest*, including what features you would like to see presented. Also feel free to share with us your experiences as a farmer or rancher with a disability or as a professional working in this arena. We'd love to hear from you. ■

A Closer Look

AgrAbility Welcomes Back Ohio and Texas



It would be hard to imagine the void created in American agriculture if two of its leading producers, Ohio and Texas, were no longer in the picture. In the same way, the absence of AgrAbility Projects in those two states has left a significant gap in AgrAbility's reach for several years. However, we're pleased to report that in 2009 both states were awarded four-year AgrAbility grants. Each program has innovative ideas for service delivery and unique challenges in assisting their customers.

Ohio—Heart of the Heartland

Rich soil and abundant rainfall help make agribusiness Ohio's largest industry, employing one in six of the state's workers. Its 77,000 farms (91% of which are family-owned and operated) place it among the top eight in ten different commodity categories. While you may think of Ohio — like most of its Midwest neighbors — primarily in terms of corn, soybean, and hogs, it also boasts high rankings in the production of chickens, eggs, pumpkins, flowers, and even maple syrup.

The new Ohio AgrAbility team partners Ohio State University Extension with Easter Seals of Ohio. Among the Project's key challenges are (1) getting the word out to the many farmers

who could benefit from its services (which is quite a task, given that the state is the nation's seventh most populous) and (2) ensuring that those with less obvious disabilities, such as arthritis, realize that they are eligible for assistance.

One unique aspect of Ohio is its Amish population, the largest of any state. The AgrAbility Project is endeavoring to make inroads in serving these and other Old Order groups, which can be a challenging task, given their distinctive agricultural and socio-religious practices. The Project is also planning special initiatives focused on peer support and universal design.

THE OHIO AGRABILITY TEAM

Dee Jepsen, *Program Director*
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Kent McGuire, *Education Program Coordinator*
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

John Zeller, *Rural Rehabilitation Coordinator*
EASTER SEALS WORK RESOURCE CENTER

David Dreith, *Vice President of Workforce Solutions*
EASTER SEALS WORK RESOURCE CENTER

Pat Luchkowsky, *Director of Public Affairs*
EASTER SEALS OF OHIO

Ohio





Proposals have already been submitted for 2010 USDA AgrAbility grants. Check back in the next *AgrAbility Harvest* to see if any other new states have joined the AgrAbility family.

Texas—Where Everything's Bigger

When you think of Texas, its sheer size — approximately 170 million acres and 254 counties — probably comes to mind. What may be less obvious is the vast diversity of Texas agriculture. In addition to such iconic commodities as cattle and cotton, the Lone Star state is a leading producer of greenhouse and nursery products, sheep, goats, hay, citrus, and many other types of crops and livestock.

With that vast expanse and divergent agriculture, however, come special challenges for the Texas AgrAbility team, which is composed of Texas AgriLife Extension, Sam Houston State University, and Easter Seals of East Texas. The Project is charged with serving the entire state but with the same budget limits as the Projects in much smaller states. To meet that challenge, Texas

AgrAbility has adopted outside-the-box thinking. Since its handful of staff members can't possibly cover such a vast area, they have set a goal of training others — including Extension professionals, Easter Seal staff members, and vocational agriculture teachers — to identify potential customers, conduct on-site assessments, and the like. The core AgrAbility team would provide the training and quality control.

The Project is also planning a “virtual community” to connect farmers/ranchers and their families with the agriculture- and disability-services communities. This model has the potential of expanding access to local services, provide training to professionals, and improve networking among AgrAbility customers and stakeholders.

THE TEXAS AGRABILITY TEAM

Rick Peterson, *Project Director*
TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Doug Kingman, *Farm Assessment Coordinator*
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Cheryl Allen, *CEO*
EASTER SEALS EAST TEXAS

Cheryl Grenwelge, *Project Coordinator*
TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Marie Reedy, *Occupational Therapist*
EASTER SEALS EAST TEXAS

Texas

Just Passin' Through: Gates That Work While You Stay Put

If you're a farmer or rancher with a mobility impairment, you know what a pain it is (and how painful it can be) to deal with opening and closing pasture or feedlot gates. This seemingly simple task can require you to get in and out of your pickup or tractor (or) climb on and off your horse many times a day. Here are three products that can help alleviate that problem.



The Push 'N' Drive-Over Gate consists of a row of spring-loaded, flexible steel rods that pivot on a frame lying on the ground. The entering vehicle simply pushes down and drives over the row of rods, which then springs back to the upright position once the vehicle has cleared. A person can also enter either by pushing the gate down or by removing one or two rods and stepping through. The Push 'N' Drive-Over Gate comes in 6-, 14-, and 16-foot widths and costs between \$1,000 and \$1,800. For further information, go to www.rementerprisesinc.com.

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The Gap-Zapper Electric Cattle Guard is a 4-foot-wide, flexible, two-layer rubber mat that delivers a shock when an animal touches it, just like an electric fence. However, a vehicle with rubber tires or a person wearing rubber- or vinyl-soled shoes can cross over with no harm. It's available in 6-, 12-, 14-, 16-, and 20-foot lengths and costs between \$515 and \$1,750. For more information, visit www.thegapzapper.com.



The Open-Range Gate Latch allows a horseback rider or ATV operator to open, pass through, and close a gate without dismounting. To operate, one simply lifts the latch handle, gives the gate a push, passes through, then pushes it shut. The handle is high enough that the rider can easily reach it but the livestock can't. Costing about \$60, the Open-Range Gate Latch comes with brackets for mounting on a steel post or 4-inch by 4-inch wooden post. To learn more, go to www.openrangegate.com. ■



Hilda Byrd

“... she made you feel that you were the most important person in the room, no matter how busy she was.”

Rare Gifts from a Rare Person

BY BECKY BRIGHTWELL, AGRABILITY IN GEORGIA

A Tribute to Hilda Byrd, Georgia Farmer and AgrAbility Peer Coordinator

The first time I met Hilda Byrd was on a site visit to Whippoorwill Hollow Organic Farm, which she and husband Andy owned near Covington, Georgia. I had originally planned to go early in the morning and leave in a few short hours. Before I knew it, it was getting dark outside and I was enjoying a delicious home-cooked meal made from the vegetables grown on the Byrds' farm.

Hilda was the type of person that, within five minutes of meeting her, you felt you had known your entire life. She made you feel that you were the most important person in the room, no matter how busy she was. Above all, Hilda had a great optimism about life. She saw something good in everyone and everything. Even the most challenging situations would become an opportunity for an adventure in her eyes.

Over time, Hilda became a Peer Coordinator with the AgrAbility program. Needless to say, the farmers and ranchers we worked with adored her. She made them feel a part of her family, just as she had made me feel the first day I met her. She could put anyone instantly at ease.

While we knew the severity of Hilda's diagnosis, we could not fathom that she would not overcome this as she had so many other things. Up until the time of her passing, she was smiling as always and making plans for the farm.

On the day of her funeral, the church couldn't hold the number of people that came to pay their respects. Some people had only known Hilda a few weeks while others had known her since she was a child. She had touched us all in such a profound personal

way. Soon sadness was replaced with laughter as everyone shared stories about Hilda and her many adventures.

What really hit me that day was the importance of the legacy we leave behind. Hilda changed me forever and will always be a part of my life. She taught me to slow down and really listen to the people around me, to look for beauty and joy everywhere, and to find something in life you are passionate about. Indeed, rare gifts from a rare person. ■





Partner Updates

Every AgrAbility Project is a partnership between a land grant university and at least one nonprofit disability services organization. The National Project represents a partnership between Purdue University's Breaking New Ground Resource Center and several organizations, including Goodwill Industries International and the Arthritis Foundation, Indiana Chapter. In this article, we briefly introduce these two entities and explain their mission and major initiatives relative to AgrAbility.

Goodwill Industries International



Many people think of Goodwill as “the thrift store people.” However, their real mission is to promote gainful employment for people with disabilities and other disadvantages, and their stores are the primary funding source for their employment and training efforts. Currently, there are 160 local, autonomous Goodwill organizations across the U.S. and more than 2300 outlet stores in North America.

AgrAbility is a natural “fit” for Goodwill, which desires to strengthen its commitment to and support of expanded services in rural America and the agricultural community. Two of Goodwill’s major initiatives with the National AgrAbility Project are: (1) to facilitate the development of relationships between Goodwill affiliates and the state AgrAbility Projects, and (2) to engage and support individual Goodwills in building effective statewide coalitions in non-AgrAbility states.

Among the highlights of Goodwill Industries International in 2009 as they relate to AgrAbility are these:

- Its Board of Directors adopted increasing federal allocations to the AgrAbility Program as a key strategy of its Policy and Advocacy agenda.
- AgrAbility was featured in the spring 2009 issue of Goodwill’s *Working* magazine (pictured above), which has a distribution of over 8,000.
- Goodwill organizations in Maine, Oregon, and Arizona assisted statewide AgrAbility stakeholder groups to begin developing Projects for their states.

In early 2010, Goodwill’s AgrAbility Coordinator Eric Olson will be setting up regional training activities for the staffs of AgrAbility Projects, Goodwill affiliates, and other interested parties. Eric can be reached at eric.olson@goodwill.org.

The Arthritis Foundation, Indiana Chapter



The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reports that arthritis is the leading source of disability in the U.S. It affects approximately one-third of all farm operators in the country, reducing their physical strength and ability to perform routine chores. With the average age of farmers continuing to climb (currently at 57 years), arthritis will likely remain an important rural health care issue for many years to come.

Through its involvement with the National AgrAbility Project, the Arthritis Foundation, Indiana Chapter’s goals include: (1) providing education and support to agricultural professionals and their families who have been affected by arthritis, and (2) making arthritis-related resources more readily available in rural communities. To begin achieving these goals, the Chapter and National Project are planning to:

- Conduct annually six training workshops—three in states that have AgrAbility Projects and three in states that do not.
- Produce and disseminate new resources related to arthritis and agriculture.
- Sponsor a national conference on state-of-the-art research and practices concerning arthritis and agriculture.

The Arthritis Foundation, Indiana Chapter’s AgrAbility Coordinator Amber Wolfe recently launched a new “Arthritis and Agriculture” website — www.arthritis-ag.org, as seen below. Amber can be reached at awolfe@arthritis.org.



Current AgrAbility Projects

NATIONAL PROJECT

Breaking New Ground Resource Center

Purdue University
800-825-4264
www.agrability.org
agrability@agrability.org

STATE & REGIONAL PROJECTS

California AgrAbility Project

800-477-6129
calagrability.ucdavis.edu
calagra@ucdavis.edu

Colorado AgrAbility

970-491-5648
www.agrability.caahs.colostate.edu
fetsch@caahs.colostate.edu

Delaware/Maryland AgrAbility Project

302-856-7303
www.de-mdagrability.com
rcjester@udel.edu

AgrAbility in Georgia

877-524-6264
www.agrabilityinga.com
andyc@ihdd.uga.edu

Idaho AgrAbility Project

888-289-3259
www.idahoagrability.org
info@idahoagrability.org

Illinois-AgrAbility Unlimited (Affiliate*)

217-333-5035
www.agrabilityunlimited.org
repetrea@uiuc.edu

Indiana AgrAbility/ Breaking New Ground

800-825-4264
www.breakingnewground.info
bng@ecn.purdue.edu

Iowa (Affiliate*)

515-309-2371
www.eastersealsia.org
tkeninger@eastersealsia.org

Kansas AgrAbility Project

800-526-3648
www.oznet.ksu.edu/agrability
kebert@k-state.edu

Michigan AgrAbility Project

800-956-4106
www.michiganagrability.org
ewaltkel@msu.edu

Minnesota AgrAbility Project

800-866-3125
safety.cfans.umn.edu/map
rasmuo32@umn.edu

Mississippi AgrAbility Project (Affiliate*)

601-736-8251
msucares.com/safety/agrability
emilyk@ext.msstate.edu

Missouri AgrAbility Project

800-995-8503
www.agrability.missouri.edu
agrability@missouri.edu

Nebraska AgrAbility

800-471-6425
agrability.unl.edu
neagrability@ne.easterseals.com

Ohio AgrAbility Project

614-292-0588
mcguire.225@osu.edu

Oklahoma AgrAbility Project

888-885-5588
www.agrability.okstate.edu
ability@okstate.edu

AgrAbility for Pennsylvanians

814-863-7490
agexted.cas.psu.edu/agrab
lmf8@psu.edu

Tennessee/Kentucky AgrAbility Project

866-248-1747
www.tnagrability.org
jwhite@eastersealstn.com

Texas AgrAbility Project

979-845-3727
txagrability.tamu.edu
chgrenwelge@ag.tamu.edu

AgrAbility of Utah

877-225-1860
www.usu.edu/aste/agrability
agrability@usu.edu

Vermont AgrAbility

866-260-5603
farmsafevt.wordpress.com/about
george.cook@uvm.edu

AgrAbility Virginia

800-365-1656 (Inside Virginia)
540-777-7325 (Outside Virginia)
www.agrability.ext.vt.edu
kirk.ballin@va.eastersealsucp.com

West Virginia AgrAbility Project

800-626-4748
www.wvagrability.org
agrability@wvagrability.org

AgrAbility of Wisconsin

608-262-9336
www.bse.wisc.edu/agrability
aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu

Wyoming AgrAbility

866-395-4986
uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/agrability
agrability@uwyo.edu

AgrAbility Harvest

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ABE Building
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West Lafayette, IN 47907

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ON THE HORIZON



Join AgrAbility staff members, customers, agriculture and rehabilitation professionals, and other stakeholders for the **2010 AgrAbility National Training Workshop** (October 11-14). This year's conference is slated for Charleston, West Virginia at the Marriott Town Center.

June

20-23	ASABE Annual International Meeting	Pittsburgh, PA	www.asabemeetings.org
26-30	RESNA Annual Conference	Las Vegas, NV	www.resna.org/conference
26-July 1	National Institute for Farm Safety Annual Conference	Wilmington, NC	www.nifsagsafety.org/events

August

31-September 2	National Farm Progress Show	Boone, IA	www.farmprogressshow.com
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October

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