

AgrAbility Harvest

*An ingathering of
helpful information
on disability in
agriculture*

Spring
2011

Volume 2, Number 1

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2011 is a milestone year for AgrAbility.

Twenty years ago, the first eight AgrAbility "demonstration" projects were launched, having been authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill. In addition to the National AgrAbility Project (NAP), which at that time was a partnership between Purdue's Breaking New Ground Resource Center and Easter Seals, the original AgrAbility Projects included Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, New York, Vermont, Wisconsin, and a regional project made up of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Currently, there are 23 funded projects covering 25 states, plus formerly-funded affiliate projects in several states.

To commemorate AgrAbility's anniversary, the NAP is preparing a 20-year summary of the program's activities and impact, scheduled for release at the Disability in Agriculture and Rural Life Forum, also sponsored by the NAP, next September in Washington, D.C. At that event, the NAP plans to honor some of AgrAbility's chief proponents, most notably Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa who has helped secure Congressional funding for the program throughout its history. Special guests from Congress, USDA, and other agencies are also being invited to the AgrAbility National Training Workshop next November to help celebrate AgrAbility's 20-year history.

This year could also prove pivotal not only in regard to AgrAbility's history but its future as well. The Farm Bill, which is the source of USDA's authorization for AgrAbility, comes up for renewal in 2012, and Congressional discussions have already begun. Congress has initiated sweeping budget cuts, and budget discussions will no doubt continue to intensify during the year. Therefore, 2011 will be an important year to continue raising public awareness about AgrAbility's value. The aforementioned 20-year summary should help with that effort, as well as the new AgrAbility video described on page 5. Consider sending someone the video's YouTube link (www.youtube.com/user/NationalAgrAbility) to ensure that support for AgrAbility remains strong.



A Closer Look

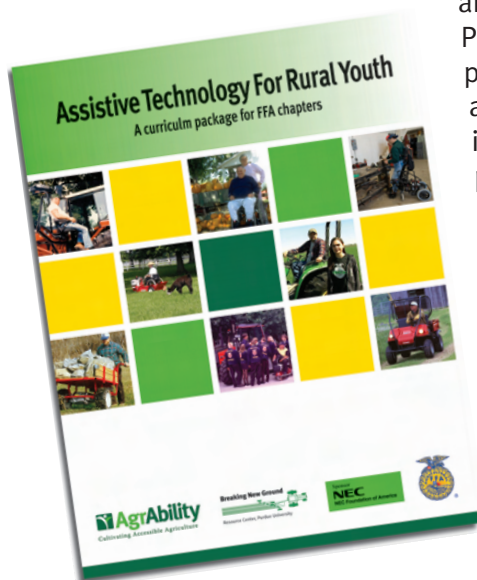
Disability and Blue Corduroy

The FFA motto is simple but challenging: Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve. More than a half million agricultural education students in nearly 7,500 FFA chapters across the U.S. and its territories have accepted the challenge to live out that motto. This article showcases a few examples of how AgrAbility interfaces with FFA, how FFA provides bridges to new levels of learning for rural youth with and without disabilities, and how some chapters are serving people with disabilities in their communities.

Equipping students and teachers

AgrAbility has long been involved with FFA through such initiatives as the *Bridging Horizons* publication, which provides a guide to inclusion of students with disabilities into FFA activities. Recently, to help FFA members learn about disability awareness and assistive technology for people with disabilities, the National AgrAbility Project and Purdue's Breaking New Ground Resource Center, with financial support from NEC Foundation of America, developed and distributed to every FFA chapter in the U.S. the *Assistive Technology for Rural Youth* curriculum. It contains lessons

and corresponding PowerPoint presentations on assistive technology in agriculture, principles of assistive technology, and disability awareness, plus *The Toolbox CD* assistive technology database.



Innovation in the classroom

When the *Assistive Technology for Rural Youth* curriculum was presented at the 2010 National Association of Agricultural Educators Convention, Alice Dubois, a 20-year teaching veteran from Ponchatoula High School in Louisiana attended the session for new ideas on teaching agricultural science students with disabilities; however, she had already implemented a number of innovative ideas of her own.

Approximately 25% of Alice's 200 students/FFA members have some type of disability, ranging from mild learning disabilities to severe disabilities that profoundly affect the student's ability to function intellectually, physically, and/or socially. When students with severe disabilities were introduced into her classroom, Alice and her teaching counterpart struggled to find meaningful learning activities for them. A breakthrough came when a therapy dog was brought to class for a visit. The two teachers quickly realized that animals had the potential to provide educational and therapeutic experiences to all their students.



Ponchatoula Ag Buddies in action

Starting with chickens and dogs, the Ponchatoula FFA menagerie expanded to include rabbits, Nigerian dwarf goats, sheep, and a miniature horse. Students with disabilities were paired with those without (forming Ag Buddies) to work with the animals, and according to Alice, the results have been

“amazing.” For example, previously non-communicative students have opened up through interactions with the animals and have begun talking and even initiating conversations with students and teachers. The FFA students also launched their own enterprise – Special Treats Company – producing dog treats for sale within the community and via the Internet. Southeastern Louisiana University has taken note of Ponchatoula FFA’s success and is conducting research on their methods.

Community outreach

Other FFA chapters around the country have also worked to improve the lives of people with disabilities inside and outside of their schools.

The Indiana AgrAbility Project began the Bridging Horizons FFA Contest in 2000, which challenges FFA chapters and other organizations to undertake projects that help people with disabilities in their communities. Examples include ramps into houses, gardening projects at nursing homes, and modifications of farm equipment. In one instance, a chapter added hand controls and extra steps on a tractor to enable its use by a fellow FFA member with a disability. The contest has been replicated by AgrAbility Projects in other states, such as Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Delaware.

Nellie Bell, Indiana FFA Southern Region Vice President, served as an ambassador to FFA chapters around Indiana to encourage their participation in the contest. She and her father (former AgrAbility customer and current NAP consultant Ed Bell) also provided short video introductions to the *Assistive Technology for Rural Youth* curriculum’s PowerPoint presentations.



Madison Huston with public speaking awards

In Missouri, Madison Huston, president of the Jamesport FFA, heard about AgrAbility through a classroom presentation and decided to make it the topic of her speech in the FFA public speaking contest. Her research led her to visit a farmer with a disability – a Vietnam veteran – in a nearby town. There, she was able to experience first-hand some of the technology that AgrAbility customers use and get a personal perspective on farming with a disability. Her experiences and talent made an impact on the speech contest judges, as she eventually won first place in the Missouri State FFA Division II Public Speaking Contest.

Growing the AgrAbility – FFA relationship

These are but a few of the many ways that FFA is fostering inclusive learning and opening doors for community members with disabilities. To keep AgrAbility in touch with FFA, a member of the National FFA Organization serves on the National AgrAbility Advisory Team.



For more information on disability and rural youth, including the complete *Assistive Technology for Rural Youth* curriculum and links to inclusive 4-H materials, visit www.agrability.org/Resources/youth.

Nellie Bell leads an FFA class discussion

Spring Farm Work a Pain in the Back? Let These Items ‘Give a Lift’

A back impairment or reduced strength can make spring-time farming tasks painful as well as difficult to accomplish. Here are three products that can help ease the pain.



A loader-bucket-mounted **Dual-Tire Changer** reduces time, effort, and the chance of back strain when handling large tractor tires and rims. The changer slips over the edge of the bucket and is secured by a strap. The loader is moved to position the end of the device inside the rim, then is raised to lift and move tire and rim to the mounting position. The rim can be precisely aligned by the changer’s three adjustable features: (1) hydraulic jack to adjust

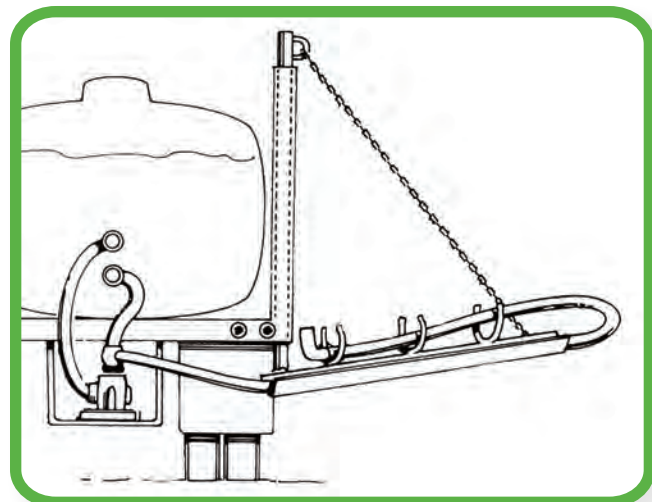
the height, (2) telescoping boom to move tire and rim forward and back, and (3) wheel on the end of the boom to rotate the tire to line up the bolt holes. The device, which costs about \$400, is made by Westendorf Manufacturing Co. (www.loaders.com).

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The **Gravity-Bed Auger** transfers bulk seed and fertilizer, thus eliminating the manual lifting of heavy bags. Designed to mount on an existing gravity-bed wagon or truck, such units are built by a number of manufacturers, including Unverferth (www.unverferth.com), Sudenga (www.sudenga.com), and Remlinger (www.remlingermfg.com), and cost about \$1,800. Commercial carts and wagons for handling bulk agricultural materials are also available from these and other farm equipment makers.

To help handle heavy hoses filled with liquid fertilizer or chemical spray solutions, an Illinois farmer built a **Swinging-Arm Hose Derrick**. The device consists of a hinged angle iron mounted to his supply truck and a support chain that runs from the far end of the angle iron to the top of his truck bed. The angle iron, which cradles the hose, swings out to fill the applicator tanks and then back against the truck during transport. This farmer’s idea was shared in *Successful Farming* magazine. ■



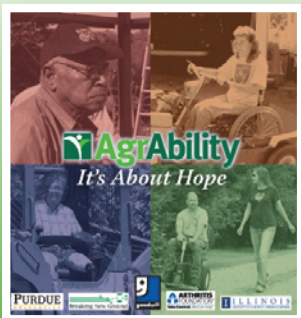
Resources for Success

New AgrAbility video completed

The National AgrAbility Project, in cooperation with several state and regional AgrAbility Projects, recently produced a 21-minute promotional video. Titled “AgrAbility: It’s About Hope,” it is available on YouTube at www.youtube.com/user/NationalAgrAbility and as a DVD from the NAP.

The video focuses on the personal stories of AgrAbility customers John Enns (Oklahoma), Brenda Besse (Illinois), Philip Jones (Maryland), and Peggy Milliman (Maryland). Each describes the circumstances that led them to AgrAbility, how the Program helped them, and the ways that they have gone on to prosper and provide hope to others. In addition to the interviews, the video provides essential information about how AgrAbility operates and how to access AgrAbility services.

After distributing quantities of the DVD to every AgrAbility Project, the NAP plans to send a copy to each Extension office and FFA chapter in the U.S. A six-minute version is also planned for use during short presentations and at trade show exhibits.



“Like” AgrAbility on Facebook

Friends of the popular social networking site Facebook should search “National AgrAbility” and “like” our page to stay up-to-date on coming events, see news articles about AgrAbility activities around the country, and check out other videos, photos, and web pages related to agriculture and disability. Some recent posts include the Oklahoma AgrAbility Day at their state capital, internships for veterans with disabilities on organic farms, and the inspiring story of a Kentucky youth who is blind and has excelled in showing cattle.



Like us on Facebook

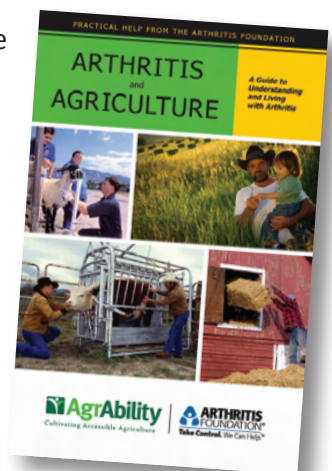
AgrAbility featured in academic journal

The most recent issue of the *Journal of Agromedicine* featured three articles related to AgrAbility. NAP staff members Gail Deboy, Paul Jones, and Bill Field teamed with Purdue nursing professor Roberta Schweitzer to author “AgrAbility Mental/Behavioral Health for Farm/Ranch Families with Disabilities,” while Kentucky AgrAbility’s John Hancock was an author on “Underserved Farmers With Disabilities: Designing an AgrAbility Program to Address Health Disparities.” Journal editor Steven Kirkhorn also provided an introductory article for the issue titled “AgrAbility Fills Important Niche in Safety, Health.”

The *Journal of Agromedicine* is available at www.informaworld.com.

Arthritis publications updated

The NAP, in cooperation with the Arthritis Foundation-Indiana Chapter, recently updated and reprinted three of its popular arthritis publications for agricultural workers. *Arthritis and Agriculture* is one of the most widely circulated AgrAbility resources with more than 50,000 copies already distributed. Its counterpart for Old Order/Amish populations, *Plain Facts about Arthritis*, has also been well-received. The AgrAbility/Arthritis Foundation publication for Spanish-speaking agricultural workers, the fotonovela *¿Podrá ser la Artritis lo que me causa Dolor?* (Could Arthritis be what is Causing My Pain?), exhausted its initial printing within a few months of release and has also been reprinted. For individual copies or bulk quantities of these publications, visit www.arthritis-ag.org or contact Amber Wolfe at awolfe@arthritis.org.





Partner Updates

In addition to our National AgrAbility grant's funded partners — Goodwill Industries International, Arthritis Foundation-Indiana Chapter, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign — the NAP works with several “unfunded collaborating organizations” to help meet the mutual missions of all parties involved. In this issue, we highlight two such organizations, RESNA and APRIL.

RESNA

RESNA, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, was founded in 1979 with the mission of promoting the transfer of science, engineering, and technology to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. This professional society is composed of rehabilitation engineers, rehabilitation engineering technologists (RETs), assistive technology professionals (ATPs), seating and mobility specialist (SMSs), and others who are invested in improving the health and wellbeing of people with disabilities through the application of assistive technology. RESNA also works cooperatively to develop voluntary national standards for the manufacture of assistive technology.

RESNA's annual conference, scheduled this year for Toronto, Canada from June 5-8, is one of the premier assistive technology events in the world. AgrAbility is a regular presenter at these events, and in fact, the first two AgrAbility National Training Workshops (NTWs) were held in conjunction with the RESNA conference. Specialized sessions at the conference can result in certification as an ATP, which is a significant credential for AgrAbility staff members, as they are frequently called upon to make recommendations on assistive technology for their customers.

RESNA is also a regular participant in the AgrAbility NTW, providing exhibits and presentations. Nell Bailey, Executive Director of RESNA, is a member of the National AgrAbility Advisory Team, and has been instrumental in significant networking activities, including the introduction of AgrAbility to White House staff members.

For more information about RESNA, visit www.resna.org.



APRIL

APRIL is the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living, a grassroots national organization made up of over 250 centers for independent living (CILs) and other organizations concerned with the independent living issues of people with disabilities in rural America. Every CIL is required to fulfill the core services of information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling, and individual/systems advocacy.

Through their network of CILs, APRIL is able to refer customers who would benefit from AgrAbility's services, while AgrAbility is able to refer clients to APRIL for disability services that CILs can best address. Some state AgrAbility Projects also have APRIL-member CILs as subcontractors on their grants.

APRIL's executive director, Billy Altom, is a member of the National AgrAbility Advisory Team and was the keynote speaker at last year's AgrAbility NTW. In addition, the NAP recently sent packets of AgrAbility resources to all the APRIL CILs and made a presentation at the 2011 APRIL Annual Conference in Kansas City. Next year's APRIL conference is slated for Anchorage, Alaska on October 15-17, and AgrAbility again plans to participate.

For more information about APRIL, visit www.april-rural.org.

McGregor wins APRIL award

Cory McGregor, an AgrAbility staff member and Independent Living Program Manager of Wyoming Services for Independent Living (WSIL), recently received the annual Linda Gonzales Award from APRIL, the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living. This award is given to an outstanding young person who has made significant contributions to the ability of people with disabilities to live independent lives. In addition to his work with AgrAbility and WSIL, Cory is a co-founder of Wyoming Disabled Hunters.

Linda Gonzales, a pioneer in the independent living movement and a long-time executive director of APRIL, was on-hand to present the award to Cory.



Photo courtesy of APRIL

AgrAbility webinar series successful

Approximately 115 individuals participated in the recent AgrAbility webinar *Emergency Preparedness for Farmers, Ranchers and other Rural Residents with Disabilities*, a record attendance for this series of online educational events. Because of the overwhelming response to this session, the NAP is considering additional activities related to this topic area.

Archives of all the past AgrAbility webinars and announcements of future ones are posted at www.agrability.org/online-training.

Arthritis and agriculture conference coming

Registration is now open for the Arthritis, Agriculture, and Rural Life Conference to be held at the Purdue University Beck Center in West Lafayette, IN May 11-13. It is intended for professionals from rural areas to better enable them to help clients with arthritis. AgrAbility staff members are invited to attend and bring participants from their areas. The conference will include a day of onsite farm sessions for hands-on applications and experiences. Dr. Steven Kirkhorn from the Marshfield Clinic in Wisconsin will be the keynote speaker. A list of confirmed speakers and topics, hotel accommodations, travel information, and a link to the registration site is available online at www.arthritis-ag.org. For more information, contact Amber Wolfe at awolfe@arthritis.org.



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Northwest AgrAbility Workshop trains professionals

On February 24-25, 23 people from 7 states met in Corvallis, Oregon for the Northwest AgrAbility Workshop. Sponsored by the NAP, Goodwill Industries, and Oregon State University, the event featured presentations by AgrAbility staff members and other experts on disability in agriculture. Among the topics covered were the background and purpose of AgrAbility, using NAP tools and resources, finding clients, and working with state vocational rehabilitation services. Special attention was given to conducting on-farm assessments, then preparing and delivering the resulting assessment report to potential funding partners for farmers/ranchers with a disability.

AgrAbility Harvest

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

The National AgrAbility Project is supported by AgrAbility Project, USDA/NIFA Special Project 2008-41590-04796

ON THE HORIZON

Join us in **Indianapolis** on November 7-10 as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of AgrAbility at the **2011 AgrAbility National Training Workshop**. Special guests from Congress and USDA will be invited to commemorate 20 years of AgrAbility. A variety of pre-conference sessions, ag-related tours, and post-conference tourism opportunities will be offered.



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

May 11-13	Arthritis, Agriculture, and Rural Life Conference	West Lafayette, IN	www.arthritis-ag.org
June 2-4	Amputee Coalition National Conference	Kansas City, MO	www.amputee-coalition.org/conference
June 5-8	RESNA Annual Conference	Toronto, Canada	www.resna.org
June 26-30	2011 National Symposium on Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing Health & Safety	Boise, ID	www.nifsagsafety.org/events
August 7-10	ASABE Annual International Meeting	Louisville, KY	www.asabemeetings.org
August 30-September 1	Farm Progress Show	Decatur, IL	www.farmprogressshow.com
October 4-8	World Dairy Expo	Madison, WI	www.world-dairy-expo.com
October 15-17	APRIL Annual Conference	Anchorage, AK	www.april-rural.org
October 18-20	Sunbelt Ag Expo	Moultrie, GA	www.sunbeltexpo.com
October 19-22	National FFA Convention	Indianapolis, IN	www.ffa.org/convention
November 7-10	AgrAbility National Training Workshop	Indianapolis, IN	www.agrability.org