

# AgrAbility e·Note

July 2020

*A monthly update for AgrAbility projects and friends of AgrAbility*

## National AgrAbility Project News

Join the **AgrAbility All-Staff Meeting** July 29 at 3:00 p.m. ET. Current topics include an update from NIFA, initial results from the SRAP COVID-19 survey by Brian French, and an introduction to Tatanka Ki Owetu, the Renewal Pine Ridge AgrAbility Project, South Dakota. Look for details coming soon.

Virtual New Staff Training is available at [www.agrability.org/extranet/staff-resources](http://www.agrability.org/extranet/staff-resources). The most recent additions are:

- "USDA/NIFA Welcome and Program Overview" from Lelan Dixon, USDA/NIFA
- "Worksite Assessment Tips and Ideas" from Steve Swain, National AgrAbility Project

The National AgrAbility Project through Goodwill of the Finger Lakes is still moving ahead with the NTW planning.



- The AgrAbility National Training Workshop is scheduled to take place in Madison, WI, November 30 - December 3, 2020. Staff are currently planning the same schedule as was planned in March, just transferred to the new dates.
- [Davon Goodwin](#), a farmer, a veteran, and an AgrAbility client from NC, is still planning on being the keynote speaker. Please note that this year's keynote address, banquet dinner, and live auction will be on Tuesday night, rather than Wednesday night.
- Some exhibitors are not able to come to the rescheduled NTW, so if anyone knows of someone that might want to exhibit or anyone that might want to be a sponsor, please feel free to direct them to contact Tess or JoBeth.
- As new information becomes available, emails will be sent out and updates will be made to the [NTW website](#).
- Contact JoBeth or Tess anytime at: - JoBeth Rath - [jbrath@goodwillfingerlakes.org](mailto:jbrath@goodwillfingerlakes.org) 585.402.2059 and Tess McKeel - [tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org](mailto:tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org) - 585.447.9015

Richard Brzozowski is leading a working group to catalog existing AgrAbility fact sheets and develop new ones. He requests that each SRAP (and the NAP) enter the fact sheets and publications from its program at <https://forms.gle/5YvEK1oVDZRYULAB9> by Friday, July 31. Contact Richard at [richard.brzozowski@maine.edu](mailto:richard.brzozowski@maine.edu) for questions.



The NAP had a record attendance of approximately 250 for the LIFE Project webinar "Roots of the Soil: Land Succession Issues among African American Farm Families" on July 8. The webinar and related materials are archived at [www.agrability.org/online-training/archived/webinar-series](http://www.agrability.org/online-training/archived/webinar-series). Another farm succession webinar is planned for August 26.

AgrAbility continues to receive calls from veterans requesting information about beginning farming, including funding options. If they are from SRAP states, they are referred to the state AgrAbility staff.

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## Toolbox Spotlight



The **BackSaver 3 Straight Auger Mover** is designed to enable one person to transport a straight auger (or conveyor) unit to any desired destination by walking next to it and maneuvering the Backsaver's motorized wheel jack. The three-wheeled, 12-volt-battery-powered, remote-controlled BackSaver 3 also serves as a swing hopper mover and a lifter so that the hopper can be transported with the straight auger and maneuvered into position.

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## State and Regional AgrAbility Project News

### Alaska

In the Land of the Midnight Sun, time is passing quickly with the long days. While Alaska AgrAbility staff are all attempting to navigate during this time of COVID-19, the sun continues to shine currently for close to 18 hours a day. [More](#)

With COVID-19 disrupting program delivery, virtual engagements continue where they makes sense. Assistive Technology of Alaska delivered an overview of all of its programs, including the partnership with AgrAbility, at the Full Lives Conference... [More](#)

In June, an accessible demonstration gardening area was installed in Bethel, Alaska, for marketing and to be used for programming and outreach. [More](#)

The Alaska CES Anchorage office has moved. The Anchorage office where DeShana York is housed relocated July 7-10 and is sharing space with another university department.

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### California

California AgrAbility continues to participate in the Mexican Consulate's Health Window Provider Meetings. [More](#)

California AgrAbility joined the AgriSafe webinar "Respiratory Fit Testing in Agricultural Communities." There has been an uptake in AgrAbility farmers and farmworkers asking about respiratory exposures and protections due to COVID-19. [More](#)



California AgrAbility staff joined part one of three of the Western Growers COVID-19 Webinar Series. The webinar featured Heather Riden from the UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety Manager. [More](#)

## Colorado

The Colorado AgrAbility Project struggled through changing times as staff attempted to re-adjust their focus. As a project whose base service is on-site assessments, they reached out a bit and began more extensive use of technology. [More](#)

Colorado AgrAbility is most pleased to announce that the project was permitted to go on the road once again. [More](#)

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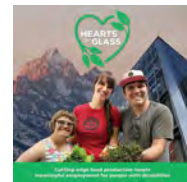
## Georgia



Georgia's Assistive  
Technology Act Program

On June 15, Georgia AgrAbility staff met with Georgia Tools for Life, which is the state AT project. Staff discussed various assistive technologies with them that can benefit a farmer with dyslexia. [More](#)

Staff participated on June 29 in a working group at the University of Georgia to plan for a statewide virtual viewing of the film "Hearts of Glass." In addition to the virtual viewing, there will be a live virtual question and answer session with the film director and two Vertical Harvest employees. [More](#)



On June 23, Georgia AgrAbility hosted a workshop featuring Dr. Therese Willkomm called "Creating Low Cost AT Solutions for Lower Extremities." Dr. Willkomm always has new and innovative items to show the participants!

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## Illinois

Farm Corps, a partnership of Illinois organizations (including IL AgrAbility) and agricultural entities, continues working to address the labor gap caused by COVID-19. [More](#)

Illinois AgrAbility has published a new ADA-compatible website that provides a more user-friendly experience and easy access to resources for clients and potential clients. Illinois AgrAbility is also collaborating with other state programs in researching potential client management systems to use in the future.

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## Indiana

June continued Purdue Extension ag & natural resources Covid-19 updates. [More](#)

Client phone calls, VR client vendor quote updates, and the first VR farm accessibility modification assessment since the shutdown in early March were accomplished.

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## Kansas

Kansas AgrAbility staff have been busy shooting video and producing voice-overs for the upcoming NAP Virtual State Fair.

KAP AT ag specialists are gearing up to resume site visits. KAP management and staff will decide if areas are relatively safe to visit based on the Johns Hopkins University trend-data by county.

KAP and their partners have been collaborating with the AAAs across the state and the Aging and Disability Resource Center to address the needs of seniors with disabilities who

are impacted by Covid19, increased isolation, and access to services.

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## Maine

On June 16, Maine AgrAbility presented the webinar "The Essentials of Accessibility: School and Community Gardens." This presentation discussed planning for school and community gardens for all users including those of all ages and abilities. [More](#)

ME AgrAbility has updated its website by adding a video page. This has links to their videos organized by: [More](#)

Staff have completed the poster [Yoga Stretches for Farmers](#). This 11"x17" color poster is designed to be hung in barns and farm workspaces to remind people to take care of their bodies.

Boots-2-Bushels practical work experience is continuing this summer. Read about it here: "[Boots-2-Bushels Pivots After Start of Pandemic](#)". The program was also featured in the [Bangor Daily News](#) and on [YouTube](#) video.

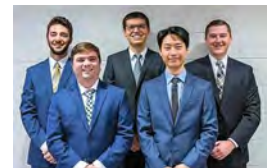
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## Michigan



Problem Solved! MSU Design Day assists another Michigan AgrAbility client and family! The MSU College of Engineering celebrates the achievements of its students by hosting Design Day at the end of each semester, where student teams exhibit their design projects and compete for awards. [More](#)

Problem Solved! Another MSU Design Day project was highlighted on the Michigan AgrAbility Facebook page. In Fall 2019, the design team of Zach Kraut, Danny McGrail, Patrick Floyd, Will Hahm and August Butzke, advised by Ned, developed a low-cost solution for Lou Visser to assist in raising his large overhead door. [More](#)



Greg Gieske is blind and has made many of his own accommodations to allow him to continue to farm. Michigan AgrAbility has also provided assistive technology to enable him to farm with less pain - specifically in the area of weed control for his plants. [More](#)

With summer's heat comes the chance of overheating! There is a way to cool off (besides not working...LOL). Consider the type of clothing worn... [More](#)

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## Missouri

Social media update from January - June 2020 (including statistics from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, plus photos for AgrAbility publications, and a Mental Health Awareness Month toolkit: [More](#)



Monday, June 22, Missouri AgrAbility and its partners co-hosted three "Let Your Voices Be Heard Table Talks" and met with AgrAbility Ambassadors via ZOOM. [More](#)

Missouri AgrAbility continues to see an increase in new clients requesting information, services, and direct onsite farmstead assessments. Three Missouri AgrAbility and one VR onsite farmstead assessment were facilitated face-to-face and virtually during the month of June.

The Brain Injury Association of Missouri (BIA-MO) featured the AgrAbility/LIFE Project

"Roots of the Soil: Land Succession Issues among African American Farm Families" webinar on its website and social media posts.

The BIA-MO Year 2 Activity Report for the Missouri AgrAbility Project (MAP) highlighted the continued success of the Brain Injury Fact of the Day media campaign. [More](#)

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## Nebraska

Nebraska AgrAbility client Kyle Lammers has started his own beef-to-table business, [KL Beef](#). Kyle is doing a fundraiser for both Nebraska AgrAbility and P.H.A.R.M. Dog USA. [More](#)



Staff specialists have received personal protective equipment through the Visiting Nurses Association/Easterseals Nebraska, as they prepare to go back out on farm visits in these next few weeks. [More](#)

Nebraska's largest (and one of the nation's largest) annual farm and ranch expos of the year, Husker Harvest Days, is canceled for September 2020.

They are hoping to create a virtual event instead, and the Nebraska AgrAbility team plans to collaborate with them for this.

A staff member trained in the Michigan State University "[Communicating with Farmers under Stress](#)" curriculum offered the first webinar (rather than a live workshop) on June 2, and another will be offered July 15, then potentially monthly going forward. [More](#)

Staff have been working to come up with ideas for the National AgrAbility Virtual State Fair!

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## New Mexico

New Mexico AgrAbility occupational therapy interns are making a big splash in the project. Derek Montoya, Shelby Jones, Sandia Wood, and Sandra Chapman recently received training in tractor safety issues, with machinery courtesy of New Mexico Tractor Supply-John Deere in Belen, New Mexico. [More](#)



## North Carolina

During the time of COVID-19, NC AgrAbility Partnership has been working in providing resources to farmers through the NCA&T Cooperative Extension programs, NC AgrAbility website, and the NC AgrAbility Facebook page.

NC AgrAbility Partnership holds monthly case management meetings with partners and collaborators discussing the progress of clients and working on moving to virtual farm visits and assessments.

NC AgrAbility Partnership is working on developing a curriculum to train NC Extension agents, starting with the next NC A&T State University faculty and staff meeting in August, and continuing with a series of webinars.

NC AgrAbility continues strengthening the group of collaborators that serve farmers with disabilities across the state.

NC AgrAbility clients have been acquiring recommended assistive technology through the AgVentures grant and the NC AgrAbility cost-share program.

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## Ohio

To sustain and grow collaboration between Ohio AgrAbility (OAP) and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD - the state vocational rehabilitation agency), Ohio AgrAbility staff met with several OOD supervisors earlier in the summer to review policies and procedures, vocational assessments, and future training opportunities for OOD and OAP. [More](#)



Ohio AgrAbility collaboration with OOD, and how it benefits Ohio farmers, was a popular topic on Ohio AgrAbility's Facebook page in late June. Rachel Jarman, rural rehabilitation coordinator for OAP, posted pictures and a short caption: [More](#)

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## Pennsylvania

Abbie Spackman worked with NAP to record a session on top tips for new AgrAbility staff members as part of the resources available on the [NAP website's extranet](#). All new staff are encouraged to view the recording and are welcome to contact Abbie ([aes5450@psu.edu](mailto:aes5450@psu.edu)) with any questions!



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## Tennessee

TNAP participated in the Abilities Expo Virtual Experience and learned about new resources to boost independence, received advice from community experts, learned adaptive activities in the virtual events arena, and learned about how to finance big-ticket medical equipment.

TN AgrAbility partner program TN New Farmer Academy introduced [Reggie Marshall, farmer and registered nurse](#). Reggie was in the first cohort of the Tennessee New Farmer Academy and is helping grow food for children's mental health.

TNAP participated in the Online Animal Handling Series webinars on June 3. The videos shown during the sessions can be viewed on the [UTHorse YouTube channel](#) to learn safe handling.



Meet [Mr. Gutter Gardner](#) (behind the scenes), while he shows you his garden from day one. Mr. Gutter Gardner has a speech impediment and is camera shy. He lets his daughter do all his video talking for him. [More](#)

A friendly reminder: the application deadline for 2021 Progressive Agriculture Safety Days is July 15. Host one in your town and promote AgrAbility! To apply to host an event in your community, visit the website [www.progressiveag.org](http://www.progressiveag.org) and click on either the "Apply Now" button or the "Get Involved" tab. [More](#)

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## Texas

Texas AgrAbility and BattleGround to Breaking Ground hosted a virtual agriculture business workshop series June 23 - July 7, 2020. All webinars were recorded and will be posted as part of a virtual workshop module.

BattleGround to Breaking Ground Program applications closed July 13 for the 8th cohort of the program. Applications will be scored and 15 veterans will be chosen to represent the

8th cohort of the program. The program consists of 16 weeks of agriculture business planning education, 100 hours of hands-on mentorship, and production agriculture courses.

Texas AgrAbility and BattleGround to Breaking Ground met with the project advisory committee to garner direction for future programs going virtually and to share resources for veterans and farmers and ranchers with disabilities.

Texas AgrAbility staff hosted a virtual training for migrant and seasonal farmworker personnel with the Texas Workforce Commission. Topics covered included services provided by Texas AgrAbility, resources for farmers and ranchers with disabilities, and common assistive technologies on the farm or ranch.

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## Utah

Central Utah Resource Facilitator Connor Dyreng was recently able to assist a disabled farmer with a hay problem. The farmer bales hay in small bales and needed help moving and stacking the bales from the field. [More](#)

Michael Porter, the southern Utah resource facilitator, has shared his knowledge of raising rabbits with several clients who are looking for alternatives to raising cattle. [More](#)

Unfortunately, Utah has seen a recent spike in cases of COVID- 19, and outreach events and client visits continue to be limited.

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## Virginia

Dr. Alex Leonessa and Dr. Divya Srinivasan, program co-directors, have been working with the Partnership for Innovation (PFI) Project to provide assistive technologies to farmers with disabilities. This effort is divided over three different prongs: knee bracing, back support, and a power glove to help with grip. [More](#)

The new AgrAbility Virginia brochure and website have been published. Please visit [www.agrabilityvirginia.org](http://www.agrabilityvirginia.org) to see more and to download the PDF of the brochure.

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## Washington

The Washington State AgrAbility Project (WSAP) staff is working on the home assessment forms and protocol for potential clients.

WSAP will be participating in the AgrAbility Virtual State Fair and is brainstorming ideas for content.

WSAP staff continues to work on building their lending library based around specific injury sectors and will have the additions on their website.

WSAP staff is working with the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop their relationship and outreach to the VA's five incubator farms. The Department of Veterans Affairs is promoting WSAP's future webinar and staff will be working with them on a veteran-specific webinar in the future.

WSAP staff have been attending several webinars hosted by other states as well as accessing National AgrAbility links for new staff training.

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## Wisconsin

Wisconsin staff is looking to hold more virtual meetings in the future. One on farm stress will be scheduled for late July. Interested persons can find the other recent webinar with a guest speaker from WI FSA on the [AgrAbility of Wisconsin website](#).

## International AgrAbility Network News

### AgrAbility for Africa



Farming communities in Africa, like many in different parts of the world, are disadvantaged when it comes to information and mental health services access. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need to support mental health information access for these rural farming communities, [More](#)

AchieveKids - a non-profit in California with expertise in complex and severe developmental, emotional, and behavioral challenges - and the staff of AgrAbility for Africa held a meeting to discuss mental developmental disabilities, stress, anxiety, and depression faced by children. [More](#)

The staff continue to attend multiple webinars related to Covid-19 and to mental health for children and farmers to draw on a wide variety of opinions, expertise, and resources geared toward minimizing lasting impact on infants and to ensure that children not only survive, but thrive in this time as do children in other parts of the world.

Staff have been developing practical tips and solutions by working with partners in Uganda to promote farmer safety and health for rural farming communities. AgrAbility for Africa has put together an instructional manual on "how to make your own masks," [More](#)



## StaffChanges and Recognition

### North Carolina

Please join NC AgrAbility Partnership in wishing all the best to Dr. Crystal Kyle who has served as the NC AgrAbility Partnership director and the NC A&T State University Agromedicine campus coordinator for the last almost two years. Dr. Kyle started a new position as a biological scientist with the United States Department of Agriculture - National Institute of Food and Agriculture in Kansas City. [More](#)

Our new NC AgrAbility Partnership director is Beatriz Rodriguez who has been helping to improve the wellbeing of the North Carolina farmers, ranchers, and farmworkers with disabilities since 2016. Beatriz earned an MS in agricultural and environmental systems with concentration in agribusiness and food industry management at North Carolina A&T State University, and a BS in agronomy engineering from the National University of Colombia. [More](#)



## Texas

**Goodbyes:** Dr. Rick Peterson, project director for Texas AgrAbility, is heading to Kansas as the new associate director of Extension programs. As project director for Texas AgrAbility since 2009, Peterson brought the AgrAbility program back to Texas and has secured funding for the project for the past 11 years. Dr. Peterson will be greatly missed as part of the Texas AgrAbility team. Congratulations on your new position with Kansas State Research and Extension!

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### AgrAbility in the News

Click titles below for news stories featuring AgrAbility projects .

- [Work's Untapped Resource](#) (Colorado AgrAbility)
  - [How a program that teaches veterans to farm pivoted during the pandemic](#) (Maine AgrAbility)
  - [Virtual Agriculture Business Workshop series for military veterans, others](#) (Texas AgrAbility)
  - [FFA students learn about farming with a disability](#) (AgrAbility for Pennsylvanians)
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### Other News

Click titles below for other news of interest to AgrAbility staff members.

- [Tuskegee one of three HBCU land-grants awarded \\$1.6M USDA Centers of Excellence grant](#)
  - [Rural America is more vulnerable to COVID-19 than cities](#)
  - [Masks can make communicating tricky. Here are ways to make it easier.](#)
  - [Farm groups launch free stress management course](#)
  - [Rising milk sales bust 'death of dairy' myth](#)
  - [Farm Aid supports farmers impacted by COVID-19](#)
  - [USDA dairy safety-net program signup to begin Oct. 12](#)
  - [Purdue Experts on COVID-19: Purdue professor provides tips for families with children who have learning disabilities](#)
  - [Americans support COVID-19 aid to farmers](#)
  - [Heroes to Hives](#)
  - [Practical Tips for Farm Resiliency – Who Does What on the Farm?](#)
  - [Organic fresh produce sales continue double digit growth](#)
  - [41 fire departments to receive grain rescue tubes](#)
  - [GPS isn't just for road trips anymore \(can improve small farm efficiency\)](#)
  - [Animal Tales: Two service dogs from Maine in national spotlight](#)
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### Upcoming Events

[Click here for professional development events related to AgrAbility.](#)

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Problems? Contact Chuck Baldwin, National AgrAbility Project, [baldwi19@purdue.edu](mailto:baldwi19@purdue.edu)  
[Unsubscribe from the e-Note](#)



July 2020

## Alaska

In the Land of the Midnight Sun, time is passing quickly with the long days. While Alaska AgrAbility staff are all attempting to navigate during this time of COVID-19, the sun continues to shine currently for close to 18 hours a day. This pushes farmers, ranchers, and the commercial fishing fleets to work long hours and make the most of the compressed Summer months.

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With COVID-19 disrupting program delivery, virtual engagements continue where it makes sense. Assistive Technologies of Alaska delivered an overview of all of their programs, including the partnership with AgrAbility, at the Full Lives Conference sponsored by the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development in June. The conference was for direct service professionals and care coordinators.

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In June, an accessible demonstration gardening area was installed in Bethel, Alaska, for marketing and to be used for programming and outreach. Alaska CES faculty member Leif Albertson built and installed the materials for the project. Thanks to Leif for assisting the AgrAbility project!

Submitted by DeShana York

July 2020

## California

California AgrAbility continues to participate in the Mexican Consulate's Health Window Provider Meetings. These meetings have served for coordination of services and collaboration between colleagues working remotely with limited opportunities to reach the populations they serve directly. The Health Window is now collaborating with a mobile clinic to provide COVID-19 tests onsite for all community members interested in getting a test.

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California AgrAbility joined the AgriSafe webinar "Respiratory Fit Testing in Agricultural Communities." There has been an uptake in AgrAbility farmers and farmworkers asking about respiratory exposures and protections due to COVID-19. The purpose of fit testing is to ensure the respirator forms an adequate seal with the user's face to provide the intended protection. Fit testing can be done at the worksite with appropriate equipment.



Workers do not need to be fit-tested if they are wearing a respirator (including some N95) on a voluntary basis. Folks being tested shall conduct a user seal check; however, a test cannot be conducted if there is any hair growth between the skin and the facepiece sealing surface. It is also important to make sure the user can see around corners and is able to go up and down steps safely with the respirator on. Check out this [visual guide to wearing a respirator correctly](#).

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California AgrAbility staff joined part one of three of the Western Growers COVID-19 Webinar Series. The webinar featured Heather Riden from the UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety Manager. Resources shared were checklists from the Centers for Disease Control and NIOSH Ag Health Centers for creating a COVID-19 assessment and control plans. Western Growers member Ryan Talley from Talley Farms shared stories about implementing COVID-19 protocols. At Talley Farms, located in the Central Coast, Ryan has been boots-on-the-ground to provide information to workers. He described the experience as a learning experience in which tailgate meetings have been the key to disseminating information at the field level.

Submitted by Sara Wat

**July 2020**

## **Colorado**

The Colorado AgrAbility Project struggled through changing times as staff attempted to re-adjust their focus. As a project whose base service is on-site assessments, they reached out a bit and began more extensive use of technology. Staff have conducted Zoom meetings, Google meetings, and Microsoft Team meetings. These have worked out generally OK. However, staff did experience IT issues with poor bandwidth and such impediments.

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Colorado AgrAbility is most pleased to announce that the project was permitted to go on the road once again. New procedures were put in place to assure both staff and client safety. Having stocked the work vehicle with COVID19-responsive PPE, staff made their first few site visits in early June.

Submitted by Jim Craig



July 2020

## Georgia



On June 15, Georgia AgrAbility staff met with Georgia Tools for Life, which is the state AT project. Staff discussed various assistive technologies with them that can benefit a farmer with dyslexia. Multiple items were discussed and they had several to loan that the farmer can try out before purchasing. One of items, a C-Pen Reader, seems really promising for the farmer. There are also a multitude of ways to customize Apple products for someone with dyslexia. Studies suggest that dyslexia may be more prevalent in the farming population than the general

population.

Staff participated on June 29 in a working group at the University of Georgia to plan for a statewide virtual viewing of the film "Hearts of Glass." In addition to the virtual viewing, there will be a live virtual question and answer session with the film director and two Vertical Harvest employees. Staff was excited to speak directly with the filmmaker on the 29th in preparation for the showing.



Submitted by Georgia AgrAbility Project

July 2020

## Illinois

Farm Corps, a partnership of Illinois organizations (including IL AgrAbility) and agricultural entities, is working to address the labor gap caused by COVID-19. The program pairs furloughed or laid off veterans with producers across the state of IL who have an immediate need for on-the-farm labor. Eight farms throughout IL have submitted job openings so far. Additional information can be found by [clicking here](#).

Submitted by Megan Crowhurst

July 2020

## Indiana

June continued Purdue Extension ag & natural resources Covid-19 updates. The updates included policy updates on travel and meetings, county fairs, and crop and produce progress reports. They also included information on virtual county fairs and modified livestock shows and canceling the Indiana State Fair and the National Farm Progress Show. Both of the latter events are major outreach activities for AgrAbility. Educational webinars continued.

Submitted by Steve Swain

July 2020

## Maine

On June 16, Maine AgrAbility presented the webinar "The Essentials of Accessibility: School and Community Gardens." This presentation discussed planning for school and community gardens for all users including those of all ages and abilities. The presentation included concepts on making the garden an enjoyable destination and how assistive technology in the form of adaptive garden tools can help. To view the recorded webinar visit the [Maine AgrAbility website](#).

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ME AgrAbility has updated its website by adding a video page. This has links to their videos organized by:

- Success Stories
- Learn More
- Gardening and Ergonomics
- Assistive Technology

Submitted by Lani Carlson

July 2020

## Michigan



Problem Solved! MSU Design Day assists another Michigan AgrAbility client and family! The MSU College of Engineering celebrates the achievements of its students by hosting Design Day at the end of each semester, where student teams exhibit their



design projects and compete for awards. All ten of the MSU engineering academic programs are represented at Design Day, including freshmen through senior level classes. Each semester, Michigan AgrAbility proposes a project to assist its clients. The spring 2020 submittal: devising a solution to manually move logs for an AgrAbility client who relies on a wood furnace for heating his home during the winter months. The ME 481 Mechanical Engineering Design Project team of Marcell Benkes-Toth, Taylor Jacobs, Jurtis Potier, Helen Miller, and Jacob Sichelsteel, advised by Michigan AgrAbility's Ned Stoller, devised a log trough capable of accommodating logs ranging from three to twenty-eight inches in diameter and ten to twelve feet in length. The team designed a mechanism that can move the log forward and backward and allows the log to be clamped and cut as desired. By hydraulically assisting the movement of the log, the amount of physical labor required to perform this important task was significantly reduced.



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solution for Lou Visser to assist in raising his large overhead



door. Lou's left arm is amputated below the elbow, making it difficult to raise the door. The team designed and installed a door opener that consisted of a pulley and bracket system powered by an electric cable winch. The motor made the door move too fast, so Lou began to just pull the chain with his one arm to open and close the door. Since the chain hoist reduced the lifting weight of overhead doors, this was much better than lifting



the door directly; but when the chain was hanging loosely, it swung away from Lou's right hand. To solve that problem, Michigan AgrAbility helped him with a \$50 chain tensioner that was installed at the bottom of the chain to keep it from swinging, but still allow it to move up and down as it is pulled by hand. The tensioner also comes with a chain latch so the door can be locked in position at any point. Lou can now open and close his door very easily without excess strain to his arm and back.

Greg Gieske is blind and has made many of his own accommodations to allow him to continue to farm. Michigan AgrAbility has also provided assistive technology to enable him to farm with less pain - specifically in the area of weed control for his plants. Prior to working with



Michigan AgrAbility, Greg had to crawl on his hands and knees to pull weeds by hand. In the past, Greg's tomato plants were not supported, and they spread on the ground. Now, Greg wraps twine around the plant and secures it to wooden stakes to support upward growth, not only making it easier to control weeds but also for harvesting to support the plants. Michigan AgrAbility also helped to solve the problem of weed control: Greg now uses a dome sprayer by foot to spray weeds rather than crawling on his hands and knees to pull the weeds by hand.



With summer's heat comes the chance of overheating! There is a way to cool off (besides not working...LOL). Consider the type of clothing worn... did you know there are evaporative cooling hats, dew rags, neckwear, bandanas, shirts.... You name it, it is most likely available, often for a price lower than one might think. These items are worth considering to help stay cool in the summer heat.

Submitted by Deb Chester

July 2020

## Missouri

Social media update from January - June 2020:

- Missouri AgrAbility's social media posts on Facebook had a reach of 1,719, 1,783 impressions, and 192 engagements (likes, comments, shares). Of the individuals reached on Facebook, 75% were women and 24% were men, with the largest audience being women ages 35-54 and men ages 55-64 (See attached graph for breakdown for all age ranges).
- Social media posts on Twitter had 26,007 impressions and 410 engagements (likes, comments, retweets)
- Social media posts on Instagram had a reach of 5,111 and 5,585 impressions.
- Photos were taken and stock images compiled to develop a catalogue of photos for AgrAbility publications, social media, and program promotion.
- A Mental Health Awareness Month toolkit was developed to raise awareness about mental health and suicide in rural, agricultural communities in Missouri. The toolkit offers practical resources to help strengthen farmer and rancher resilience with coping mechanisms to maintain balance and protect their mental health.
  - o As part of the campaign, staff shared a video from one of their clients, Carey Portell. Within 48 hours of sharing her video about disabilities and mental health, nine new clients reached out to Missouri AgrAbility for assistance.



Submitted by Tevin Uthlaut

Monday, June 22, Missouri AgrAbility and its partners co-hosted three "Let Your Voices Be Heard Table Talks" and met with AgrAbility Ambassadors via ZOOM. Farmers and ranchers provided feedback about what can be done differently to contribute to greater inclusion, diversity, and equity in the communities AgrAbility serves and ways folks can stay connected during these challenging and unprecedented times. Information gathered will be used to improve program delivery, content, social media outreach, and future grant initiatives.

Submitted by Karen Funkenbusch

The BIA-MO Year 2 Activity Report for the Missouri AgrAbility Project (MAP) highlighted the continued success of the Brain Injury Fact of the Day media campaign. AgrAbility marketing and networking continues with professionals in healthcare, vocational agriculture, veteran services, rehabilitation, and other disciplines through online meetings. Awareness materials and referrals for MAP services are incorporated with BIA-MO information and referral services for persons with brain injury and their families to enhance opportunities for successful farming with brain injury.

Submitted by Maureen Cunningham

July 2020

## Nebraska

Nebraska AgrAbility client Kyle Lammers has started his own beef-to-table business, [KL Beef](#). Kyle is doing a fundraiser for both Nebraska AgrAbility and P.H.A.R.M. Dog USA. He states, *"These organizations have helped me tremendously, and I can't thank them enough. Please watch the video, to learn about these organizations! To donate and enter a chance to win a prime rib, please send the funds through Venmo to klbeefgivesback. Each dollar donated is a chance to win the prime rib, so for instance \$5 is 5 chances. If your Venmo name does not clearly identify who you are, please write your full legal name in the comments. Thank you for helping me give back to a life changing organization for us in agriculture with disabilities!"* To watch the video, [click here](#).



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Staff specialists have received personal protective equipment through the Visiting Nurses Association/Easterseals Nebraska, as they prepare to go back out on farm visits in these next few weeks. They look forward to being back out serving farmers and ranchers with disabilities, but definitely want to protect them as much as possible.

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A staff member trained in the Michigan State University "[Communicating with Farmers under Stress](#)" curriculum offered the first webinar (rather than a live workshop) on June 2, and another will be offered July 15, then potentially monthly going forward. This program is for ag professionals to help them identify signs of stress in producers, use techniques for approaching someone in distress, and learn where to access resources that are helpful for someone experiencing stress.

Submitted by Susan Harris

July 2020

## New Mexico

New Mexico AgrAbility occupational therapy interns are making a big splash in the project. Derek Montoya, Shelby Jones, Sandia Wood, and Sandra Chapman recently received training in tractor safety issues, with machinery courtesy of New Mexico



Tractor Supply-John Deere in Belen, New Mexico. They are making frequent internet visits to the National AgrAbility Project website. At Mandy's Farm, the interns have helped re-organize tool storage, adapted tools, and begun preparations for a phased-in re-start of the adapted farming program. Each graduate student has selected a subject area for developing programming and conducting webinar equipment demonstrations.

Submitted by Carla Wilhite

July 2020

## North Carolina

### STAFF CHANGES

Please join NC AgrAbility Partnership in wishing all the best to Dr. Crystal Kyle who has served as the NC AgrAbility Partnership director and the NC A&T State University Agromedicine campus coordinator for the last almost two years. Dr. Kyle started a new position as a biological scientist with the United States Department of Agriculture - National Institute of Food and Agriculture in Kansas City. Dr. Kyle has worked tirelessly to meet the needs of individuals farming with a disability. She is recognized as a leader across the state and nation for farmer veterans. We honor Dr. Kyle for her military service and commitment to agricultural health and safety.

Our new NC AgrAbility Partnership director is Beatriz Rodriguez who has been helping to improve the wellbeing of the North Carolina farmers, ranchers, and farmworkers with disabilities since 2016. Beatriz earned an MS in agricultural and environmental systems with concentration in agribusiness and food industry management at North Carolina A&T State University, and a BS in agronomy engineering from the National University of Colombia. Beatriz is fully committed to support the agricultural communities: she is an affiliate member of the NC Agromedicine Institute, serves as secretary for the North Carolina Farmworker Health Program Governing Board, and is a Master Gardener for Guilford County. Beatriz is certified in Mental Health First Aid and has received trainings in ergonomics, addressing and preventing occupational illness and injury in the farm environment, and child agricultural injury prevention, among other health and safety-related trainings.

Submitted by Beatriz (Betty) Rodriguez



July 2020

## Ohio

To sustain and grow collaboration between Ohio AgrAbility (OAP) and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD - the state vocational rehabilitation agency), Ohio AgrAbility staff met with several OOD supervisors earlier in the summer to review policies and procedures, vocational assessments, and future training opportunities for OOD and OAP. Topics included developing in-person farm visit protocols for OOD counselors across the state who focus on AgrAbility clients, assessment tools, open lines of communication, what OOD does and does not want to see in assessments, building rapport, educating supervisors and counselors about agriculture, and streamlining the process to clarify how OOD & OAP rural rehabilitation coordinators write and read assessments. Another outcome of the meeting was clarifying roles, discussing more OOD training for counselors and vendors, and making training available to new counselors.



Ohio AgrAbility collaboration with OOD, and how it benefits Ohio farmers, was a popular topic on Ohio AgrAbility's Facebook page in late June. Rachel Jarman, rural rehabilitation coordinator for OAP, posted pictures and a short caption: "Ohio AgrAbility worked with Opportunities for Ohioans With Disabilities to help Kane get this Action Track Chair and a few other pieces of assistive technology. This assistive technology will allow Kane to keep farming



for years to come!" As of noon July 2, the post had reached 10,689 people, with 1,701 engagements, and 45 shares! For Ohio AgrAbility, that qualifies as a viral post, and [we are proud of Kane and Rachel for bringing so much positive attention to Ohio AgrAbility.](#)

Submitted by Laura Akgerman

July 2020

## Tennessee

Meet [Mr. Gutter Gardner](#) (behind the scenes), while he shows you his garden from day one. Mr. Gutter Gardner has a speech impediment and is camera shy. He lets his daughter do all his video talking for him. He has back and heart issues. Mr. Gutter Gardner grew up on a farm in Oklahoma and moved to Tennessee with his job, where he recently retired and is giving more time to his gutter garden.



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A friendly reminder: the application deadline for 2021 Progressive Agriculture Safety Days is July 15. Host one in your town and promote AgrAbility! To apply to host an event in your community, visit the website [www.progressiveag.org](http://www.progressiveag.org) and click on either the "Apply Now" button or the "Get Involved" tab. Returning coordinators can apply via their personal website's homepage. Please note that all Safety Day coordinator trainings for 2021 will be on-line this fall/winter in an effort to minimize in-person events due to uncertainty with COVID-19. For more about what a Progressive Agriculture Safety Days program entails, [click here](#).

Submitted by Tennessee AgrAbility Project

July 2020

## Utah

Central Utah Resource Facilitator Connor Dyreng was recently able to assist a disabled farmer with a hay problem. The farmer bales hay in small bales and needed help moving and stacking the bales from the field. With help from Vocational Rehabilitation, Connor was able to obtain a piece of equipment called a grapalator, which is used with a skid steer or tractor. The grapalator is able to pick up and stack 10 bales at a time. See the [video here](#).

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Michael Porter, the southern Utah resource facilitator, has shared his knowledge of raising rabbits with several clients who are looking for alternatives to raising cattle. Michael raises rabbits himself and says raising rabbits in a colony-style setting is less time-consuming and usually more profitable than raising them in cages. Colony-style pens allow the rabbits to move around and eat freely, but they must be adequately protected from predators.

Submitted by Randall Bagley

July 2020

## Virginia

Dr. Alex Leonessa and Dr. Divya Srinivasan, program co-directors, have been working with the Partnership for Innovation (PFI) Project to provide assistive technologies to farmers with disabilities. This effort is divided over three different prongs: knee bracing, back support, and a power glove to help with grip. A prototype is almost ready for testing with the first phase of testing delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The final functional device will be available commercially.

Dr. Srinivasan has been creating a global research collaborative network called HARVEST with experts in agriculture technology. The goal will be to identify specific issues within global agriculture rather than solving those issues. Network development has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as HARVEST requires much international travel.

Submitted by AgrAbility Virginia

July 2020

## AgrAbility for Africa

Farming communities in Africa, like many in different parts of the world, are disadvantaged when it comes to information and mental health services access. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need to support mental health information access for these rural farming communities, and to fill the gap the staff of AgrAbility for Africa are working to increase distribution of this important information to people who need it through low-literacy information handouts and mobile communication messaging. This is intended to help the farmers, ranchers, farmworkers, and their children cope with social isolation and its effects in terms of both business and mental wellness.



By educating them on identifying the signs and symptoms, encouraging them to seek help when they need it, and sharing where to find that help, AgrAbility for Africa can promote the positive mental health of vulnerable people and communities who are struggling at this time. Staff are also responding to the increased number of calls for help with mental health and domestic violence prevention, calls precipitated by the restrictions meant to control the spread of the coronavirus.

AchieveKids - a non-profit in California with expertise in complex and severe developmental, emotional, and behavioral challenges - and the staff of AgrAbility for Africa held a meeting to discuss mental developmental disabilities, stress, anxiety, and depression faced by children. Special focus was on the worsening situation caused by the pandemic. Pandemic countermeasures that lead to social isolation have deprived some children of the opportunity to connect, learn, and play, unless they have the luxury of digital solutions and tools that are safe. Such things, which aren't available to many children in Africa, include monitored online games, social media, and video chat programs that provide opportunities for children in other parts of the world to connect with each other, learn, and play with their friends, parents, and relatives, while at home. Discussions centered on bridging the digital divide, recognizing and addressing the uniqueness of the condition of the children in Africa, children's developmental disabilities, parenting during COVID-19, and children's mental health support in times of isolation.

Staff have been developing practical tips and solutions by working with partners in Uganda to promote farmer safety and health for rural farming communities. AgrAbility for Africa has put together an instructional manual on "how to make your own masks," to guide farmers, ranchers, and children in making their own protective masks as a means to help minimize the danger of infection to themselves and their families.



Submitted by Mutumba Faisal

July 2020

## Upcoming Events

- Name** AgrAbility National Training Workshop - **NEW DATES SET**  
**Dates** **November 30-December 3, 2020**  
**City, State** Madison, Wisconsin  
**Contact Info/Web link** <http://www.agrability.org/agrability-national-training-workshop/>
- NAME** 2020 West Tennessee New Farmer Academy: (Scholarships for beginning farmers with disabilities and veterans)  
**Dates** 7-month certificate program April 23 – October 22, 2020  
**City, State** Memphis, Tennessee  
**Contact Info/Web link** <http://www.tnstate.edu/extension/NFA.aspx>
- Name** Communicating with Farmers Under Stress  
**Dates** July 15, 2020 - 12:00 Noon EDT, 11:00 a.m. CDT  
**City, State** Webinar online  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://tinyurl.com/y8ocsttu>
- Name** Farm estate & succession planning event  
**Dates** July 21-23, 2020  
**City, State** ZOOM Webinar online  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://www.morningagclips.com/farm-estate-succession-planning-event/>
- Name** Milan No Till Virtual Field Day (TN AgrAbility will have a tour)  
**Dates** July 23, 2020  
**City, State** Tennessee  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://milannotill.tennessee.edu/rsvp-to-the-milan-no-till-field-day/>
- Name** Dr. Therese Willkomm, Assistive Technology Tools  
**Dates** July 28, 2020, from 3:30-5:00 p.m. EDT  
**City, State** Webinar online  
**Contact** <https://tinyurl.com/yapcv99w>

**Info/Web  
link**

**Name** Seven Secrets of Effective Farmers  
**Dates** August 6, 2020; 11:00a.m.-12:00p.m. CDT

**City, State** Online webinar

**Contact** <https://7secrets.questionpro.com/>  
**Info/Web  
link**

**Name** Data organization yields positive returns  
**Dates** August 7, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time

**City, State** Webinar online

**Contact** For further information, [click here](#).  
**Info/Web  
link**

**Name** 2020 Midwest Poultry Federation Virtual Trade Show & Convention  
**Dates** August 12-13, 2020

**City, State** Virtual - Online

**Contact** <https://midwestpoultry.com/attendees/registration/>  
**Info/Web  
link**

**Name** Seven Secrets of Effective Farmers  
**Dates** September 3, 2020; 11:00a.m.-12:00p.m. CDT

**City, State** Online webinar

**Contact** <https://7secrets.questionpro.com/>  
**Info/Web  
link**