

# AgrAbility e·Note

May 2023

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

## National AgrAbility Project News

Don't miss out on the next NAP regional workshop. It will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn Indianapolis Airport, June 6-8. This workshop will focus on veterans in farming and programs to support them. NAP staff were able to extend the deadline for the hotel block to May 19th, so room reservations need to be made now. Reserve a room by [clicking here](#). More information and the link to register for the Regional can be found on the NAP website under [Training & Events](#).



National AgrAbility would love to host a Regional Workshop with you. Anyone interested, please contact Tess [tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org](mailto:tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org) or JoBeth [jbrath@goodwillfingerlakes.org](mailto:jbrath@goodwillfingerlakes.org), for more information.

AgrAbility/North Central FRSAN webinar: "An Overview of Native American Behavioral Health Issues," May 17 at 3:00 p.m. EDT. [www.agrability.org/training-category/upcoming](http://www.agrability.org/training-category/upcoming)



AgrAbility was represented again this year at the Midwest Migrant Stream Health Forum in Austin, TX. The event was sponsored by the National Center for Farm Worker Health during the last week of April. [More](#)

Kimber Nicoletti-Martinez also presented at the East Coast Migrant Stream Forum in Orlando, FL, during the first week of April. Kimber hosted the AgrAbility display and conducted a breakout session titled, "Strategies to increase access to mental health services in farm worker communities in post-COVID era."

The recording of the April 24 all-staff meeting is available at on the extranet at [www.agrability.org/extranet/staff-resources](http://www.agrability.org/extranet/staff-resources)

NAP sponsored an exhibit at the 2023 American Occupational Therapy Association Conference. Many thanks to Marty Cotterman for providing the Life Essentials accessible tractor and to him, Karen Funkenbusch of Missouri AgrAbility, and Ellis Vidmar of Colorado AgrAbility for staffing the display.



## Toolbox Spotlight



Supporting the full body from beneath, the [Zeen Sit-Stand Walker](#) is designed to allow one to stand and walk at his/her natural pace or to sit but still using legs/feet for locomotion. It also has a leverage mechanism that can raise the user from seated to standing position. Other features of this mobility device include: coasting/parking brake, foam swiveling seat, retractable seatbelt, adjustable lift-assist, armrests with seat-height adjustment, footrests, rear caster-wheel locks, rear storage rack, and rear push handles.

## State and Regional AgrAbility Project News

### Alaska

The Alaska AgrAbility team, like many state projects, is gearing up to visit clients and perform on-site assessments throughout the state through the summer months. In addition to that, a robust calendar of outreach events is being scheduled for the next four months, ranging from cultural festivals to farmers markets and fairs around the state.

Project non-profit partner Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA), personnel attended the Anchorage Home Show during April in Anchorage and provided information regarding their programs and AKAgrAbility resources.

### Colorado



Jim Craig, Colorado AgrAbility rural rehabilitation specialist, presented at the VA Health Administration National Conference in February. This year's conference was titled "Health Services Research & Development ADAPT" (Accelerate Discovery and Practice Transformation). [More](#)

Ellis Vidmar, program coordinator, represented the National AgrAbility Project in partnership with Life Lyfts at the 2023 American Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference and Expo. "It was a great networking opportunity for me personally, and for the National Project," Vidmar said.



Candiss Leathers, program manager, visited The Coffee Break Project in Rocky Ford, CO. She met Hannah Bates, agricultural outreach coordinator, and several individuals attending the project. [More](#)

The Colorado AgrAbility project is hiring a rural rehabilitation specialist! The rural rehabilitation specialist coordinates AgrAbility program activities for farmers and ranchers located in rural Colorado ... [More](#)

### Florida

Florida AgrAbility attended Florida 4-H Day at the Capitol on April 19 where there were over 1,000 attendees.

This year, CILNCF (Center for Independent Living North Central Florida) chose Florida AgrAbility to be the recipient of the generous donations



received from The Amazing Give event, a community-based giving day hosted by the Community Foundation of North Central Florida (CFNCF). [More](#)



The FL AgrAbility case coordinator conducted initial key informant interviews with five other states having active AgrAbility programs. A poster was presented by AgrAbility student interns on preliminary results at the University of Florida.

## Georgia

Six of Georgia's AgrAbility staff members attended an American Heart Association Heartsaver First Aid Course on April 20th. The course prepares participants to provide first aid in medical emergencies, injury emergencies, and environmental emergencies. [More](#)



Georgia AgrAbility had a board meeting on April 25th. The board meeting was very exciting because staff were able to share with them the news of NTW! The board had some great ideas for farm tours and other things that make conferences special in Georgia

The Meet at the Shed Program is continuing to offer workshops for men to come and fellowship with each other. On April 22nd, another wood carving class was held in which the participants made a Lil' Abner boot and learned new carving techniques. [More](#)



GA AgrAbility has many clients and farmers around the state struggling to find workers for their farming operations. agrileadHER (a Southern Region FRSAN/SaGE project) hosted a webinar about the H2A program and what farmers need to know who are considering using it. [More](#)

## Indiana

Indiana AgrAbility and Easterseals Crossroads held an Agricultural Assistive Technology Expo in mid-April. It was a beautiful day at Purdue's Beck Center where vocational rehabilitation professionals, occupational and physical therapists, extension educators, and college students majoring in occupational therapy, as well as representatives from AgrAbility projects from surrounding states (Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Kentucky) immersed themselves in learning about farming with disabilities. [More](#)



Indiana AgrAbility in partnership with the LIFE Project presented and exhibited at the Gary, IN, Black Loam Workshop April 15, 2023. Approximately 70 people, the vast majority being BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), attended the in-person event. [More](#)

## Maine

The job description for the Maine AgrAbility coordinator has been posted! Please contact [anne.martin1@maine.edu](mailto:anne.martin1@maine.edu) if you know of anyone that might be interested in the position.

Staff continued outreach to vocational rehabilitation offices throughout Maine and, as part of a \$5k grant, are putting together an assistive



Staff provided ergonomic and work safety training to employees at Wyman's Blueberry farm facility.

Additionally, Maine AgrAbility continued promoting ergonomics for loggers and presented to over 600 loggers throughout Maine during April in an effort to reduce back pain and improve efficiency during work.

Staff and a University of Southern Maine PhD OT student conducted 36 interviews to collect data about the utility of the "Managing Pain on the Farm: A tool for farmers" developed by Maine AgrAbility staff for agricultural workers. Maine AgrAbility's OT student also participated in the National Seaweed Symposium, talking to 23 folks about working on the water safely and sustainably.



## Michigan



Six Michigan State University students partnered with Michigan AgrAbility for their mechanical engineering design senior capstone project titled "Tractor Manlift Analysis." Pictured (L to R) are Kevin Upcott, Jacob Huskin, Nick Lauinger, Alexandra Iorga, Connor Anderson, and Wade Varney.

## Missouri

Emily Doosing and Karen Funkenbusch co-authored "Save your Brain: Equipping Agriculture Teachers with Resources to Promote Brain Injury Prevention" featured in (2023, March/April), The Agricultural Education Magazine, Volume 95 (Issue 5), pages 12-14. The article can be read [HERE](#).

April 10 - 14, Missouri AgrAbility co-hosted a successful Armed to Farm Sustainable Agriculture Training for military veterans in partnership with the Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and Veterans Urban Farm in Columbia, Missouri. The week-long training featured daily farm tours and hands-on activities at a variety of successful farms. [More](#)



During the month of April, staff members from Missouri AgrAbility, the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, and statewide partners worked together to develop the "2023 Mental Health Awareness Month Promotional Toolkit". The Mental Health Toolkit can be accessed [HERE](#).



Karen Funkenbusch, Missouri AgrAbility, had a great time demonstrating and discussing the Life Essentials accessible tractor lift with Ellis Vidmar of Colorado AgrAbility and Marty Cotterman of LifeLyfts by Life Essentials, at the National AgrAbility display during AOTA Inspire 2023 in Kansas City, Missouri. [More](#)



Three members of the Lincoln University Missouri ISFOP accompanied the University of Missouri Extension team assisting with the NCAT ATTRA Armed to Farm program in Columbia, MO, April 10th-14th. Veterans training to transition from the military to



farming toured farms and saw presentations, including a demonstration on soil health and the Jessup Wagon.

Missouri AgrAbility was featured on the Brain Injury Association of Missouri exhibit at the Missouri Assistive Technology Power Up Conference on April 3 and 4. Approximately 450 professionals from across Missouri participated in this conference that features services and assistance for individuals with various disabilities. [More](#)

Missouri AgrAbility was also featured at the KeeleyLife Health Fair on April 19. This company-sponsored event educated construction related professionals who live throughout Eastern and Central Missouri about Missouri AgrAbility.

## Nebraska

Nebraska AgrAbility staff and team members have been featured at conferences and training events focused on agricultural safety.

Emily Jacobson presented ATV safety during Youth Safety Days in Boone and Nance counties. She reports that students were engaged in the subject and had excellent questions. [More](#)



Emily Jacobson and John Davis have been busy working on client visits. John continues to provide support as Nebraska continues the search for a candidate to fill the open rural rehabilitation specialist position.



Aaron (photo left) presented at the 2023 Center for Great Plains Studies Conference on April 19. He also provided education at several training events in March focused on grain handling safety.

Nebraska AgrAbility hosted the annual Nebraska AgrAbility Advisory Council meeting on April 5 in Kearney. [More](#)

## New Mexico

AgrAbility team members met with leadership at the NM Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces to explore options for the creation of an AgrAbility-focused exhibit at the museum, telling the personal stories of how the AgrAbility project has affected the lives of people in New Mexico, the work the partners in this project do in this space, and the opportunities the project provides for the farming community in general and farmers affected by limitations in specific.

AgrAbility posters were presented at the American Occupational Therapy Association National Conference related to work that fieldwork students Barrett Harding and Celia Gianella completed in their summer 2022 rotations. The posters were presented by another team member as the OT students have transplanted to their next fieldwork sites and jobs.



## North Carolina



Training opportunities: NC AgrAbility provided training in "Preventing Injuries and the Use of Ergonomic Tools" to Benevolence Farm on April 12 and to the NC Apprenticeship Program on April 24. [More](#)

NC AgrAbility is in the process of recording some marketing and educational videos with our North Carolinian farmers. On April 18 and 19 two farmers from the west and two from the east were filmed at their farms.



NC AgrAbility participated at the 2023 NC Farmworker Institute on April 20. The event is a gathering of agencies, organizations, and activists dedicated to advancing the lives of farmworkers and their families. [More](#)

Iredell Garden Fair April 29. NC AgrAbility participated as an exhibitor reaching out to gardeners, master gardeners, and farmers. Approximately 150 participants attended the event, and a self-referral for direct services came out of the educational efforts.



At the Annual Union County Transition Fair on April 20, NC AgrAbility participated as an exhibitor for the morning COMMUNITY RESOURCES SESSION and the EC PARENT AWARENESS NIGHT SESSION "Embracing Transition: Preparing for Your Child's Future." [More](#)

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## Ohio



Ohio AgrAbility staff made new contacts, flew a drone, and picked up great ideas for a lending library and an AT wish list when they attended the Indiana AgrAbility AT Expo. Rural Rehabilitation Coordinator Rachel Jarman demonstrated her drone flying prowess and speculated on how drones could benefit Ohio farmers with disabilities. [More](#)

Allyson Whitaker, OTD candidate/graduate from Kettering College, completed her capstone project with Ohio AgrAbility - "Continuing Education for Healthcare Professionals: Addressing the Needs of Workers in the Commercial Agriculture Industry". OAP staff are reviewing this project and will work with Allyson to create resources from it to share with AgrAbility colleagues, and health care personnel.

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## Pennsylvania

Spring has sprung in Pennsylvania, which equated to temperature swings, periods of rain, and lots of activity across the commonwealth for farmers as planting season began.

The AgrAbility PA staff held a spring meeting with its advisory board. Staff reported project updates that included responses and results from farmer/customer surveys, educational and networking activities, and outreach and marketing happenings. This meeting offered an opportunity for both reflection and fruitful follow-ups for staff to carry forward.

Abbie Spackman attended the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association's Professional Development Institute. She spoke about, and exhibited information on, AgrAbility services and agricultural assistive technology. [More](#)



Project Director Dr. Suzanna Windon and Project Graduate Assistant Carolyn Henzi delivered a presentation, "Farmers' Stress During the COVID-19 Pandemic," which included information on and for farmers and agricultural workers connected to AgrAbility PA. The research was presented at the 2023 Association of International Agricultural and Extension Education, April 26-29 in Guelph, Canada.

Funding is often a topic on the table when talking with farmers that have a disability or long-term health condition - but paying for or acquiring assistive



technology can present some challenges. [More](#)

## South Carolina

This month, the South Carolina AgrAbility team will hold an advisory meeting to bring together those who want to see the South Carolina AgrAbility team succeed in bringing services to the state.

The SC team will host a workshop in July with some participants from the National AgrAbility office and some from the LIFE Project. SC staff hope to describe AgrAbility and how they can offer services to the participating farmers in the area. [More](#)

## Tennessee

The Emergency Management Association of Tennessee (EMAT) welcomed over 500 first responders and healthcare professionals to Knoxville, TN, for their 37th annual conference in April. TN AgrAbility partnered with TN Farm Bureau and the TN Association of Rescue Squads... [More](#)



Over 150 attended the 2023 TN Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Conference held at the TN Farm Bureau Expo Center in Lebanon, TN, recently. TN AgrAbility's educational exhibit on small tools was geared toward those with back and chronic diseases... [More](#)

The first session of the West TN New Farmer Academy began in April with 60 participants. The first session serves as an overview of the partners who serve the agriculture industry in Tennessee. [More](#)



TN AgrAbility staff had the honor of being introduced to the Stewart Creek FFA's Ag Issues Forum Team at the FFA State Convention. The team placed 2nd in the nation in 2022 on the topic of "ADA in the Ag Industry." [More](#)

## Texas

Texas AgrAbility's online course for occupational therapists was part of a presentation at the AOTA conference in Kansas City. Two OT doctoral students worked with Texas AgrAbility to develop a course for OTs working with farmers and ranchers. Read more about their experience and the work they have done [HERE](#).



Online Course  
Texas AgrAbility for Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers  
\$0.00  
QTY 1

Texas AgrAbility launched a new online course for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The course is designed to educate service providers of farmworkers on how to identify challenges and improve services for farmworkers with disabilities and chronic health conditions. View the FREE course [HERE](#).

Texas AgrAbility, in partnership with AgriSafe Network, hosted a "QPR Suicide Prevention for Farm Families" training on May 4th. The virtual training was taught by Cene Cleaton, Texas AgrAbility's Total Farmer Health coach, and Tara Haskins with AgriSafe Network.

## Utah

AgrAbility of Utah staff set up a display booth and were excited to meet with and explain AgrAbility to many of the 1,200 FFA students who attended the Next Step Expo in Logan, UT, on April 25. The Expo focused on education and career options and was held in conjunction with the State Career Development Events Contest on the campus of Utah State University.

On April 24, AgrAbility staff presented to members of the Cache Interagency Council in Logan, UT.

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## Virginia

During the month of April, the Virginia AgrAbility team presented on AgrAbility for two undergraduate classes of about 20 students at Virginia Tech, providing information about the program and farming with a disability, illness, or injury, and answering students' questions.

Staff also partnered with a group home for people with developmental and physical disabilities to assist a house member in designing and planning a raised bed garden.

Staff participated in the Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program staff retreat and made plans to attend upcoming meetings of the Southern Region Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN).

Staff also took on three new farmer cases, including one farmer who lost his arm in a motor vehicle accident.

AgrAbility Virginia also hosted its bi-annual advisory group meeting, with 17 attendees including 9 members from the team, 7 of 8 advisory group members, and 1 invited guest. Staff provided programmatic updates and advisory group members engaged in discussions about how to grow the program. Advisory group members include VR professionals, healthcare and rural health professionals, farmers, educators, and others.

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## Washington

Spring has arrived in Washington, and April was spent preparing for more events to attend and visiting with new clients.

The Washington team met with several DVR vocational rehabilitation counselors this month and discussed how to serve and support each other. Staff hope to continue and grow this relationship in the future.

Emily Whittier tabled at the 12th Annual Columbia Gorge Invasive Species and Exotic Pest Workshop in Stevenson, WA, and displayed several AT items for attendees to try out.



Emily Whittier also tabled at the first annual Goldendale Spring Mini-Fair and Agriculture Awareness Day in Goldendale, WA.

Debbie Fredricks attended an open house at The Guardian Ranch, whose owners attended the NTW (National Training Workshop), and had a wonderful time.

Debbie also attended a Veterans Relief Fund meeting and met with Thurston County Extension office and the Lewis County Farm Bureau to discuss AgrAbility partnerships.

The co-coordinator team is working on developing stretching posters that represent Washington's agricultural communities. Thank you to Maine AgrAbility for the inspiration and advice at the NTW!



Alyssa Wade is continuing to work with her client in SE Washington. Debbie Fredricks met with a rancher recently who is looking to become a client. And Deb Eidsness and Debbie Fredricks are continuing to work with existing clients as well.

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## Wisconsin



AgrAbility of Wisconsin wrapped up a busy event season by hosting its 2023 AgrAbility of Wisconsin Summit this past April 6 in Tomah, WI. Over 45 attendees learned about veteran farmer resources, soil health testing, and strategic farm business planning at this day-long networking event. [More](#)

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## International AgrAbility Network News

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## AgrAbility for Africa

In order to enhance inclusion in agriculture, access to rehabilitation-care, and assistive technologies across Africa, the staff of AgrAbility for Africa will be holding an inaugural annual AgrAbility for Africa training workshop June 5th and 6th, 2023. [More](#)

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## Staff Changes and Recognition

## Nebraska

Dr. Mark Riley, former PI and current advisor for Nebraska AgrAbility, was inducted as a fellow of the Institute of Biological Engineering – University of Nebraska-Lincoln during the IBE Annual Conference on April 15. Congratulations!



## Texas

Texas AgrAbility welcomes Cene Cleaton to the team. Cene is a mental health nurse that will assist Texas AgrAbility with training on mental health and wellness for farmers and ranchers. She has been trained as a Total Farmer Health coach and is QPR certified. She is a military veteran spouse, and her family owns and operates a market garden and nursery in Kempner, Texas. She brings a wealth of knowledge to our project, and we are excited to have Cene join our team!

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## AgrAbility in the News

**Click titles below for news stories featuring AgrAbility projects .**

- [Fundraiser set up for Florida farmers with disabilities](#) (Florida AgrAbility Project)
- [Nonprofit supporting individuals with disabilities focuses on fundraising for its new AgrAbility project](#) (Florida AgrAbility Project)
- [Military veteran farmers invited to AgrAbility Regional Workshop](#) (National AgrAbility)

- Project)
- [AgrAbility expands into two-year program at Mandy's Farm](#) (New Mexico AgrAbility Project)
- [Managing physical challenges in the ag workplace](#) (AgrAbility of Wisconsin)
- [MSU's AGR donates \\$15,000 to AgrAbility](#) (Michigan AgrAbility Project)
- [Military veteran farmers invited to AgrAbility Regional Workshop](#) (National AgrAbility Project)
- [Observations from the recliner](#) (AgrAbility Virginia)
- [Program helps people with disabilities get farming experience](#) (New Mexico AgrAbility Project)

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## OtherNews

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

- [Hearing Loss](#) - an AgriSafe Talking Total Farmer Health podcast
- Nebraska AgrAbility team member Aaron Yoder discusses wearables with a focus on safety, noise reduction and heat injury. Featured in [EDGE OF AG](#) (April 20, 2023).
- Michigan State University Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine published the [third report on work-related farm injuries in Michigan](#). The report covers injuries that occurred in 2020 and 2021.
- [Study: Cover Crops Help Mitigate Farmer Losses](#)
- [USDA Announces Additional Assistance For Distressed Farmers Facing Financial Risk](#)
- [AgrAbility expo to provide hands-on training in assistive technology](#)
- [USDA Disaster Assistance to AR, IN, IA, WI](#)
- [Colorado Becomes First to Pass 'Right to Repair' for Farmers](#)
- [Building Stronger Communities through Community Gardens](#)
- [Have a second cup: Coffee provides health benefits](#)

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## UpcomingEvents

[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](#)

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May 2023

## National AgrAbility Project



AgrAbility was represented again this year at the Midwest Migrant Stream Health Forum in Austin, TX. The event was sponsored by the National Center for Farm Worker Health during the last week of April. AgrAbility hosted a display sharing resources on the general AgrAbility program as well as farm-worker-specific resources on diabetes, arthritis, and mental health. National AgrAbility Farm Worker Outreach Coordinator Kimber Nicoletti-Martinez and Esmeralda Mandujano, Western Regional Agricultural Stress

Assistance Program representative, facilitated a farm-worker-specific QPR Gatekeeper training at the conference.



Submitted by Kimber Nicoletti-Martinez

May 2023

## Colorado



Jim Craig, Colorado AgrAbility rural rehabilitation specialist, presented at the VA Health Administration National Conference in February. This year's conference was titled "Health Services Research & Development ADAPT" (Accelerate Discovery and Practice Transformation). This year was the first in three years for the conference to be held due to the pandemic. The objective of this three-day event was to discuss and inform newly hired VA health care workers in best practices in service delivery for disabled veterans. Jim presented on improving the use of VA care and achieving improved outcomes. Jim wants to continue to raise national awareness that returning veterans are not being heard by the VA, and employment can have a direct effect on reintegration and improved mental health.

Candiss Leathers, program manager, visited The Coffee Break Project in Rocky Ford, CO. She met Hannah Bates, agricultural outreach coordinator, and several individuals attending the project. The Coffee Break Project is a model for providing outreach and connection in rural communities and is a community-driven model that supports the mental health and emotional wellbeing of farmers and ranchers in rural Colorado.



The Colorado AgrAbility project is hiring a rural rehabilitation specialist! The rural rehabilitation specialist coordinates AgrAbility program activities for farmers and ranchers located in rural Colorado with the goal of informing, educating, and assisting farmers, ranchers, farm workers with disabilities, and their families to mitigate incidences of harmful responses to stress experienced by these individuals. The specialist will aid those with physical, behavioral, and/or developmental disabilities to enhance self-sufficiency and/or the continuation of employment. The rural rehabilitation specialist assists program participants to remain and/or to enter into their agricultural livelihoods by analyzing each individual situation, making recommendations, identifying adaptive technology, and facilitating access to resources.

Contact Program Manager Candiss Leathers for more information:  
[cleathers@goodwillcolorado.org](mailto:cleathers@goodwillcolorado.org)

To apply, [click here](#).

Submitted by Ellis Vidmar

May 2023

## Florida

This year, CILNCF (Center for Independent Living North Central Florida) chose Florida AgrAbility to be the recipient of the generous donations received from The Amazing Give event, a community-based giving day hosted by the Community Foundation of North Central Florida (CFNCF). Multiple organizations partner to promote philanthropy across different causes and critical needs. The \$8,700 raised is going to be used to support FL AgrAbility clients to purchase assistive technology. See more about the event [HERE](#).

Submitted by Cassandra Ward

May 2023

## Georgia



Six of Georgia's AgrAbility staff members attended an American Heart Association Heartsaver First Aid Course on April 20th. The course prepares participants to provide first aid in medical emergencies, injury emergencies, and environmental emergencies. As well, participants receive AHA, CPR, and AED use certifications and learn to recognize and provide first aid in cases of opioid associated life-threatening emergencies.



The Meet at the Shed Program is continuing to offer workshops for men to come and fellowship with each other. On April 22nd, another wood carving class was held in which the participants made a Lil' Abner boot and learned new carving techniques. A journalist came to the class to do a story on the Meet at the Shed Program.



GA AgrAbility has many clients and farmers around the state struggling to find workers for their farming operations. agrileadHER (a Southern Region FRSAN/SAG E project) hosted a webinar about the H2A program and what farmers need to know who are considering using it. AgrAbility staff attended the webinar to be able to share information with their farmers.

Submitted by AgrAbility in Georgia

May 2023

## Indiana



Indiana AgrAbility and Easterseals Crossroads held an Agricultural Assistive Technology Expo in mid-April. It was a beautiful day at Purdue's Beck Center where vocational rehabilitation professionals, occupational and physical therapists, extension educators, and college students majoring in occupational therapy, as well as representatives from AgrAbility projects from surrounding states (Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan,

Ohio, and Kentucky) immersed themselves in learning about farming with disabilities. The goals for the day were to have individuals who work with a person with disabilities in agriculture 1) understand a little more about different kinds of farming and what is physically required by trying it for themselves and 2) learn about several kinds of assistive technology that are used to help someone on the farm.

- Attendees climbed into equipment for themselves, such as a tractor, skid steer, and a zero-turn mower, to identify difficulties that someone with a disability might encounter. Several individuals drove the zero-turn mower in the parking lot.
- Mark Carter demonstrated his drone technology and discussed how it was helping farmers in the fields. He invited anyone who was interested to fly a drone.
- A panel of Indiana farmers (Toby Days, Ron Frazier, and Donald Lawson) discussed their experiences of being diagnosed with a disability and working with AgrAbility to find solutions to continue their farming business. Those in attendance asked questions and the panel provided very detailed answers concerning how assistive technology was implemented and made each of them more independent.
- Everyone was invited to try equipment designed as solutions for farmers with disabilities. Whether navigating an obstacle course with a Trackchair (sitting or standing), transferring from a wheelchair to a pickup truck or tractor using LifeLyfts mobility lifts, or using a personal scooter, each attendee challenged themselves to use the technology. A Roll-a-ramp (available for loan through the new loan library) helped the scooters navigate over rough terrain and climb over a step easily.
- Many toured several Purdue farming operations close by. Two thirds of the attendees visited a dairy barn, walked through the calf huts, explored a sheep/lamb operation, stopped at a grain storage facility, and learned about aquaculture in Indiana. Understanding the tasks involved in each of these operations helps to understand the barriers that exist for someone with a disability.
- Breakout learning sessions covered many topics. Steve Swain discussed the process of assessing the needs of



someone with a disability going through vocational rehabilitation. Home modifications, the new AT loan library at Purdue, the National AgrAbility Toolbox website database, underserved populations in farming (veterans and the Amish), and using AT in small scale or nontraditional farming were some of the topics discussed.



Everyone walked away with a better understanding of the need for assistive technology to ensure the success of farmers with disabilities.

Submitted by Lisa Becker



Indiana AgrAbility in partnership with the LIFE Project presented and exhibited at the Gary, IN, Black Loam Workshop April 15, 2023. Approximately 70 people, the vast majority being BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), attended the in-person event.

Led by John and Denise Jamerson, directors of the LIFE Project 2501 grant (in which the NAP is a partner) and founders of Legacy Taste of the Garden LLC, the Black Loam series of workshops are intended to build relationships, to help farmers gain access to information, and to train them in better agricultural practices. Attendees received introductions to multiple USDA programs and resources available to BIPOC and socially disadvantaged urban, rural, and community producers to encourage increased participation in USDA programs, loans, grants, scholarships, sustainable agriculture practices, business planning, and community development.



Chuck Baldwin represented AgrAbility with a display of AgrAbility printed materials and a talk on the importance of AgrAbility for anyone involved in agriculture who is impacted by disability.

Submitted by Chuck Baldwin



May 2023

## Missouri

April 10 - 14, Missouri AgrAbility co-hosted a successful Armed to Farm Sustainable Agriculture Training for military veterans in partnership with the Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and Veterans Urban Farm in Columbia, Missouri. The week-long training featured daily farm tours and hands-on activities at a variety of successful farms. Participants learned from seasoned farmers and gained direct experience on livestock, vegetable, fruit, and agritourism operations. While in the classroom, participants learned about sustainable agriculture that included how to adopt climate-resilient practices in regenerative approaches, agroforestry as a land management approach, and accessible sustainable beekeeping to address financial and personal wellness. At the end of the conference, veteran farmers reported having gained 100% new knowledge about 1) how to run a successful business, 2) marketing their products, 3) accessing USDA programs, 4) setting business goals, 5) developing meaningful mentorships, 6) managing their physical health: recognizing personal stressors and requesting information and resources for agricultural rehabilitation and vocational training for veteran farmers and ranchers, and 7) selecting ergonomic tools and anti-vibration gloves for small-scale farmers and ranchers.



Karen Funkenbusch, Missouri AgrAbility, had a great time demonstrating and discussing the Life Essentials accessible tractor lift with Ellis Vidmar of Colorado AgrAbility and Marty Cotterman of LifeLyfts by Life Essentials, at the National AgrAbility display during AOTA Inspire 2023 in Kansas City, Missouri. The Annual AOTA Conference & Expo is the place for occupational therapists to expand their knowledge, enhance

skills, and stay up to date on the latest assistive technologies and evidence-based research in the profession.

Submitted by: Karen Funkenbusch, Emily Doosing, Tevin Uthlaut, Elizabeth Picking

Missouri AgrAbility was featured on the Brain Injury Association of Missouri exhibit at the Missouri Assistive Technology Power Up Conference on April 3 and 4. Approximately 450 professionals from across Missouri participated in this conference that features services and assistance for individuals with various disabilities. The professionals learned about Missouri AgrAbility services and assistance through the Brain Injury Association of Missouri.

Submitted by: Maureen Cunningham

May 2023

## Nebraska



Emily Jacobson presented ATV safety during Youth Safety Days in Boone and Nance counties. She reports that students were engaged in the subject and had excellent questions. Students learned the difference between ATVs and UTVs, that ATVs are designed for one rider only, and that youth must be age 16 to drive a full-sized ATV.



Students also learned about the importance of tire pressure, navigating terrain, and wearing helmets. Nearly 200 students participated in the event.



Nebraska AgrAbility hosted the annual Nebraska AgrAbility Advisory Council meeting on April 5 in Kearney. Advisory Council members include VR, NCBVI, clients, caregivers, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, occupational therapists, physical therapists, Assistive Technology Partnership, Hydrated dealers, cattlemen, Farm Bureau, Amputee Coalition peer volunteer, Center for Rural Affairs, nurse, and veteran groups. The council members are appreciated for their willingness to attend this meeting and assist the team throughout the year.

Meeting discussions included peer training and actively engaging the council through quarterly meetings. The Nebraska AgrAbility team reviewed current work and accomplishments, and shared ideas on how the council members can provide added support. Emily created a promotional kit for each council member to use and take to smaller events in their communities or to share with individuals wanting to learn more about AgrAbility. The kits include brochures, business cards, an elevator speech, table tent, and more. With these kits, council members are able to provide outreach across Nebraska.

The annual meeting was a terrific opportunity to collaborate. The team looks forward to working with the council on their peer training, collaborating on future projects, and continuing these statewide efforts to bring awareness to AgrAbility.

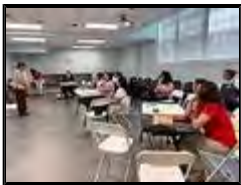
Submitted by Soni Cochran

May 2023

## North Carolina

Training opportunities: NC AgrAbility provided training in "Preventing Injuries and the Use of Ergonomic Tools" to Benevolence Farm on April 12 and to the NC Apprenticeship Program on April 24.

- Benevolence Farm is a program providing transitional employment and living program for women leaving North Carolina prisons. Seven women attended the training.
- The Boots on the Ground: NC Veteran Farmer Apprenticeship Program expands access to high quality and accessible farmer training, specifically intensive hands-on training that provides long-term experience and mentorship. Seven beginning veteran farmers attended the training.



NC AgrAbility participated at the 2023 NC Farmworker Institute on April 20. The event is a gathering of agencies, organizations, and activists dedicated to advancing the lives of farmworkers and their families. NC AgrAbility presented the "Assistive Technology for Harm Reduction for Farmworkers" session and manned an exhibitor booth. The event counted with the participation of 150 attendees.

At the Annual Union County Transition Fair on April 20, NC AgrAbility participated as an exhibitor for the morning COMMUNITY RESOURCES SESSION and the EC PARENT AWARENESS NIGHT SESSION "Embracing Transition: Preparing for Your Child's Future." The event showcases the organizations, schools/colleges, businesses, trade schools, and community agencies that provide services for students to assist them with transitioning to adulthood in the areas of education, employment and independent living. The event was attended by 150 students, parents, educators, administrators, and community service providers.

Submitted by Beatriz (Betty) Rodriguez

May 2023

## Ohio



Ohio AgrAbility staff made new contacts, flew a drone, and picked up great ideas for a lending library and an AT wish list when they attended the Indiana AgrAbility AT Expo. Rural Rehabilitation Coordinator Rachel Jarman demonstrated her drone flying prowess and speculated on how drones could benefit Ohio farmers with disabilities. Rural Rehabilitation Supervisor Randy Joseph took pictures of all the AT equipment on display. Disability Services Coordinator



Laura Akgerman networked with attendees and invited vendors and speakers to attend Farm Science Review in London, Ohio, September 19 - 21.

Submitted by Laura Akgerman

May 2023

## Pennsylvania

Abbie Spackman attended the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association's Professional Development Institute. She spoke about, and exhibited information on, AgrAbility services and agricultural assistive technology. This is a new outreach activity aimed at educating and raising awareness of AgrAbility PA among rehabilitation professionals and service providers across the state.



Funding is often a topic on the table when talking with farmers that have a disability or long-term health condition - but paying for or acquiring assistive technology can present some challenges. AgrAbility PA staff created a "[Funding Agricultural Assistive Technology](#)" handout to use as a communication tool to help farmers understand where funding comes from, how to be a self-advocate for funding, and examples of farmers who have received funding for AT from various sources.

Submitted by Kendra Martin

May 2023

## South Carolina

The SC team will host a workshop in July with some participants from the National AgrAbility office and some from the LIFE Project. SC staff hope to describe AgrAbility and how they can offer services to the participating farmers in the area. South Carolina State and those from Clemson and Able SC who make up the South Carolina team will host the event. The AgrAbility team will continue working with Able SC in their commitment to the state in offering the AgrAbility program.

Submitted by South Carolina AgrAbility

May 2023

## Tennessee

The Emergency Management Association of Tennessee (EMAT) welcomed over 500 first responders and healthcare professionals to Knoxville, TN, for their 37th annual conference in April. TN AgrAbility partnered with TN Farm Bureau and the TN Association of Rescue Squads in an educational exhibit highlighting grain bin safety and rescue work conducted in their state. The Southern Ag Exchange Network TN was part of the exhibit, providing information on farm stress.



Over 150 attended the 2023 TN Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Conference held at the TN Farm Bureau Expo Center in Lebanon, TN, recently. TN AgrAbility's educational exhibit on small tools was geared toward those with back and chronic diseases and included the EZ back handle, the garden scooter, anti-vibration gloves, small adaptive tool kits, and booklets on arthritis, and how to take proper care of your back.

The first session of the West TN New Farmer Academy began in April with 60 participants. The first session serves as an overview of the partners who serve the agriculture industry in Tennessee. TN AgrAbility staff presented information about the AgrAbility program and how staff members provide and find assistive technology for producers facing physical limitations.



TN AgrAbility staff had the honor of being introduced to the Stewart Creek FFA's Ag Issues Forum Team at the FFA State Convention. The team placed 2nd in the nation in 2022 on the topic of "ADA in the Ag Industry." Paul Jones, with National AgrAbility, had previously met with them via ZOOM. The group traveled to several farms and organizations in Tennessee to discuss ADA issues, and they met with Mr. Tim Williams of Farm Credit Mid-America who spoke with the team about how Farm Credit has partnered with AgrAbility to sponsor assistive technology for local farmers.

Submitted by Tennessee AgrAbility Project

May 2023

## Wisconsin



AgrAbility of Wisconsin wrapped up a busy event season by hosting its 2023 AgrAbility of Wisconsin Summit this past April 6 in Tomah, WI. Over 45 attendees learned about veteran farmer resources, soil health testing, and strategic farm business planning at this day-long networking event. The 2023 Summit had a strong attendance from veterans, with a focus on veteran farmers and farmer wellness. The keynote speaker was Jeff

Ditenberger, founder of TUGS - Talking, Understanding, Growing, Supporting, giving a powerful and personal presentation about his own journey with mental health.

"The goal of having Jeff speak to the group was to start that conversation and help break the stigma surrounding mental health. He stole the show and did a wonderful job," said Andrea Klahn, outreach specialist. Slides from presentations can be found at the website <https://agrability.bse.wisc.edu/>. Learn more about TUGS at <https://tugsgroup.com/>.



Submitted by Annie Klahn



May 2023

## **AgrAbility for Africa**

In order to enhance inclusion in agriculture, access to rehabilitation-care, and assistive technologies across Africa, the staff of AgrAbility for Africa will be holding an inaugural annual AgrAbility for Africa training workshop June 5th and 6th, 2023. This year's event is largely geared toward mapping service providers and interventions, facilitating partnership development for collaborations, and disability support service capacity development and scaling.

All are invited to join AgrAbility for Africa in Uganda on the 5th and the 6th of June, 2023, for the event. Support towards facilitating the attendance of farm workers and farm owners with disabilities is welcome! Anyone interested in supporting this event should contact Mutumba Faisal at [mutumbaf@yahoo.com](mailto:mutumbaf@yahoo.com).

Look for news and pictures from the event in the July 2023 AgrAbility e-note!

Submitted by Mutumba Faisal

May 2023

## Upcoming Events

**Name** New Battleground to Breaking Ground Phase 1 Course  
**Dates** Rolling admission  
**City, State** Online  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/s/product/new-phase-1-battleground-to-breaking-ground/01t4x000002ciNKAAY>

**Name** USDA Mental Health Awareness Month Workshop Series  
**Dates** May 9 - June 6, 2023, Each Tuesday from 2:00-3:30 p.m. EDT  
**City, State** Virtual event Online  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://ruralhealthinfocenter.health.mo.gov/usda-mental-health-awareness-month-workshop-series-starts-in-may/>

**Name** QPR for Farmers and Farm Families  
**Dates** May 25, 2023, from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. EDT  
**City, State** Webinar Online  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://tinyurl.com/33pj5xyj>

**Name** 2023 WORLD PORK EXPO  
**Dates** June 7-9, 2023  
**City, State** Des Moines, Iowa  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://www.worldpork.org/all-about-expo/>

**Name** Disability: It's Not What You Think  
**Dates** June 8, 2023, from 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. EDT  
**City, State** Virtual event Online  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://ufl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0td-Gvpj0jH9QOIXdiJmDmfC2sGaihO2xO#/registration>

**Name** Horse Progress Days  
**Dates** June 30 - July 1, 2023  
**City, State** Shipshewana, Indiana  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://horseprogressdays.com/>

**link**

**Name** Farm Science Review

**Dates** September 19-21, 2023

**City, State** London, Ohio

**Contact  
Info/Web  
link** <https://fsr.osu.edu/>

**Name** 2023 agrileadHER virtual conference

**Dates** November 1-2, 2023

**City, State** Virtual Event Online

**Contact  
Info/Web  
link** <https://www.agrileadher.com/>