

AgrAbility e•Note

June 2024

A monthly update for AgrAbility projects and friends of AgrAbility

National AgrAbility Project News

Save the date for the 2025 NTW!

It's official: the 2025 NTW is scheduled for Las Cruces, New Mexico, on March 24 -27. We will be staying at the [Hotel Encanto](#) and holding our sessions at the [New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum](#). The museum is building an AgrAbility exhibit that should be completed sometime this fall. We are excited for this partnership. Do not make your room reservations quite yet, as we do not have a direct link for our room block.



AgrAbility NTW Encore Webinars: six webinars from some of the most requested sessions of the 2024 in-person National Training Workshop. The first is “How to Develop Financial Sustainability for Your Organization” on June 26. [More](#)



Registration is filling up for the regional workshop/assistive technology professional training in Ann Arbor, MI, July 16-18. This regional workshop is provided in conjunction with MI AgrAbility and will

focus on assistive technology, worksite assessments, and preparing for the RESNA Assistive Technology Professional exam. [More](#)

NAP is also planning a regional workshop in Guam for October 29-31. A request for proposals was sent out. If interested in presenting or have any questions, please reach out to Tess. More information should be coming out in a couple of months.



The Michigan State Extension staff is putting together a monthly meeting of Extension staff working with AgrAbility to create space for knowledge sharing and questions about clients, outreach and marketing, and reporting. If interested, email Sam at wolfesa4@msu.edu.



Upcoming AgrAbility Zoom discussion on AT expos as outreach events to VR counselors, OTs, Extension professionals, and others. Save the date for July 2 at 3:00 p.m. EDT.

Are you interested in discussing issues related to OTs and other rehab professionals involved in agriculture? Complete a Doodle poll

to indicate your availability for an upcoming Zoom meeting by [clicking HERE](#).

NAP is seeking feedback on an updated version of the AgrAbility Publication Database, which lists and links to publications produced by NAP and by SRAPs. Visit www.agrability.org/publications-new to review it and access the anonymous web survey.

Paul Jones of NAP and Jeff Kratochwill of AgrAbility Wisconsin gave the presentation "Collaborations to Address the Needs of Agricultural Workers with Disabilities" on May 22 in Madison, Wisconsin, at the 2024 National Symposium on Quality Employment, a conference focused on vocational rehabilitation services. Paul also gave a similar presentation at spring conference of the Counsel of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) in Bethesda, MD, on April 9.

Toolbox Spotlight

[An OSHA Heat Safety Tool App](#) on their mobile phones allows workers with heat sensitivity to appropriately plan for and/or engage in outdoor work activities based on how hot it feels throughout the day. This app will visually indicate the current heat index and associated risk level specific to that worksite then recommend protective measures that should be taken in light of those heat index-based risk levels. It also provides first-aid information if heat-related illness is experienced. The app is available in English and Spanish for Android and iPhone devices.



State and Regional AgrAbility Project News

California



California AgrAbility had the pleasure of attending the 10th Annual Faith, Food, & Farms Conference in early May. It was an education-packed event hosted by the Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative. Staff learned loads and are looking forward to next year's conference!

Later in the month, staff partnered with the Center for Land Based Learning to host the first Pizza for Producers event, a Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program network initiative. The event promotes holding spaces for farmers to connect and support the agricultural community with a special focus on farmers who are veterans. [More](#)



Florida



Florida AgrAbility staff member Vanessa Spero hosted an educational visit with "Angels Bridging Gaps." This organization is an "autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities" caregiver support group that is dedicated to helping families and individuals with disabilities by providing emotional support, education, socialization, and more. [More](#)

Case Coordinator Lindsey Head attended the UF IFAS Corn Silage Field Day to spread awareness about Florida AgrAbility to Extension staff and local producers. The field day includes educational talks on silage production, a trade show connecting producers and industry partners, and tours of the hybrid trials.



The Florida AgrAbility team hosted a lunch and learn webinar to network with centers for independent living across Florida to educate directors about how they can collaborate with the AgrAbility program to best serve our farmers with disabilities.

Lindsey Head attended the 2024 Governor's Hurricane Conference in West Palm Beach to network with emergency management professionals and learn about proactive measures to help farmers with disabilities prepare for the upcoming hurricane season.

Georgia



Georgia AgrAbility staff attended the Village Community Garden's 3rd Annual Ag Field May Day in Sylvester, Georgia, on May 2nd. AgrAbility displayed its mobile learning lab where event attendees could try different forms of assistive technology.

On May 15th, Georgia AgrAbility staff presented to the Southeast District Agriculture and Natural Resource Extension Agent Meeting. After presenting, agents were taken outside to the mobile learning lab where they were able to see the types of assistive technology that farmers with disabilities may use on their farms.



Illinois

Illinois AgrAbility worked with one of its program partners, Illinois Assistive Technology Program-Illinois (IATP), to get some agricultural tools and devices into their existing device loan library. This effort will provide AgrAbility clients and audiences with the opportunity to borrow assistive technology items from IATP that can help them around their farms.

Illinois AgrAbility completed its spring webinar series in April, and these archived webinars can be found on the [Illinois Media Space](#) for anyone interested in learning about relevant topics in agriculture.

Indiana



Outreach Coordinator Ed Sheldon joined the Indiana Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation for its annual workshop on accessible gardening at Flanner Farms in downtown Indianapolis on May 18. The farm is sponsored by Flanner House, a social service organization started in 1898 that assists senior citizens, those in financial distress, families, children, and more. [More](#)

The summer 2024 edition of the Indiana AgrAbility *News Note* newsletter was recently published. [View it here](#).

Maine

Maine FishAbility joined with Maine Coast Fisherman's Association to offer two separate safety training and safe movement sessions for Maine fishermen in South Portland and Boothbay Harbor. Staff discussed general FishAbility program information and fishing ergonomics, and provided some movement practices for fishermen to incorporate into their daily work. [More](#)



AgrAbility staff exhibited at the Maine Bureau of Rehab Services conference in Bangor. The event intended to address an audience of those looking to



enter and re-enter the workforce. [More](#)

Maine AgrAbility staff had the opportunity to share a brief oral presentation with Cooperative Extension leadership regarding program progress and to initiate greater transparency within the Cooperative Extension network on AgrAbility services.

Michigan

AgrAbility staff joined the Michigan State University Extension Emergency Response for Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) team to deliver a training for first responders that includes a hands-on component with live animal herds including cattle, swine, sheep, and horses.

Extension Educator Samantha Wolfe and Occupational Therapy Assistant Andrea Garza also attended a Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) event onsite at a farmworker housing development. [More](#)



The Michigan team is excited to welcome AgrAbility staff to the regional training in Ann Arbor in July.

Missouri

The Missouri AgrAbility video, "Taking Agriculture to new Heights: Using drones to help Missouri Farmers with disabilities overcome barriers and improve efficiency," produced by MU Extension, Lincoln University Cooperative Extension Innovative Small Farmers' Outreach Program (LUCE ISFOP), and Poole Communications, was launched and published on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

To address the mental health crises in Missouri's rural areas, MU Extension has compiled mental health resources for customers, ag supports, professionals, and rural families. Resources also include free telehealth counseling by a trusted professional who understands agriculture. [More](#)



Emily Doosing, 4-H specialist and with Missouri AgrAbility, conducted the 4-H Clown College with an emphasis on AgrAbility. Lessons included inclusivity, positive mental health, and personal, physical, and mental safety. [More](#)

Mackenzie Bevins, occupational therapy student with the department of occupational therapy at the University of Missouri, is completing her doctoral capstone with Missouri AgrAbility. [More](#)

Lincoln University Innovative Small Farmers' Outreach Program Farm Outreach (ISFOP) Worker Mary Keeter led a hands-on demonstration on inoculating logs to grow mushrooms at the Forest Farming Train-the-Trainer Workshop at Carver Farm on May 16. Topics included proper PPE and safe handling of power tools and attendees included NRCS and Extension staff who work with minority and disabled farmers.

Mary Keeter led a workshop on building a raised garden bed at Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church in St. Louis on May 21st. A new garden bed that is 24" tall with built-in seating was constructed to accommodate community garden members with disabilities. Safe handling of power tools and proper PPE was included in the training.



Missouri AgrAbility was highlighted each day of March 2024 during the Brain Injury Fact of the Day awareness media campaign. The increased awareness from website banner ads was 456,554 impressions. [More](#)

Heather O'Hara, BIA-MO office administrator, attended the St. Louis Cardinals Redbird

Rookie Health Fair Kick-off on May 29. It was reported that Missouri AgrAbility Youth Activity Sheets to prevent brain injuries will be shared during the Health Fair in August 2024.

Nebraska

Nebraska AgrAbility staff members have been busy with client services this month. The team has been ensuring that assistive technology gets to the client in a timely manner and has been strengthening relationships with clients to ensure the correct equipment is being recommended on their behalf. [More](#)

New Mexico



New Mexico AgrAbility is excited about NM being chosen to host the 2025 NTW in beautiful Las Cruces, NM.

Non-profit farm partner Mandy's farm was featured in the *Los Ranchos Village Vision* for its AgrAbility-funded apprentice training program. Mandy's farm has also hired a new NM AgrAbility apprenticeship program coordinator. Welcome to the team Sylvan Rose.

Two level 2 fieldwork students successfully passed the NM AgrAbility fieldwork rotations.

NM AgrAbility's Technology Assistance Program partner (NMTAP) is planning an AT conference for September 2024.



Look for the NM AgrAbility summer newsletter that will be out later this month!

North Carolina - Affiliate Project

In its no-cost extension year, affiliate project NC AgrAbility has streamlined its services and outreach, and is having great success at increasing the number of farmers it is serving. NC AgrAbility is serving 41 clients and anticipates this will reach 60 by summer's end.



A pilot program was launched in partnership with Easterseals UCP for individuals living with disabilities in a NC group home. Residents alongside Extension agents and volunteers assembled and planted raised garden beds for the home. [More](#)

By attending these and other events to expand services, NC AgrAbility is establishing a stronger presence in the agricultural communities. They are proactively addressing farmers' needs and promoting safety practices in the industry.

NC AgrAbility staff members presented at the Forsyth Urban Growers School, focusing on agricultural safety and a mini "Stop the Bleed" course and presented on NC AgrAbility as a resource.



Ohio

Ohio AgrAbility staff attended Vendor Day in Dayton, Ohio, hosted by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD - state vocational rehabilitation agency). Vendor Day is an opportunity to share information



about AgrAbility, speak to OOD counselors, and promote the availability of agriculture expertise for VR services.

OAP staff also presented "Gardening with Arthritis" to the Summit County Master Gardeners in Akron, Ohio. The information was well-received, and the attendees shared several tips and pieces of equipment that they have found helpful as they have adapted their gardening practices to suit their abilities.

Pennsylvania

AgrAbility PA staff member Marci Walborn (OT, ATP with UCP Central PA) presented to a group of OTA students at Central Penn College on May 15. This was an opportunity for AgrAbility PA to pilot the introductory presentation/course which is targeted to OTs, other rehabilitation professionals, and medical professionals. [More](#)

AgrAbility PA's Marci Walborn presented to Rodale Institute Farmer Training/Veteran Farmer Training Program on Friday, May 17. [More](#)

South Carolina

The South Carolina team was able to meet with some prospective clients and gather information to assist in technology transfer and ideas and suggestions to aid the clients to continue in agriculture. This was beneficial for the team to evaluate the procedure the team had selected to use with assistance from other state AgrAbility programs.

The AgrAbility team will continue working with nonprofit Able SC in their commitment to the state in offering the AgrAbility program. One of the team's goals was to meet with assistive technology and vocational rehabilitation education to develop a plan to provide farmers in the state with resources to benefit their commitment to agriculture. [More](#)

Tennessee

May was recognized as Mental Health Month by Mental Health America (MHA). TN AgrAbility and Extension offices promoted Mental Health Month by sharing mental health resources and educational information to show the importance of removing labels on mental health and talking about it without shame. [More](#)

UT Extension Carter County and TN AgrAbility partnered with Carter County Cattlemen's Association, Farm Bureau Insurance- Elizabethton and SAgE TN to host a Bringing Awareness Right Now (BARN) Farmer Appreciation Dinner for 50 producers! [More](#)



Five veterans participated in the Veterans Horticultural Therapy Workshop at Alpha Omega Veterans Farm in Memphis, TN, hosted by TN AgrAbility, UT Gardens, UT TSU Extension, and Alpha Omega. Dr. Derrick Stowell, UT Gardens director of horticultural therapy programs, led the group in discussions related to... [More](#)

Dr. Derrick Stowell, TN AgrAbility partner and UT Gardens specialist, offered three scholarships for the Sow to Grow program. Sow to Grow is a program for teenagers 13 years old through high school seniors who have disabilities. [More](#)

TN AgrAbility public awareness events:

- Haywood County Progressive Ag Day for 3rd grade/disability awareness station to 135 students [More](#)
- Exhibit at Emergency Management Association of Tennessee

conference, Murfreesboro, TN

- Exhibits at Wayne and Lewis County Vocational Rehabilitation resource fairs
- Mission of TN AgrAbility/farm safety presentation to 52 farm families at the Wayne County Farmer Appreciation Dinner and movie night hosted by Wayne County UT TSU Extension and SAge (Southern Ag Exchange Network)



A TN Association of Rescue Squads member fabricated extra steps for a Carroll County livestock farmer with recent bilateral leg amputations due to complications from diabetes to prevent secondary injuries when entering and exiting his tractors. Thanks to Ned Stroller for these designs.

Giles and Wayne County livestock farmers with back/knee/mobility issues received mobility devices funded by TN Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Texas

Texas AgrAbility is hosting a FREE summer webinar series geared toward providing resources to farmers and ranchers with disabilities. The topics include "Getting Started with USDA Farm Service Agency," "Work Vessels for Veterans: Helping America's Injured Veterans Succeed," and "Resources for Farmers and Ranchers with Disabilities." [More](#)

Makenzie Thomas, program manager, and Mary Kate Hivnor, student assistant, were part of an inspection for a Texas AgrAbility client's pilot lift for his ranch operation. The client will now be able to access his tractors and equipment on his family's cattle and hay operation in central Texas. [More](#)



Texas AgrAbility met with its advisory committee for the quarterly meeting. Resources were shared to assist Texas AgrAbility clients and farmers and ranchers affected by recent natural disasters. [More](#)

Utah

AgrAbility of Utah staff were excited to be interviewed for Utah State University Extension's AgWellness podcast on May 20. The Ag Wellness podcast is hosted by ag Extension agents Jacob Hadfield and Josh Dallin, and they explore stories and resources that help promote mental health among the farming and ranching community. [More](#)

Virginia

This month, AgrAbility team members attended a breakfast with state legislators at the Rockingham County Extension Office. This unique opportunity allowed AgrAbility Virginia to share about the important efforts being made to overcome challenges and keep farmers in their fields.

Additionally, Field Agent Jeremy Daubert had an article published in the [Virginia Journal of Public Health](#) regarding dinner theaters in the Shenandoah Valley.

The team continues to assist 37 open farmer client cases, including a dairy farmer with whom the staff is looking into securing funding for farm equipment assistive technology.

Washington

Washington State AgrAbility had a fabulous time in Atlanta Georgia at the National

Training Workshop. Thank you for hosting.

Join us in Guam, Oct 29th -31st for the Western Region AgrAbility Workshop.

Wisconsin

AgrAbility of Wisconsin hosted an in-person training at Marshfield Agriculture Research Station for specialists with the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR professionals were given a chance to better understand the tasks farmers undergo every day to get their work done. [More](#)

StaffChanges and Recognition

Colorado

The Colorado AgrAbility Project sends its deepest gratitude and congratulations to Candiss (Candy) Leathers upon her retirement. For over a decade, Candy has served AgrAbility! Her time, energy, passion, and rigor has changed the lives of hundreds of clients and truly magnified the impact of the Colorado AgrAbility Project beyond measure. Candy will be retiring from the project this summer.



As a fitting way to cap off her time with the Colorado AgrAbility Project, Candy was honored at the 22nd Annual Colorado State University Department of Occupational Therapy (OT) Knowledge Exchange. She has been a long-time partner and friend of the OT department and has hosted several interns over the years. Please join us in thanking Candy for her selfless devotion to others and uplifting our agricultural and rural Colorado families!

Ashley Buchanan, our rehabilitation specialist, and her husband, Blake, welcomed a baby girl this January. Annabeth Jean Buchanan was born on January 15th, 2024, and is now on her way to being a rambunctious 4-month-old! Ashley has officially returned from maternity leave and is resettling back into serving AgrAbility clients across Colorado.



Nebraska



Meet Nebraska AgrAbility's New Team Member, Ashley Ahrens. Ashley is a food, nutrition, and health educator with Nebraska Extension in Dawes, Sheridan, Sioux, and Box Butte counties. Her office is in Chadron, which is located in the northwest Nebraska Panhandle. Ashley has a Master of Science in nursing and worked as a bedside nurse for several years before transitioning to Extension. Ashley has a passion for helping people live the healthiest lives they can. Help us welcome Ashley to AgrAbility!

New Mexico

NM Agrability offers gratitude to Janet DeWeese, MOT OT/L, for her work as a farm site assessor as she has announced her retirement. Staff welcome Carmen McClelland, a private practice OT with abundant AT experience into the role.

Washington

Washington State AgrAbility Co-Coordinators Emily Whittier and Alyssa Wade have accepted new positions. Emily accepted a faculty position with the Washington State Small Farms Team, and Alyssa Wade is creating a new business with her husband called The Butcher's Wife, LLC. Principle Investigator Don McMoran and Co-Coordinators Deb Eidsness and Debbie Fredricks continue to outreach for AgrAbility as they work toward closing the program out at the end of our grant cycle. We want to thank everyone for their encouraging words and for joining us in Washington at the national meeting two years ago.

Wisconsin

Michelle Bachand joined the AgrAbility of Wisconsin team on May 6th. She serves as the AgrAbility and youth tractor safety outreach program coordinator, which is an exciting new position for the UW-Madison Division of Extension. This position is designed to provide outreach and support for programs that promote safety and health for Wisconsin farm businesses. Michelle will increase awareness of the programs and identify opportunities for new program development. [More](#)

Pennsylvania

AgrAbility PA welcomed Gregory Shaw to the team on May 20 to work with the non-profit partner, UCP Central PA. Greg will be taking on our community outreach with a focus on marketing, education, and networking. He brings a great deal of experience with him in videography and production. He is very excited to join the project and we are looking forward to being able to reach out to and connect with individuals about AgrAbility in a variety of new ways.

AgrAbility in the News

Click titles below for news stories featuring AgrAbility projects .

- [AgrAbility: Cultivating Support and Independence for Farmer's with Disabilities](#) (Colorado AgrAbility Project)
- [New film on rural mental health is a teaching tool for counselors](#) (Colorado AgrAbility Project)
- [Illinois AgrAbility provides assistive technology to farmers statewide](#) (Illinois AgrAbility)
- [AgrAbility mechanical engineering capstone project designs portable swarm trap lifter for veteran beekeeper](#) (Michigan AgrAbility Project)
- [Nebraska AgrAbility aids accessibility for those disabled](#) - see pages 8-9 (Nebraska AgrAbility)
- [Accessibility in Agriculture: AgrAbility provides hope](#) (Nebraska AgrAbility)
- [After a life-changing farm accident, AgrAbility gives Larsen farmer a second chance](#) (AgrAbility of Wisconsin)
- [New AgrAbility and Youth Tractor Safety Coordinator](#) (AgrAbility of Wisconsin)
- [East Central FFA Students Build Handicap Accessible Raised Garden Beds](#) (Indiana AgrAbility Project)
- [Wearable technology makes the workplace safer](#) (Nebraska AgrAbility)

Other News

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

- On May 17th, Georgia AgrAbility staff attended the Pike County Middle School Ag Safety day in Meansville, Georgia. AgrAbility staff shared

about tractor and farm safety with tractor roll-over simulators, PTO safety simulator, and a grain safety simulation and a reaction time exercise with approximately 275 middle school students.



- [Biden-Harris Administration Announces Actions to Strengthen Tribal Food Sovereignty, Co-Stewardship, and Knowledge of Tribal Agriculture Policy](#)
- [USDA Provides \\$50 Million to Farms for Migrant Labor Program](#)
- [Cattle are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Hawaiian seaweed could change that.](#)
- [The UN says more aquatic animals were farmed than fished in 2022. That's the first time in history](#)
- [USDA and FarmRaise Launch Additional Online Disaster Assistance Decision Tool for Livestock, Honey Bee and Farm-Raised Fish Producers](#)
- [The Matanuska Valley Colony: Founding Farms in the Land of the Midnight Sun](#)
- [U.S. researchers developing hemp cellulose for diapers, other absorbent products](#)
- [Ukrainian winemakers visit California's Napa Valley to learn how to heal war-ravaged vineyards](#)

Upcoming Events

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

Problems? Contact Chuck Baldwin, National AgrAbility Project, baldwi19@purdue.edu
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