

AgrAbility e•Note

January 2025

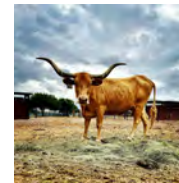
A monthly update for AgrAbility projects and friends of AgrAbility

National AgrAbility Project News

NTW updates

Happy New Year! If you have been putting it off, it is time to start thinking about the NTW. Here are some things for you to do:

- Register for the NTW. [More](#)
- Reserve your hotel room at the Hotel Encanto. [More](#)
- Do you know of someone that might like to be an exhibitor or a sponsor? [More](#)
- Put together a SRAP raffle basket and/or collect auctions items. [More](#)



For questions about the NTW, contact Tess at tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org.

NAP would love to host a regional workshop with another SRAP. If interested, please contact Tess tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org or JoBeth jbrath@goodwillfingerlakes.org, for more information.

AgrAbility Leadership & Management Training Survey. NAP requests that all SRAP staff members complete a brief web survey on training needs related to leadership and management. [Click here to access the survey by Friday, January 24.](#)

The AgrAbility/Extension conversation meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 3:00 p.m. Eastern. Contact Samantha Wolfe at wolfesa4@msu.edu for details. [More](#)



NAP Project Director Bill Field gave a presentation on AgrAbility for the January nTIDE (National Trends in Disability Employment) Lunch & Learn Series, a monthly, national series conducted by the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability and the Employment Policy and Measurement Rehabilitation and Research Training Center, funded by the Kessler Foundation.

As mentioned during the December all-staff meeting, the Extension Foundation is sponsoring a seven-part webinar series on fundraising and grant/partnership development, which are topics of interest mentioned by many SRAPs. Visit agrability.info/extension-fundraising for more information.

Newly archived virtual events:

- [AgrAbility all-staff meeting, December 16](#)

Toolbox Spotlight

Getting on/off one's skid steer can be a daunting task for those with leg impairments and/or arm-strength limitations. One possible solution is a set of [Skid Steer Folding Grab Bars](#), which consists of a pull-down bar with grab handle and a permanently-affixed bar mounted side by side to the machine's both left and right forward frame. Providing the leverage to climb aboard, one hand grasps the pulled-down grab bar, while the other hand grasps the stationary bar. Once seated, the left- and right-side pull-down bars are returned to upright position so they're out of the way when the loader bucket is raised.



State and Regional AgrAbility Project News

Colorado

The Colorado AgrAbility team, including Julie Elliott (western region behavioral health specialist), Natalie Bachmeier (AgrAbility coordinator), and Janell Pisegna (professor, CSU Occupational Therapy Department, and AgrAbility faculty), has been awarded a mini-grant to develop and implement an "Agriculture Workforce Exploration and Training Program" tailored for young adults with disabilities. [More](#)

Colorado AgrAbility team members Chad Reznicek, Julie Elliott, and Clinton Wilson have been appointed as leaders of the Agricultural Behavioral Health Workgroup. Established by Senate Bill 55, which passed in 2024, this workgroup is tasked with shaping agricultural and rural behavioral health programs within Colorado's Behavioral Health Administration. [More](#)

The AgrAbility program staff has hosted three winter workshops throughout the 2024 year that aim to provide health-related educational opportunities as well as resources to individuals living in rural communities. Four more workshops are scheduled for early 2025.

New AgrAbility program staff members successfully opened and completed services for two new clients during the month of December and shared AgrAbility information with five interested parties throughout the months of November and December.

Additionally, seven Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) assessments were completed. In January 2025, one completed DVR Report highlighted an individual who is new to the agricultural field with aspirations to complete a hydroponic greenhouse operation. [More](#)

Georgia



Georgia AgrAbility had a booth at the 87th Annual Georgia Farm Bureau Convention. Staff were able to interact with hundreds of farmers and farm families from across the state and let them know about AgrAbility services. [More](#)

The Georgia Farm Again veteran coordinator had the opportunity to highlight the impact veteran farmers in Georgia are making during the USDA's "Cultivating Care in

the Agricultural Community: Celebrating Mental Health Outreach and Agricultural Wellness Capacity Building in Georgia" along with partners from various state organizations and programs. [More](#)

The Georgia AgrAbility team met with a Georgia-based non-profit called FODAC to discuss how they can collaborate to reach more rural Georgia. FODAC works to provide refurbished home medical equipment for adults and children with disabilities. [More](#)

Indiana

The Purdue University Extension Professional Development Conference (PDC) was held December 4th and 5th at the Tippecanoe County Fairgrounds Event Center in Lafayette, Indiana. This annual gathering brings together nearly 400 Extension professionals, including county Extension educators and campus-based specialists, to network and share experiences, programs, and ideas. [More](#)



Twenty-four members of the Indiana AgrAbility advisory team, along with Dr. Randy Hubach and Dr. Cody Mullen, who were speakers from Purdue University's Center for Rural and Migrant Health, met December 18 in Indianapolis in the beautiful building of the Indiana Farm Bureau. [More](#)

Maine

Maine AgrAbility contractors Toni Small and Brie Weisman, as well as program coordinator Bella Russo, will be presenting at the AgrAbility National Training Workshop 2025 in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardener's Association hosted its annual Farmer to Farmer conference in Carabassett Valley, Maine. Program coordinator Bella Russo presented as a gold-level sponsor to 100 Maine farmers about Maine AgrAbility, as well as co-presented with Maine Agricultural Mediation and Maine Farm Coaching about on-farm conflict.

UMaine Cooperative Extension hosted the annual Maine Forage Conference in Waterville, ME. AgrAbility program coordinator Bella Russo had the opportunity to share resources at a table as well as speak to the room of about 40 farmer guests.

Maine Occupational Therapy Association hosted its annual conference. AgrAbility contractors Brie Weisman and Ketra Crosson networked at a table and presented the "Pain Tool Identifier."

The UMaine Cooperative Extension "Aggies" meeting for agricultural Extension staff was held in December. Maine's program coordinator was able to speak on behalf of Maine AgrAbility's projects and efforts in 2024.

Maine AgrAbility contractors Toni Small, Brie Weisman, and former OT student James Wall, presented virtually on "Let's MOOOve" via a AgrAbility NTW Encore Webinar

Contractor Brie Weisman and Program Coordinator Bella Russo appeared on the UMaine Cooperative Extension podcast, "Maine Farmcast" that features Maine agricultural-related resources. Episode link: <https://extension.umaine.edu/agrability/>.

The Certified Logging Professionals held their annual awards ceremony on December 6 in Brewer, ME. The event was held to raise awareness about logging-related news as well as give annual awards. Program Coordinator Bella Russo and contractor Brie Weisman were the keynote speakers and delivered a presentation about their logging work and how LogAbility supports Maine loggers and forest workers.

Bella Russo presented about AgrAbility's resources and farm injury at the annual crop planning meeting in Aroostook County Maine in early December. About 80 potato farmers attended the event, and staff were able to visit potato processing and storage facilities as well as the UMaine potato research station.

The soil health workshop hosted in York County, ME, for southern ME producers was attended by Maine's program coordinator where farmer contacts were established and staff tabled.

Michigan

The fall 2024 Michigan State University Mechanical Engineering Design Day took place at the beginning of December. The AgrAbility-sponsored project this term was a rolling kneeler cart designed to help a client with foot pain tend to her lavender plants. [More](#)



Staff attended the Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable Growers Expo in Grand Rapids, MI, engaging with potential and past clients and providing a brief demonstration of low- and high-tech assistive technologies during a worker protection standards session for farm workers. (images of Sam on rolling cart and of agrability tabling setup)



Staff and partners gathered for a strategic planning session in mid-December. Gathering everyone in one place was rejuvenating and refreshed the networks and ideas between new and returning staff, improved morale, and provided important insights from clients and partners alike. [More](#)

Missouri

Missouri AgrAbility collaborated with two cohorts of certified occupational therapy assistant (COTA) students from the University of Missouri Department of Occupational Therapy for their community practice projects. This partnership involved working alongside Missouri AgrAbility and MU Extension to research and revise the AgrAbility Client Intake Questionnaire, as well as to create an AgrAbility teaching module.

Leaders in the Field Podcast, hosted by Dr. Mackenzie Bevins, a 2024 grad in occupational therapy who did her capstone with the Missouri AgrAbility Program, is all about helping healthcare pros get a better grip on the agricultural community. It dives into the unique healthcare needs, challenges, and situations that agricultural workers face. [More](#)

Emily Doosing, a 4-H specialist with MU Extension, is actively refining the teaching module for Rodeo Clown College. This module covers important topics such as physical and mental health, farm safety, well-being, and AgrAbility. [More](#)

Karen Funkenbusch from MU Extension is still offering Missouri AgrAbility training to Dr. Mark Lucas, the new director for the Lincoln University Innovative Small Farmers' Outreach Program, along with its new farm outreach worker for the central region, Bryan de Valdivia.

Missouri AgrAbility was discussed as a resource at the Networking Coffees for Professionals hosted by the Brain Association of Missouri (BIA-MO) in December 2024. Networking coffees were held in St. Louis, Springfield, and Kansas City with participation of 50 vocational, rehabilitation, agriculture, health, and other professionals serving AgrAbility clients.

Susan Jaster, Lincoln University Small Farm Assistance Program field specialist, and

Maureen Cunningham, BIA-MO executive director, presented a session of "Missouri AgrAbility: Helping Farmers with Disabilities Succeed" as part of the Missouri Rural Health Association (MRHA) Lunch and Learn series. [More](#)

Nebraska

The Nebraska team took some time off during the holidays. They hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday season, and they look forward to the new year and serving many more clients.

Angie Howell, Jada Zimmer (Ruff), John Davis, and Emily Jacobson had a great time showcasing AgrAbility at the booth at the Nebraska Ag Expo in Lincoln, Nebraska. This event is considered to be the second largest indoor farm show in the United States. [More](#)



Soni Cochran, Aaron Yoder, Ashley Ahrens, and Emily Jacobson are working on a presentation for the upcoming National Training Workshop. They are excited to also be partnering with Ed Sheldon and his team for this presentation and look forward to sharing information about "Rural Preparedness: Strategies and resources to help strengthen the resilience of families and communities."

New Mexico

The NMAP team is excited about the opening of the AgrAbility exhibit at the NM Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces, NM. The official opening will be on January 23, 2024.

Staff are also preparing their presentations for NTW in March, as well as working with the national planning committee to ensure that the NTW in beautiful Las Cruces is an enchanting event.

The farm apprentices who have been working with NMAP's nonprofit partner, Mandy's Farm, graduated from the program on December 19th. They worked hard and all participated in at least one full year's growth of seeds, crops, ducks, goats, and farm skills. Mandy's Farm will continue to support the apprentices for job placement.

University of New Mexico and NMAP team members are scheduled to give a presentation on AgrAbility and assistive technology for food growers at an Albuquerque Master Gardeners program in January.

NMAP's non-profit partner will promote NM AgrAbility at a table in Santa Fe during the NM legislative session in February.

Ohio

Ohio AgrAbility finished the year strong with a very productive advisory board meeting where the team reviewed OAP's 2024 accomplishments and discussed opportunities for outreach, conference presentations, collaborations, and outreach activities.

OAP staff met for their quarterly in-person staff meeting to review 2024 and review recruitment strategies for 2025.

OAP was featured in the [Ohio State University Alumni Society magazine](#), as well as the [Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities newsletter](#). OAP staff appreciate the positive stories and expects to hear from new farmers across Ohio who would like to learn more about AgrAbility services.

Pennsylvania

AgrAbility PA provided a presentation to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) board during its annual in-person meeting. Staff highlighted three farmer success stories, including one video story. [More](#)

Staff presented to a class of OTA students about AgrAbility PA. Conversations surrounded the resources available to farmers and considerations when in the clinic working with a farmer.

Tennessee



2024 was TN AgrAbility's 30-year anniversary. Staff want to express their heartfelt gratitude for AgrAbility's support and dedication throughout the past 30 years. [More](#)

TN AgrAbility staff exhibited at the TN Farm Bureau State Convention tradeshow in Franklin, TN. This is always a great opportunity to visit with TN AgrAbility farmers and their families, with UT TSU Extension staff, and with our ag partners and have a chance to have the TN AgrAbility Extension team together! [More](#)



The TN Farm Family Health and Wellness Program is an educational outreach program, which TN AgrAbility partners with, designed to help farm families cope and thrive with the unique challenges facing them. The course will utilize a hybrid method of live webinars and/or recordings that can be watched as one's schedule allows. [More](#)

Texas

An advisory meeting was conducted with AgrAbility partners to discuss upcoming events and initiatives.

Utah

AgrAbility of Utah staff was excited to set up a vendor table at the Utah Cattleman's Association Annual Convention in Salt Lake City on December 5. The staff was able to explain AgrAbility to many of the 90 attendees from around the state. Over 23% of Utah's agricultural cash receipts come from cattle and calf production.

AgrAbility staff set up a table and presented at two pesticide training workshops. On December 17, staff presented to 92 people at the Cache County Training in Logan, UT, and on December 19, staff presented to 53 people at the Box Elder Training in Tremonton, UT.

Virginia

AgrAbility Virginia is supporting 38 farmer clients, including a beef farmer collaborating on an accessible cattle facility design.



In December, the team attended the 2024 Farm Bureau Convention and Virginia Farm-to-Table Conference, where Dr. Kim Niewolny presented on AgrAbility and the mission of VA Tech's Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation.

Wisconsin

AgrAbility of Wisconsin was the topic of discussion for the December 6th Common Ground Coffee Chat at the Food + Farm Exploration Center. AgrAbility Outreach Program Coordinator Michelle Bachand and Easterseals Rural Rehabilitation Specialist Lindsey Prahl were at the event to talk about AAW, describe their roles within the program, and answer questions. [More](#)



Michelle Bachand exhibited at the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation conference December 7th & 8th. The WFBF conference is an annual event that brings together over 1,000 Wisconsin farmers, agriculture business professionals, and supporters to discuss top issues impacting agriculture. [More](#)

Outreach Program Coordinator Michelle Bachand exhibited at the Wisconsin Farmers Union convention December 14th and 15th in collaboration with UW-Madison Division of Extension's farm succession specialist, Joy Kirkpatrick. The WFU convention is an annual event that brings together 250 WFU members to set policy that will improve life on their family farms and in their communities. [More](#)

International AgrAbility Network News

AgrAbility for Africa

It has been a busy month for AgrAbility for Africa staff who have been analyzing the increasing cases of misdiagnosed hidden conditions, particularly among children of farmers in rural areas. For example, there was a case in 2024 where a child underwent five different examinations at various facilities, each yielding a different diagnosis and resulting in changes to the prescribed medications. [More](#)

StaffChanges and Recognition

Missouri

Please help us welcome Journey Polacek to Missouri AgrAbility for spring 2025. She is a second-year student in the occupational therapy assistant program at the University of Missouri - Columbia, set to graduate in fall 2025. She is a lifelong resident of Columbia with an interest in rural healthcare. [More](#)



Texas

Texas AgrAbility bids farewell to Makenzie Thomas, Texas AgrAbility program manager. Makenzie worked for Texas AgriLife for 10 years, leaving a positive impact on Texas farmers. Makenzie will be missed, but we are so excited that she will have more time with her three children.

Texas AgrAbility welcomes Cindy Kovar, Texas AgrAbility program manager. Cindy has 14

years' experience in AgriLife Extension as the program manager of a statewide traffic safety grant. Cindy's lineage is in farming, as she was raised on a small farm in Milam County. She continues to have a small garden and helps her parents out on the family farm

AgrAbility in the News

Click titles below for news stories featuring AgrAbility projects .

- [From Disability to AgrAbility - Horse Training with Adaptive Technology](#) (New Mexico AgrAbility Project, Colorado AgrAbility Project, National AgrAbility Project)
 - [Local Motion: 2024 Salute to Agriculture](#) (Colorado AgrAbility Project)
 - [Sitting](#) - see pages 38-39 (Maine AgrAbility)
 - [A photo tour of the 2024 Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Show](#) (Michigan AgrAbility Project)
 - [Important role of farm dogs shown](#) (AgrAbility in Georgia)
 - [How Michigan AgrAbility Helped Sturgis Farmer Monte Bordner to Keep Working](#) (Michigan AgrAbility Project)
 - [Keeping Farmers at Work](#) (Ohio AgrAbility)
 - [Register for Wisconsin Youth Tractor safety program](#) (AgrAbility of Wisconsin)
 - [Maine FARMcast: Maine AgrAbility with Bella Russo and Brie Weisman](#) (Maine AgrAbility)
 - [AgrAbility helping MSU AgBioResearch center implement assistive technology to support worker](#) (Michigan AgrAbility Project)
 - [AgrAbility's tech transforms lives on farms](#) Michigan AgrAbility Project)
 - [AgrAbility expands to improve mental health](#) (Colorado AgrAbility Project)
 - [Joint Pain in the Woods: How to Protect Your Body While Logging](#) - see pages 34-35 (Maine AgrAbility)
 - [Kellyn Rides Back into the Ring: Overcoming Challenges, One Step at a Time](#) (Ohio AgrAbility)
-

Other News

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

- [Talking Total Farmer Health Podcast: Motherhood, Farming, and Invisible Burdens](#). Episode 39, 1st January 2025
 - December 3rd International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebrated the strength, resilience, and unique contributions of people with disabilities. [More](#)
 - December 10th Human Rights Day was celebrated! Everyone deserves to live with dignity and respect. [More](#)
 - Congratulations to Dr. Cheryl Witt, KY Ag nurse, Extension specialist for mental health, who partners with AgrAbility and Raising Hope KY. Dr. Witt is part of a writing team that recently had a paper published, "Concept Analysis: Challenge Coins as a Caring Support Tool to Prevent Farmer Suicide." [More](#)
 - [Government boosts replant payments for farmers in 2026](#)
 - [A farming project in South Africa is helping deaf people build skills and find jobs](#)
 - [Winterproof your farm tires: Essential tips for cold season](#)
 - [Galloping Through Time: Inspiring History of Horse Farming](#)
 - [USDA Highlights Business Builder Grants for Small and Mid-Sized Farm and Food Businesses](#)
 - [Honey Bee Health Coalition Releases Tips for Beekeepers on Navigating the H-2A Seasonal Worker Program](#)
-

Upcoming Events

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

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

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January 2025

National AgrAbility Project

Happy New Year! If you have been putting it off, it is time to start thinking about the NTW. Here are some things for you to do:

- Register for the NTW. You can click [HERE](#) to go to the NTW website. There you will find more detailed information. The registration link is on the registration tab.
- Reserve your hotel room at the Hotel Encanto. You can click [HERE](#) to go to the hotel reservation page. You can also go to the hotel tab on the NTW website, there you will find more information and the link to reserve your room. The room block closes on February 21st, so don't miss out.
- Do you know of someone that might like to be an exhibitor or a sponsor? More Send them this [link](#) for the NTW website and tell them to click on Exhibitor or Sponsor tab, or send their contact information to Tess-tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org
- Put together a SRAP raffle basket and/or collect auctions items. More Both activities help us to bring farmer clients to the NTW. You can ship items ahead of time to Shelly Morris at NMSU Ag Science Center at Clovis, Attn. Shelly Morris for NTW 2025, 2346 SR 288, Clovis, NM 88101. Please let Shelly know what you are shipping and if it is for the auction or your raffle basket. Shelly's email is sspears@nmsu.edu.



Submitted by Goodwill of the Finger Lakes

The AgrAbility/Extension conversation meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 3 p.m. Eastern. Contact Samantha Wolfe at wolfesa4@msu.edu for details. Last month, four participants discussed supplemental funding, marketing materials and strategies, client intake processes in different states, and more.

Submitted by Samantha Wolfe

January 2025

Colorado

The Colorado AgrAbility team, including Julie Elliott (western region behavioral health specialist), Natalie Bachmeier (AgrAbility coordinator), and Janell Piseigna (professor, CSU Occupational Therapy Department, and AgrAbility faculty), has been awarded a mini-grant to develop and implement an "Agriculture Workforce Exploration and Training Program" tailored for young adults with disabilities.

AgriProspects, supported by the Extension Foundation through a USDA-NIFA federal grant, aims to enhance access to education and skill-building opportunities for rural and underserved populations. The pilot program will be launched in Mesa County at CSU's Western Campus in collaboration with the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

To ensure the curriculum aligns with community needs, the team will host listening sessions in January and February with producers, educators, and young adults. For questions or feedback, please contact Julie Elliott, project PI, at julie.elliott@colostate.edu.

Colorado AgrAbility team members Chad Reznicek, Julie Elliott, and Clinton Wilson have been appointed as leaders of the Agricultural Behavioral Health Workgroup. Established by Senate Bill 55, which passed in 2024, this workgroup is tasked with shaping agricultural and rural behavioral health programs within Colorado's Behavioral Health Administration.

The workgroup will work alongside a dedicated liaison connecting the Behavioral Health Administration, Colorado Department of Agriculture, behavioral health providers, rural community leaders, agricultural communities, and nonprofit organizations. The group's efforts aim to provide meaningful support to farmers, ranchers, and their families.

For more information about this initiative, visit [Colorado Sun's coverage](#).

Additionally, seven Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) assessments were completed. In January 2025, one completed DVR Report highlighted an individual who is new to the agricultural field with aspirations to complete a hydroponic greenhouse operation. AgrAbility staff provided this client with educational resources for greenhouse production, information about local farmer's markets, and more to help jump start his agricultural business. Given the client's significant limitations, these recommendations will serve as a foundation to support their agricultural-related endeavors.

Submitted by Natalie Bachmeier

January 2025

Georgia



Georgia AgrAbility had a booth at the 87th Annual Georgia Farm Bureau Convention. Staff were able to interact with hundreds of farmers and farm families from across the state and let them know about AgrAbility services. Staff also enjoyed having Laura Adams attend with us to tell about her family's experience with AgrAbility and to debut the new children's book about their dog Skippy!

The Georgia Farm Again veteran coordinator had the opportunity to highlight the impact veteran farmers in Georgia are making during the USDA's "Cultivating Care in the Agricultural Community: Celebrating Mental Health Outreach and Agricultural Wellness Capacity Building in Georgia" along with partners from various state organizations and programs. The event captured the programs' interest in recognizing and battling farm stress and the impact on mental health throughout the farming communities in Georgia.

The Georgia AgrAbility team met with a Georgia-based non-profit called FODAC to discuss how they can collaborate to reach more rural Georgia. FODAC works to provide refurbished home medical equipment for adults and children with disabilities. Staff are excited to work with them to distribute more equipment to farm families who need it.

Submitted by AgrAbility in Georgia

January 2025

Indiana

The Purdue University Extension Professional Development Conference (PDC) was held December 4th and 5th at the Tippecanoe County Fairgrounds Event Center in Lafayette, Indiana. This annual gathering brings together nearly 400 Extension professionals, including county Extension educators and campus-based specialists, to network and share experiences, programs, and ideas.



Several Indiana AgrAbility staff members participated in the event and presented breakout sessions to educate fellow Extension professionals about both state and national efforts to assist farm families impacted by disability. Latino Outreach Coordinator Kimber Nicoletti-Martinez highlighted challenges to meeting mental health needs of farmworker communities. Joe Ricker, veteran outreach coordinator, led a roundtable discussion with Extension educators and campus specialists about Extension outreach to veterans. Ed Sheldon and a team of county educators from throughout Indiana introduced a newly developed teaching module titled "Inclusive Emergency Preparedness: Ensuring Safety for Individuals with Disabilities" that will



be available to Extension and AgrAbility staff. Indiana and National AgrAbility Project Director Bill Field led a presentation about grain handling and storage safety and how to better educate Indiana farmers about safe work practices. In addition to the formal presentations, team members were able to visit personally with many Extension colleagues and distribute AgrAbility resources at an exhibit in the Department/Program Showcase.

The conference provided a great chance for the Indiana team to introduce AgrAbility to newer Extension professionals, while also allowing them to re-connect with "veteran" Extension partners from throughout Indiana and other Purdue departments.

Submitted by Ed Sheldon

Twenty-four members of the Indiana AgrAbility advisory team, along with Dr. Randy Hubach and Dr. Cody Mullen, who were speakers from Purdue University's Center for Rural and Migrant Health, met December 18 in Indianapolis in the beautiful building of the Indiana Farm Bureau. Following introductions, Drs. Hubach and Mullen shared the work of the Center, and a discussion ensued concerning ways that IN AgrAbility and the Center might collaborate together.



IN AgrAbility staff reports were shared prior to open discussions on Vocational Rehabilitation trainings, the Bridging Horizons Contest, and an upcoming AT expo. Following lunch, the group discussed ways in which IN AgrAbility could improve client services, how the advisory team might support staff efforts to contact all clients annually, and any new ideas that might improve the next project proposal from Indiana once the next AgrAbility RFA is received from USDA/NIFA.

The meeting closed with a report on NAP activities in which many of the IN

AgrAbility staff participate plus a challenge to the group to participate personally and through giving to the 2025 NTW.

Submitted by Chuck Baldwin

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January 2025

Michigan



The fall 2024 Michigan State University Mechanical Engineering Design Day took place at the beginning of December. The AgrAbility-sponsored project this term was a rolling kneeler cart designed to help a client with foot pain tend to her lavender plants. This design was honored as the Best Capstone Design Project for the term. Design plans for the cart will be shared



online at canr.msu.edu/agrability.

Staff and partners gathered for a strategic planning session in mid-December. Gathering everyone in one place was rejuvenating and refreshed the networks and ideas between new and returning staff, improved morale, and provided important insights from clients and partners alike. The facilitator encouraged everyone to get creative and led a "Dream Play Build" exercise where everyone shared a favorite childhood memory followed by working in small groups to create an ideal model of life - from which participants drew core themes towards AgrAbility.



Submitted by Samantha Wolfe

January 2025

Missouri

Leaders in the Field Podcast, hosted by Dr. Mackenzie Bevins, a 2024 grad in occupational therapy who did her capstone with the Missouri AgrAbility Program, is all about helping healthcare pros get a better grip on the agricultural community. It dives into the unique healthcare needs, challenges, and situations that agricultural workers face. Check out Episode 6: "Farm Life After Injury - A Caregiver's Perspective" at *Leaders in the Field Podcast* at: <https://extension.missouri.edu/programs/podcasts/leaders-in-the-field-podcast>.

Emily Doosing, a 4-H specialist with MU Extension, is actively refining the teaching module for Rodeo Clown College. This module covers important topics such as physical and mental health, farm safety, well-being, and AgrAbility. Stay tuned for more details, which will be highlighted at the 2025 AgrAbility National AgrAbility Training Workshop.

Submitted by Karen Funkenbusch, Emily Doosing, and Willard Downs

Susan Jaster, Lincoln University Small Farm Assistance Program field specialist, and Maureen Cunningham, BIA-MO executive director, presented a session of "Missouri AgrAbility: Helping Farmers with Disabilities Succeed" as part of the Missouri Rural Health Association (MRHA) Lunch and Learn series. This live-streamed session had 33 participants. The session was recorded for sharing with MRHA Members and posted on their website.

Submitted by Maureen Cunningham

STAFF CHANGES

Please help us welcome Journey Polacek to Missouri AgrAbility for spring 2025. She is a second-year student in the occupational therapy assistant program at the University of Missouri - Columbia, set to graduate in fall 2025. She is a lifelong resident of Columbia with an interest in rural healthcare. Through her work in the OTA Practice in the Community course, she researched and updated the Missouri AgrAbility Intake Questionnaire and explored the relationship between agriculture and healthcare. In her free time, Journey enjoys spending time with friends and family, working out, and being outdoors as much as she possibly can. While working with Missouri AgrAbility, she aims to deepen her understanding of rural communities and how to connect with individuals in those settings as part of her future career.



January 2025

Nebraska

Angie Howell, Jada Zimmer (Ruff), John Davis, and Emily Jacobson had a great time showcasing AgrAbility at the booth at the Nebraska Ag Expo in Lincoln, Nebraska. This event is considered to be the second largest indoor farm show in the United States. Numbers were down at the show this year, but staff still had some engaging conversations and spread the word about the program. This show offers an Innovation Hub to showcase new technologies, many of which would be helpful for AgrAbility clients. Emily's favorites were [BoviJet](#) and [Grain Weevil Robot](#)



Submitted by Soni Cochran

January 2025

Pennsylvania

AgrAbility PA provided a presentation to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) board during its annual in-person meeting. Staff highlighted three farmer success stories, including one video story. The stories showed the impact OVR and AgrAbility make when collaborating on services. The presentation was very well-received, and AgrAbility was highly praised by OVR's executive director.

Submitted by Marci Walborn

January 2025

Tennessee



2024 was TN AgrAbility's 30-year anniversary. Staff want to express their heartfelt gratitude for AgrAbility's support and dedication throughout the past 30 years. Together, staff have achieved remarkable milestones and touched countless lives. Here's to a new year filled with hope, growth, and endless possibilities. Hoping 2025 brings joy, health, and prosperity. Let's keep the momentum going and continue to remove barriers to farming for farmers with disabilities!

TN AgrAbility staff exhibited at the TN Farm Bureau State Convention trade show in Franklin, TN. This is always a great opportunity to visit with TN AgrAbility farmers and their families, with UT TSU Extension staff, and with our ag partners and have a chance to have the TN AgrAbility Extension team together!



Entertainment at the TN Farm Bureau State Convention banquet was [Operation Song](#), a veteran music therapy/mental health resource... "Bringing Them Back One Song at A Time". Their mission is to empower veterans, active-duty military members, and their families to tell their stories through the process of songwriting. Those served need no musical or writing skills, only a willingness to share their stories and, with the help of professional songwriters, transform them into song.

The TN Farm Family Health and Wellness Program is an educational outreach program, which TN AgrAbility partners with, designed to help farm families cope and thrive with the unique challenges facing them. The course will utilize a hybrid method of live webinars and/or recordings that can be watched as one's schedule allows. Five new Zoom-based webinars have been scheduled for 2025. These will be held every other Thursday evening at 6 p.m. (CT) / 7:00 p.m. (ET) beginning January 30, 2025. Register: <https://fcs.tennessee.edu/mffhw/>.

Other News

December 3rd International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebrated the strength, resilience, and unique contributions of people with disabilities. Let's continue to work together to create a more inclusive and accessible world for all.



December 10th Human Rights Day was celebrated! Everyone deserves to live with dignity and respect. Let's work together to create a world where everyone's rights are protected.

Congratulations to Dr. Cheryl Witt, KY Ag nurse, Extension specialist for mental health, who partners with AgrAbility and Raising Hope KY. Dr. Witt is part of a writing team that



recently had a paper published, "Concept Analysis: Challenge Coins as a Caring Support Tool to Prevent Farmer Suicide." Thank you to Cheryl and [Raising Hope KY](#) for bringing awareness to the "Challenge Coin!" Read the full article: ukfcs.net/CDWarticle

January 2025

Wisconsin



AgrAbility of Wisconsin was the topic of discussion for the December 6th Common Ground Coffee Chat at the Food + Farm Exploration Center. AgrAbility Outreach Program Coordinator Michelle Bachand and Easterseals Rural Rehabilitation Specialist Lindsey Prahll were at the event to talk about AAW, describe their roles within the program, and answer questions. It was an opportunity for local

farmers to learn about AgrAbility services and engage in peer networking.

Michelle Bachand exhibited at the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation conference December 7th & 8th. The WFBF conference is an annual event that brings together over 1,000 Wisconsin farmers, agriculture business professionals, and supporters to discuss top issues impacting agriculture. The AgrAbility of Wisconsin booth was adjacent the Marshfield Clinic Research Institute's National Farm Medicine Center booth, allowing both programs to continue their collaboration to distribute SMV signs and bring attention of agricultural safety on public roadways.



Outreach Program Coordinator Michelle Bachand exhibited at the Wisconsin Farmers Union convention December 14th and 15th in collaboration with UW-Madison Division of Extension's farm succession specialist, Joy Kirkpatrick. The WFU convention is an annual event that brings together 250 WFU members to set policy that will improve life on their family farms and in their communities. Michelle had the opportunity to speak with a number of farmers and share examples of assistive technology, as well as providing information for attendees to take home.

Submitted by AgrAbility of Wisconsin

January 2025

AgrAbility for Africa

It has been a busy month for AgrAbility for Africa staff who have been analyzing the increasing cases of misdiagnosed hidden conditions, particularly among children of farmers in rural areas. For example, there was a case in 2024 where a child underwent five different examinations at various facilities, each yielding a different diagnosis and resulting in changes to the prescribed medications.

AgrAbility for Africa is leading initiatives to raise awareness of this issue and is advocating for a specialized pediatric team to support affected children and their families. The goal is to reduce the risk of organ damage and ensure access to accurate diagnoses and appropriate treatments for children living with disabilities.

Submitted by Mutumba Faisal

January 2025

Upcoming Events

- Name** Sioux Falls Farm Show
Dates January 22-24, 2025
City, State Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Contact Info/Web link <https://siouxfallsfarmshow.com/>
- Name** Keep Rural Communities Healthy - The Role of HPV Vaccination
Dates January 28, 2025, from 1:00-2:00 EST
City, State Agrisafe Webinar Online
Contact Info/Web link <https://www.agrisafe.org/event/webinar-keep-rural-communities-healthy-the-role-of-hpv-vaccination/>
- Name** International Production & Processing Expo
Dates January 28-30, 2025
City, State Atlanta, Georgia
Contact Info/Web link <https://ippexpo.org/>
- Name** Advancing Safety Skills in Forestry Settings with Virtual Reality
Dates January 30, 2025, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. EST
City, State Webinar Online
Contact Info/Web link <https://learning.agrisafe.org/products/advancing-safety-skills-in-forestry-settings-with-virtual-reality>
- Name** CattleCon 2025
Dates February 4-6, 2025
City, State San Antonio, Texas
Contact Info/Web link <https://convention.ncba.org/>
- Name** AgriSafe Monthly Mental Health Innovations Exchange - AgriStress Response Network
Dates February 5, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. EST
City, State Zoom Meeting Online
Contact <https://www.agrisafe.org/event/agristress-response-network-mental->

Info/Web link [health-innovations-exchange-2024-10-02/2025-02-05/](https://www.health-innovations-exchange.com/2024-10-02/2025-02-05/)

Name World Ag Expo

Dates February 11-13, 2025

City, State Tulare, California

Contact <https://www.worldagexpo.com/>

Info/Web link

Name National Farm Machinery Show

Dates February 12-15, 2025

City, State Louisville, Kentucky

Contact <https://farmmachineryshow.org/>

Info/Web link

Name Western Farm Show

Dates February 21-23, 2025

City, State Kansas City, Missouri

Contact <https://www.westernfarmshow.com/health-safety-roundup/>

Info/Web link

Name Lincoln University Small Farmers Conference 2025

Dates March 3-5, 2025

City, State Jefferson City, Missouri

Contact <https://www.lincolnu.edu/college-of-agriculture-environmental-and-human-sciences/small-farmers-conference.html>

Info/Web link

Name AgrAbility National Training Workshop

Dates March 24-27, 2025

City, State Las Cruces, New Mexico

Contact www.agrability.org/ntw

Info/Web link

Name 2025 ISASH

Dates June 23-26, 2025

City, State Portland, Maine

Contact <https://isash.org/isash-annual-conference-home-page/>

Info/Web link