

# AgrAbility e·Note

February 2025

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

## National AgrAbility Project News

AgrAbility all-staff meeting: Monday, March 10 at 3:00 p.m. ET. Look for details coming soon.

### NTW Updates

- Don't put off making hotel reservations any longer. The room block closes on February 21st, so don't miss out. Click [HERE](#) to go to the hotel reservation page. Also see the hotel tab on the NTW website for more information and the link.
- Earlybird Registration pricing ends February 21st. Regular registration will increase from \$400 to \$450. Click [HERE](#) to go to the NTW website registration tab.
- Know of someone that might like to be an exhibitor or a sponsor? [More](#)
- Register to have a SRAP display table. [More](#)
- Put together a SRAP raffle basket and/or collect auctions items. [More](#)
- Start thinking about the snack to bring to share in the hospitality suite

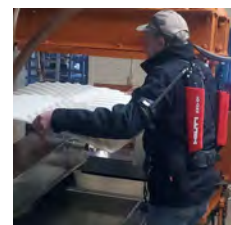


If you have any questions about the NTW, contact Tess at [tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org](mailto:tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org).



NAP is just starting to plan a regional workshop for the late spring in Shipshewana, IN, that will focus on working with Old Order communities. To be on the planning committee, please let Tess know.

AgrAbility Zoom discussion: "Exoskeletons in Agriculture." Tuesday, February 20 at 2:00 p.m. ET. Contact [jonesp@purdue.edu](mailto:jonesp@purdue.edu) if you didn't get the link.



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

### More Upcoming Deadlines:

- AgrAbility Annual Staff Needs Assessment (for those serving during 2024). **Today, February 14.** NAP will be giving away three items for randomly chosen participants

who complete the survey: One free 2025 NTW registration, One \$250 order of NAP publications, One \$100 order of NAP publications.

- Orders for the Plowshares Technical Report, *The Accessible Farm Shop: Usable and Efficient*. \$2 each + shipping; minimum order 25. Respond to [jonesp@purdue.edu](mailto:jonesp@purdue.edu) by Monday, February 17.
- NAP "Featured SRAP" social media initiative. One staff member per interested SRAP should respond to the web poll by Friday, February 28.

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## Toolbox Spotlight



Designed to reduce strain on one's back and joints, the [EarthLifter Spading Fork](#) utilizes a "rolling fulcrum" for controlled lifting. This not only allows one's posture to be in better alignment with spinal orientation, but also reportedly provides a 4:1 mechanical advantage (i.e., 1 pound of effort to lift 4 pounds). The tool can be used for harvesting root crops and for removing weeds, grasses, rocks, etc. as well as tilling the soil. *Several of these devices will be available in the 2025 NTW auction.*

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## State and Regional AgrAbility Project News

### Alaska

Staff provided a presentation about adaptive gardening and farming and AgrAbility program services to the Fairbanks Retired Teachers Association (FRTA). As a result of this presentation, they have been invited to create awareness of AgrAbility with a pod cast produced by one of the FRTA members.

As part of their plan to produce awareness of AgrAbility among medical professionals, staff had a booth at the three-day Alaska Public Health Association Summit, and nonprofit partner ATLA participated in a "lightning round" session on adaptive technology.

Finally, staff participated with a two-day booth at the Interior Farm Forum, an event aimed at local farmers, ranchers, and food producers.

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### Florida

Vanessa Spero presented at the 26th International Conference on Autism, Intellectual Disability & Developmental Disabilities (DADD). The poster presentation, "Opportunities in Agriculture for People with Disabilities", highlighted programs and opportunities for youth and adults and reached an audience of 50 individuals.



Palm Beach and Brevard counties have launched Barnyard Challengers, a 4-H program that creates agricultural and interpersonal connections for youth with disabilities. Teen mentors and adult staff and volunteers foster hands-on learning opportunities for youth to care for and show poultry.

The Florida AgrAbility team met with their advisory board.

- Advisory board members will reach out to state senators and representatives regarding potential funding to support the AgrAbility program. [More](#)



## Georgia



A few members of the Georgia AgrAbility staff were able to take a tour of an organization called FODAC. Georgia AgrAbility is partnering with them to help reach more individuals with disabilities in rural Georgia.

[More](#)

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## Indiana

January 14-16, several Indiana AgrAbility staff and volunteers worked the AgrAbility/LifeLyfts booth at the Fort Wayne Farm Show. More than 28,500 attended the event and good contacts were made - especially through giving rides on the LifeLyfts Tractor Seat Lift!



The Indiana Horticulture Conference is an annual gathering of growers, Extension staff, researchers, and supporters of the state's diverse horticultural and specialty crop industry. Ed Sheldon, Indiana AgrAbility outreach coordinator, participated in the conference and highlighted AgrAbility's services in a trade show exhibit. [More](#)

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## Maine



Maine AgrAbility Project was present at the annual Maine Agricultural Trade Show, January 14-16 in Augusta. Staff prepared a "farm ergonomics" theme for the show and talked to over 180 new contacts throughout.

AgrAbility staff worked in conjunction with an advisory council member from the Professional Logging Contractors to begin work on a version of a "Yoga for Loggers" poster with help from a small-scale logging contractor in western Maine.

The annual "Flowering in the North" conference for cut flower growers took place at the end of January in Portland, ME. AgrAbility staff tabled and spoke with small-scale growers that attended the conference.



## Michigan

Ned Stoller presented and had a table at the Frank's Crop Watch meeting in Hemlock, MI, where over 100 growers gathered.

Samantha Wolfe shared an intro to AgrAbility presentation to her Extension colleagues in the Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute at MSU. The following day, she also gave a short speech about AgrAbility to the local chapter of Toastmasters International.

Check out the [Rolling Kneeler Cart Design Plans](#) from the fall semester's MSU mechanical engineering capstone design project for an AgrAbility client.

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## Missouri

A group of 100 participants at several events learned how to utilize Missouri AgrAbility as a key resource offering direct services and educational support. [More](#)

Journey Polacek, a student pursuing a career as an occupational therapy assistant

through the University of Missouri Occupational Therapy Assistant Baccalaureate Program, works with Missouri AgrAbility to develop toolkits that emphasize rural assistive technology devices, disability awareness, ergonomics, mental health resources, and injury prevention guides. [More](#)

Lincoln University's Innovative Small Farmers' Outreach Program (ISFOP) provided training with all staff members who assist with Missouri's plan of work. ISFOP Extension staff also handed out resources and discussed Missouri AgrAbility during in-person, on-the-farm visits with new farmers and their families.

Missouri AgrAbility was discussed as a resource during the Starling Missouri meeting on January 21 and 22. Discussions were held with five professionals in the fields of residential services for persons with developmental disabilities and community supports. [More](#)

Maureen Cunningham, BIA-MO executive director and Missouri AgrAbility Co-PI, highlighted Missouri AgrAbility during a BIA-MO Speakers Bureau presentation for 20 case managers and admission liaisons for The Rehabilitation Institute of St. Louis that provide in-patient rehabilitation services for Missouri AgrAbility clients throughout Missouri. [More](#)

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## Nebraska

Emily Jacobson, program manager for Nebraska AgrAbility, shared that she has been making quite a few farm visits this month - great news! She is finishing up client reports and getting quotes for VR. [More](#)

Emily attended the quarterly Beginning Farmer and Rancher Group meeting in Lincoln to discuss opportunities to support those beginning ag producers.

Emily and Angie Howell, Nebraska Easterseals, recently connected with the 50 Mile March project to learn more about their efforts in Bellevue, Nebraska. They explored opportunities for AgrAbility to help educate homeless veterans about farming and the different types of assistive technology available to overcome their limitations.

Soni Cochran, Aaron Yoder, Ashley Ahrens, and Emily Jacobson continue to work on a presentation for the upcoming National Training Workshop. They are co-presenting with Ed Sheldon, Indiana AgrAbility, and his team for this presentation. [More](#)

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## New Mexico



The New Mexico AgrAbility Project (NMAP) team completed a walk-through and attended the grand opening of the AgrAbility exhibit at the NM Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces, NM. [More](#)

The next class of farm apprentices have been determined with NMAP's non-profit partner, Mandy's Farm. They will begin their farm training in February and March. [More](#)

UNM and NMAP team members gave a presentation about common intervention for hand injuries and assistive technology for food growers at the Albuquerque Master Gardeners program on January 28.

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

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## Ohio

Ohio AgrAbility started January presenting on "Making your fair accessible to people with disabilities" at the Ohio Fair Managers Conference and ended it with "Fitness for Farm Life" at AgPro Safety Day. [More](#)

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## Pennsylvania

AgrAbility PA provided a presentation on the small stage at the 2025 Farm Show during the Women in Ag series with Temple Grandin as the opening speaker.



AgrAbilityPA staff also had a presence at the Keystone Farm Show held in York, PA.

Staff attended various trainings this month with representation at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable Convention and the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATiA) Annual Conference.



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## South Carolina



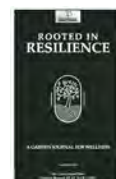
The South Carolina AgrAbility Project was invited by SC State 1890 Extension to attend the Young Farmers Association committee meetings in Orangeburg and Hampton Counties of South Carolina. [More](#)

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## Tennessee

January began the 4th year of the Farmer Family Health and Wellness online webinar program, an educational outreach program designed to help farm families cope and thrive with the unique challenges facing them. TN AgrAbility staff has been a part of the online webinar program from year one by presenting, securing speakers, and moderating some sessions. [More](#)

TN AgrAbility had the best mental health wellness day spent planting succulents in pots with Frontline Gardens and some veterans who wanted to learn more about horticulture therapy (HT). The Knoxville Vet Center and Frontline Gardens have partnered to offer to build a tabletop garden that can be taken home. [More](#)



One hundred seventy South Gibson County Middle School FFA students (5-8 grades) were able to learn about AgrAbility and touch/use AT tools and equipment as one of their career days. There was a Q/A period at the end of the presentation for the speaker to answer. [More](#)

A UT-Martin ag engineering student chose TN AgrAbility to complete his scholar's project. He and his professor made a farm visit to Fayette County to evaluate a TN AgrAbility farmer with severe arthritis and back impairment.

[More](#)



TN AgrAbility (TNAP) continues to help veterans who farm learn about resources to help them succeed and remove barriers. TNAP always refers veterans who farm to become a member of the Farmer Veteran Coalition. [More](#)

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## Texas



In January, staff conducted three farm assessments in northeast Texas. Staff worked with the local farmers to help provide them with a better quality of life. The served farmers varied from a beginning farmer to a farmer with over 50 years' experience.

A "Share Fair" was attended to educate new AgriLife Extension agents about the resources that AgrAbility can provide for their counties.

AgrAbility presented at the Battleground to Breaking Ground Boot Camp, introducing the program to veterans and assisting with the conference.



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## Utah

The AgrAbility of Utah staff was excited to present at Utah State University's Crop School Conference in Delta, Utah, this month, and they visited with over 40 producers in central Utah.

On January 29, AgrAbility staff set up a vendor table at the Utah State Horticulture Association's annual conference, which was attended by over 110 participants. Utah is famous for the cherries, peaches, and apples that it grows.

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## Virginia

AgrAbility Virginia is currently assisting 38 farmers at various levels of need, including a future sheep farmer for whom the team is designing a tactile map and pasture markers for navigation.



In January, AgrAbility Virginia participated in the 2025 VA Biological Farm Conference in Roanoke.

On February 5, the team led a session on farm stress and suicide prevention at the 2025 VCE Winter Conference in Blacksburg.

The program is also conducting its biannual evaluation to gather feedback from farmers and service providers to improve its services.

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## Wisconsin

AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW) staff exhibited at the Wisconsin Agribusiness Classic on January 13th & 14th. The Wisconsin Agribusiness Classic is Wisconsin's premier agribusiness industry event with nearly 1,000 attendees. [More](#)

Outreach Program Coordinator Michelle Bachand exhibited at the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA) Winter Trade Show on January 15th. The WSCGA Winter Trade Show is held concurrently with Wisconsin Cranberry School and the WSCGA



Annual Winter Meeting and had 350 people in attendance.

Outreach Program Coordinator Michelle Bachand presented to the MEDA (Milking Equipment Dealers Association)/Chem-Star Sanitation School. After the presentation, participants had the opportunity to view and handle simple assistive technology devices and have individual conversations with Michelle to learn more about the AAW program.

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## International AgrAbility Network News

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### AgrAbility for Africa

The AgrAbility for Africa staff is faced with a wave of uncertainty and fear within African communities as the suspension of PEPFAR-the U.S.-backed HIV/AIDS treatment lifeline that sustained over 20 million lives-leaves clinics shuttered, families stranded, and progress unraveling. [More](#)

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## Staff Changes and Recognition

### Florida

The team welcomes new members Tara Dorn and Savannah Stephens.

### Missouri

Lincoln University has appointed Dr. Mark Lucas to be a Missouri co-Pi representing Lincoln University. Dr. Lucas is the director of the Small Farms Outreach Program and spent the month on-boarding and preparing to implement the plan of work. Two new staff were hired at Lincoln University in January who will assist with MO-AgrAbility implementation by virtue of their work with small farmers across the State of Missouri.

### New Mexico

We welcome Julie LaJeunesse into a new role with NMAP as the program manager. Julie has already demonstrated proactive concern for the needs of NM food producers in her prior role with NM Technology Assistance Program as an assistive technology specialist.

### Pennsylvania

AgrAbilityPA would like to welcome Em Kase to the project team. Em will be working out of the non-profit partner agency and is responsible for all the marketing and social media for AgrAbilityPA. Check out our [Facebook page](#) to learn more about Em!

### Tennessee

Special thank-you to Troy Dugger for his leadership of the TN AgrAbility program for the past five years after the "original" Tim Prather retired. Troy Dugger will be finishing his work with the Center for Profitable Agriculture, Southern SARE, and the University of Tennessee Extension before retiring later in 2025.

TN has started the transition to our new University of TN project director, Dr. Shelli

Rampold. Dr. Rampold is an assistant professor of agricultural leadership, education, and communications in the Herbert College of Agriculture within the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. [More](#)

UT feels that this new leadership will support the longstanding success and impact of the AgrAbility program in Tennessee and look forward to reaching new audiences and even more farmers with disabilities and their families. Please welcome Dr. Rampold.  
srampold@utk.edu

## Texas

Texas AgrAbility welcomes Sarah Pierce, an occupational therapy student at Texas Woman's University in Dallas, Texas. She grew up on a beef cattle ranch in Yoakum, Texas, and has always had a love for agriculture and agricultural workers. She is currently in her last semester of OT school and is completing her doctoral capstone project with Texas AgrAbility. Sarah will be creating educational fact sheets for farmers and ranchers with disabilities. She is grateful to be working with Texas AgrAbility this semester as she combines two things she loves - farming/ranching and occupational therapy.

Texas AgrAbility welcomes Ramzey Zimmerman as she joins AgrAbility as our student worker. She is working on her degree in agricultural leadership and development and a minor in extension. She has raised market lambs and goats, which sparked her interest in an agriculture degree.

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### AgrAbility in the News

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

- [New AgrAbility Exhibit Showcases Resilience Of Farmers, Ranchers](#) (New Mexico AgrAbility Project)
- [Warrior 101](#) - Originally published in *Commercial Fisheries News* and used with permission (Maine AgrAbility)
- [AgrAbility mechanized rolling kneeler cart helps small farms tend low crops](#) (Michigan AgrAbility Project)
- [For Farmers, Fitness Programs Can Improve Mental Health, Too](#) (Nebraska AgrAbility)
- [Organizations help to implement assistive technology](#) (Michigan AgrAbility Project, National AgrAbility Project)
- [What's the Paradox of Employing People with Disabilities in US Agriculture?](#) (AgrAbility)

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### Other News

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

- 2025 means TN beautiful outdoors at 30 state parks, and more are accessible now with access to an all-terrain wheelchair! The parks with an all-terrain wheelchair offer specific trail experiences, ensuring a safe and adventure-filled trip. [More](#)
- Extension Foundation webinar: [Fundraising, Grant and Partnership Development: Building Financial Sustainability through Foundations and Donors](#)
- [The deadly mix of substance use and farm machinery](#)
- [Virtual Fencing: A Climate Adaptation Strategy](#)
- [Precision agriculture new frontier: Crop digital twins](#)
- [Strong Agronomic Business Plans Lead to Strong Economics](#)
- ['Solar shepherds' earn big by grazing sheep on solar farms — and they benefit everyone involved](#)
- [USDA invests \\$2M to provide risk management training to farmers, ranchers](#)

- [Safeguarding Dairy Calves: Simple Biosecurity Tips](#)
- [Aerial Imaging: A Game Changer in Crop Management Efficiency](#)
- [We can make fertilizer more efficiently under the surface of the Earth](#)

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## Upcoming Events

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

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

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February 2025

## National AgrAbility Project

- Know of someone that might like to be an exhibitor or a sponsor? 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](mailto:tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org).
- Register to have a SRAP display table. You can add that to your registration on the registration website. If you have already registered and want a SRAP display table, call or email Tess 585-447-9015.
- Put together a SRAP raffle basket and/or collect auctions items. Both activities help 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](mailto:sspears@nmsu.edu).



Submitted by Goodwill of the Finger Lakes

February 2025

## Florida

The Florida AgrAbility team met with their advisory board.

- Advisory board members will reach out to state senators and representatives regarding potential funding to support the AgrAbility program.
- There is a strong focus and support for farmers that are veterans, service members, and their families.
- Partnerships are being explored that would expand services to the farm worker community.
- Another meeting is scheduled to continue building partnerships, connections, and sustainability. Serap Gorucu and Lindsey Head will present.



Submitted by Florida AgrAbility Project

# AgrAbility e·Note

February 2025

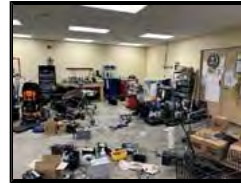
## Georgia



A few members of the Georgia AgrAbility staff were able to take a tour of an organization called FODAC. Georgia AgrAbility is partnering with them to help reach more individuals with disabilities in rural Georgia. They have programs that offer home medical equipment, vehicle

modifications, computer refurbishing, and assistive technology for a very small registration fee. Staff are excited to be able to expand what they can offer to the farmers that they serve.

Submitted by Whitney Ostrander



February 2025

## Indiana

The Indiana Horticulture Conference is an annual gathering of growers, Extension staff, researchers, and supporters of the state's diverse horticultural and specialty crop industry. Ed Sheldon, Indiana AgrAbility outreach coordinator, participated in the conference and highlighted AgrAbility's services in a trade show exhibit. This year, approximately 200 people attended the conference in Danville, Indiana, to network and share strategies for success. Ed had several types of assistive technology on hand that were appropriate for the audience, including a Quick-Cut Greens Harvester, Stand-n-Plant, and various ergonomic hand tools. This event was a great opportunity to better engage with a small-in-number but vital segment of the farming industry in the state.

Submitted by Ed Sheldon

February 2025

## Missouri

A group of 100 participants at several events learned how to utilize Missouri AgrAbility as a key resource offering direct services and educational support. These included Show-Me Farm Safety, the 2501 OPPE Team-to-One Coaching, the MO Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, the Heroes to Hives Missouri State Chapter, Pearls of Production, the Jefferson Farm Advisory Board, and meetings for Missouri's new and beginning farmers and ranchers program.

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Journey Polacek, a student pursuing a career as an occupational therapy assistant through the University of Missouri Occupational Therapy Assistant Baccalaureate Program, works with Missouri AgrAbility to develop toolkits that emphasize rural assistive technology devices, disability awareness, ergonomics, mental health resources, and injury prevention guides. These key resources from Missouri were distributed to ag commodity groups, MU Extension specialists, and various faith-based organizations.

Submitted by: Karen Funkenbusch

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Missouri AgrAbility was discussed as a resource during the Starling Missouri meeting on January 21 and 22. Discussions were held with five professionals in the fields of residential services for persons with developmental disabilities and community supports. These discussions raised awareness about Missouri AgrAbility for clients in rural Missouri.

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Maureen Cunningham, BIA-MO executive director and Missouri AgrAbility Co-PI, highlighted Missouri AgrAbility during a BIA-MO Speakers Bureau presentation for 20 case managers and admission liaisons for The Rehabilitation Institute of St. Louis that provide in-patient rehabilitation services for Missouri AgrAbility clients throughout Missouri. Brain injury resource kits, featuring Missouri AgrAbility, were distributed to each attendee for utilization with patients with brain injury. The impact is farmers with brain injury will become aware of Missouri AgrAbility during their in-patient rehabilitation at The Rehabilitation Institute of St. Louis (TRISL). This training complements the ongoing distribution of brain injury resource kits by TRISL staff.

Submitted by: Maureen Cunningham

February 2025

## Nebraska

Emily Jacobson, program manager for Nebraska AgrAbility, shared that she has been making quite a few farm visits this month - great news! She is finishing up client reports and getting quotes for VR. Emily has also been busy updating and adding content for the Nebraska AgrAbility social media sites.

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Soni Cochran, Aaron Yoder, Ashley Ahrens, and Emily Jacobson continue to work on a presentation for the upcoming National Training Workshop. They are co-presenting with Ed Sheldon, Indiana AgrAbility, and his team for this presentation. Staff look forward to sharing information about "Rural Preparedness: Strategies and resources to help strengthen the resilience of families and communities."

Submitted by Soni Cochran

February 2025

## New Mexico



The New Mexico AgrAbility Project (NMAP) team completed a walk-through and attended the grand opening of the AgrAbility exhibit at the NM Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces, NM. Please see attached pictures of an AgrAbility display as well as of an NM rancher with her display and an NM farm apprentice with his display.



The next class of farm apprentices have been determined with NMAP's non-profit partner, Mandy's Farm. They will begin their farm training in February and March. Garlic and tulips planted in late fall by the last group of farm apprentices have begun to spring up in our variable New Mexico January weather.

Submitted by Mary Thelander

February 2025

## Ohio

Ohio AgrAbility started January presenting on "Making your fair accessible to people with disabilities" at the Ohio Fair Managers Conference and ended it with "Fitness for Farm Life" at AgPro Safety Day. At the fair Conference, OAP staff reviewed the legal requirements for accessibility and best practices for inclusion and shared several examples of providing seamless access to all exhibitors and visitors. Attendees were asked to share their ideas and experiences with accessibility and inclusive shows and how to proactively plan programs and events at the fair.

OAP's "Fitness for Farm Life" presentation started with an overview of Ohio AgrAbility services, then reviewed body mechanics, ergonomics, and safe lifting. The presentation ended with a short stretching activity, which included attendees demonstrating their favorite stretches.

Submitted by Laura Akgerman

February 2025

## South Carolina



The South Carolina AgrAbility Project was invited by SC State 1890 Extension to attend the Young Farmers Association committee meetings in Orangeburg and Hampton Counties of South Carolina. The Young Farmers Association supports agricultural businesses and landowners



within the Low Country counties of Hampton, Allendale, and Jasper by offering peer support, resources, and systems advocacy at the local, state, federal, and national levels.

The first committee meeting was scheduled for Monday, January 27, at the Orangeburg County Clemson Extension offices. Able SC staff traveled and met with 30 members of the Young Farmers Association. The second committee meeting was held on Thursday, January 30, at the Hampton County Clemson Extension offices. Able SC staff provided a virtual presentation to 35 Young Farmers Association members.

SC State 1890 Extension helped the SC AgrAbility team connect with 65 farmers/landowners who are members of the Young Farmers Association and share about Able South Carolina services, specifically highlighting how the SC AgrAbility Project can support farmers with disabilities in maintaining their farming businesses. Both workshops were well attended, and the audience had excellent questions following the presentations. The SC AgrAbility Project is thankful to the Young Farmers Association for allowing it to share resources, and staff look forward to strengthening the partnership in support of all farmers with disabilities in South Carolina.

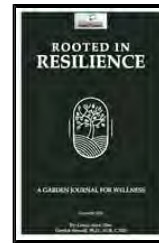
Submitted by South Carolina AgrAbility

February 2025

## Tennessee

January began the 4th year of the Farmer Family Health and Wellness online webinar program, an educational outreach program designed to help farm families cope and thrive with the unique challenges facing them. TN AgrAbility staff has been a part of the online webinar program from year one by presenting, securing speakers, and moderating some sessions. From farm to family, UT Extension supports health and wellness in every step of the journey. Register for this year's program and watch earlier recorded webinars: <https://fcs.tennessee.edu/mffhw/>

TN AgrAbility had the best mental health wellness day spent planting succulents in pots with [Frontline Gardens](#) and some veterans who wanted to learn more about horticulture therapy (HT). The Knoxville Vet Center and Frontline Gardens have partnered to offer to build a tabletop garden that can be taken home. The day allowed time for fellowship with other veterans plus time to learn about the new HT journal that Professor Derrick Stowell and graduate student Grace Eber wrote, *Rooted in Resilience: A Garden Journal for Wellness*. It is [now available on Amazon books](#) and Kindle and coming soon to Barnes and Noble.



One hundred seventy South Gibson County Middle School FFA students (5-8 grades) were able to learn about AgrAbility and touch/use AT tools and equipment as one of their career days. There was a Q/A period at the end of the presentation for the speaker to answer. Examples of questions: 1) What is your biggest challenge with your job? 2) What is your most rewarding experience with your job? 3) If you could do anything other than what you are doing, what would that be? The word for the day was "assistive technology" and relating to farmers with physical/learning challenges. The big AT hit for the day were the comfort cats that they touched and petted throughout the class period.

A UT-Martin ag engineering student chose TN AgrAbility to complete his scholar's project. He and his professor made a farm visit to Fayette County to evaluate a TN AgrAbility farmer with severe arthritis and back impairment. The student chose the tractor steps as his point of interest. Statement from the student: "The mission of the TN AgrAbility project hits home with me. When I was five years old, I broke my arm, and due to complications, I went through 13 surgeries. This led to severe wrist contracture, and I still require therapy to manage my mobility. From this experience, I know firsthand the challenges of adapting to physical limitations, even with tasks as simple as tying my shoes." TNAP staff is excited to work with UTM ag engineering department and see the final completed project(s). Stay tuned.



TN AgrAbility (TNAP) continues to help veterans who farm learn about resources to help them succeed and remove barriers. TNAP always refers veterans who farm to become a member of the Farmer Veteran Coalition. During January, TNAP encouraged beginning farmers who are veterans to apply to the FVC Fellowship fund. <https://farmvetco.org/fvfellowship/>

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## Staff Changes and Recognition

TN has started the transition to our new University of TN project director, Dr. Shelli Rampold. Dr. Rampold is an assistant professor of agricultural leadership, education, and communications in the Herbert College of Agriculture within the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. Rampold, who joined the UTIA faculty in 2021, teaches three courses, specializing in agricultural communications for policy, crisis management and public relations. She chairs or participates in committees for numerous master's students and receives excellent reviews from students. As a scholar, she has written more than 40 peer-reviewed journal articles and presented more than 50 times at conferences. Like many UTIA faculty, Rampold has a joint appointment with UT Extension, and she has established a program to train producers, Extension agents, forestry and wildlife professionals, and communities about crisis management in agriculture. Two Tennessee Master Producer programs offered through UT Extension include her crisis management curricula. She also helped develop a new internship program to bolster workforce development in the dairy industry.

UT feels that this new leadership will support the longstanding success and impact of the AgrAbility program in Tennessee and look forward to reaching new audiences and even more farmers with disabilities and their families. Please welcome Dr. Rampold. [srampold@utk.edu](mailto:srampold@utk.edu)

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## Other News

2025 means TN beautiful outdoors at 30 state parks, and more are accessible now with access to an all-terrain wheelchair! The parks with an all-terrain wheelchair offer specific trail experiences, ensuring a safe and adventure-filled trip. This specialized wheelchair is designed to provide greater access to beautiful trails and serene spots for those with mobility challenges, free of charge. Action Trackchair and Magic Mobility representatives demonstrated the different features of the wheelchairs at the 2024 Resource Ability Fair. Sunrise Medical, based in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, is one source of these chairs. "At Sunrise Medical, we understand that the world is not flat, and with our Magic Mobility power chairs, we believe that everyone, regardless of ability, should have the opportunity to explore Tennessee's incredible state parks," said Larry Jackson, president of Sunrise Medical North America. The all-terrain wheelchairs are on the TN AgrAbility assistive technology (AT) list for farmers with mobility challenges. For more information about these wheelchairs and how to request one at a TN park and other places, please visit <https://tnstateparks.com/accessibility>.

February 2025

## **Wisconsin**

AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW) staff exhibited at the Wisconsin Agribusiness Classic on January 13th & 14th. The Wisconsin Agribusiness Classic is Wisconsin's premier agribusiness industry event with nearly 1,000 attendees. AAW staff had the opportunity to speak with a number of agribusiness professionals and provided information they can share with their agriculture clients.

Submitted by AgrAbility of Wisconsin

February 2025

## **AgrAbility for Africa**

The AgrAbility for Africa staff is faced with a wave of uncertainty and fear within African communities as the suspension of PEPFAR-the U.S.-backed HIV/AIDS treatment lifeline that sustained over 20 million lives-leaves clinics shuttered, families stranded, and progress unraveling. While its partial revival under a restructured model has restored limited services, the damage is already unfolding: desperate patients now receive only three-month re-fills of antiretroviral drugs with no follow-up care, reversing decades of gains that slashed HIV rates from 19% to 5% and saved a generation through youth testing, maternal transmission prevention, and treatment adherence.

In this crisis that has affected palliative services as well, AgrAbility for Africa staff are racing to alert rural farming communities of options-many of whom relied on now-shuttered specialty clinics-to navigate fractured systems. Governments scramble to redirect care to overcrowded general clinics that expose them to stigma, and stakes are catastrophic: without urgent action, the collapse of this once-transformative program threatens to erase hard-won victories and ignite a preventable public health disaster.

Submitted by Mutumba Faisal

February 2025

## Upcoming Events

**Name** Assistive Technology: What You Need to Know Across Agricultural Specializations  
**Dates** February 19, 2025, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. ET  
**City, State** Webinar Online  
**Contact Info/Web link** [https://ufl.zoom.us/meeting/register/Fi8x\\_EqWTzaOhz8s3SH3qw#/registration](https://ufl.zoom.us/meeting/register/Fi8x_EqWTzaOhz8s3SH3qw#/registration)

**Name** Webinar: Zoonoses in a Changing World  
**Dates** February 19, 2025, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. ET  
**City, State** Webinar Online  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://www.agrisafe.org/event/webinar-zoonoses-in-a-changing-world/>

**Name** Western Farm Show  
**Dates** February 21-23, 2025  
**City, State** Kansas City, Missouri  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://www.westernfarmshow.com/health-safety-roundup/>

**Name** Lincoln University Small Farmers Conference 2025  
**Dates** March 3-5, 2025  
**City, State** Jefferson City, Missouri  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://www.lincolnu.edu/college-of-agriculture-environmental-and-human-sciences/small-farmers-conference.html>

**Name** Monthly Mental Health Innovations Exchange- AgriStress Response Network  
**Dates** March 5, 2025, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. ET  
**City, State** Online  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://www.agrisafe.org/event/agristress-response-network-mental-health-innovations-exchange-2024-10-02/2025-03-05/>

**Name** UF/IFAS Bee College  
**Dates** March 21-22, 2025

**City, State** Gainesville, Florida  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://entnemdept.ufl.edu/honey-bee/extension/events-and-activities/bee-college/>

**Name** AgrAbility National Training Workshop  
**Dates** March 24-27, 2025  
**City, State** Las Cruces, New Mexico  
**Contact Info/Web link** [www.agrability.org/ntw](http://www.agrability.org/ntw)

**Name** 2025 ISASH  
**Dates** June 23-26, 2025  
**City, State** Portland, Maine  
**Contact Info/Web link** <https://isash.org/isash-annual-conference-home-page/>