

*An ingathering of  
helpful information  
on disability in  
agriculture*

# AgrAbility Harvest

2013

Volume 4, Number 1

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**Continuity** and **change** may seem like opposing concepts, but both are important to any program or organization. Without continuity, the momentum of mission and the institutional memory of a group can be lost, and much time, money, and energy can be spent trying to recreate them. On the other hand, without change, programs can stagnate and become absorbed in maintaining the status quo or, at worst, become consumed with self-preservation.

The National AgrAbility Project (NAP) is currently experiencing both continuity and change. The USDA recently awarded the Breaking New Ground Resource Center, based at Purdue University, another four-year grant to lead the NAP. Our staff is thankful for the opportunity to continue providing resources and support to the state and regional AgrAbility projects (SRAPs) and services to clients in non-SRAP states to the extent possible.

Many of the initiatives begun during our first four years will continue, including the expansion of the [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org) web portal and The Toolbox Online, the publication of resources, including a new booklet on back impairments, and efforts to help farmers and ranchers manage arthritis. Other activities will continue with modifications, among them the National Training Workshop, which has been moved from the fall to the spring (see the back cover for more details).

However, some significant changes are also happening. The NAP is welcoming New York's Goodwill of the Finger Lakes (GWFL) as one of its primary partners in the new grant cycle. Although GWFL operates as a local Goodwill affiliate, it will be taking on a national role as part of the AgrAbility team. In addition, there are changes in the staff at USDA/NIFA, the agency that provides federal oversight for AgrAbility. To learn more about GWFL and NIFA, see the Partner Highlights section on p. 6.

One other notable change involves this publication. Due to funding reductions on the federal level, *AgrAbility Harvest* will now be published annually instead of semiannually. However, current news about AgrAbility can always be found at [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org).

# A Closer Look

## Furry farmhands provide help and healing



*Odie on the job*

Humans and animals have a long history of partnership in agriculture-related endeavors. For millennia, farmers and ranchers have used dogs for herding and guarding livestock; horses, mules, and oxen for pulling and transporting; and cats for controlling vermin. Even pigs can serve as “working animals,” as demonstrated by the truffle hunters of France, and elephants have long been used for packing and pulling in Asia.

In addition to providing practical assistance, animals can also have profound influence on human psychology and physiology. According to Purdue University’s Center for the Human-Animal Bond, contact with animals can, among other things, lower blood pressure and reduce anxiety. While pet owners may intuitively know these things, such benefits have also been documented in a variety of settings, including nursing homes, hospitals, and prisons.

### Putting it all together

Missouri AgrAbility staff member Jackie Allenbrand recognized both the practical and therapeutic potential of animals when she started the PHARM Dog program in 2005. Having lived on a farm most of her life, she knew from personal experience the value of dogs in agricultural settings. Her perceptions were reinforced when she joined



*Bruce and Odie make a great team*

AgrAbility and worked with a farmer who had experienced a lower leg amputation. To maximize his efficiency, he would drive his ATV to the location of his cattle and then have his dog, Weasel, bring in the herd, saving him time, effort, and the potential for secondary injury.

To start PHARM Dog, which stands for Pets Helping Agriculture in Rural Missouri, Jackie worked with groups like University of Missouri Extension and Midland Empire Resource for Independent Living. Her dogs fall into two main categories: herders, mostly Border Collies, and service dogs, usually Labrador Retrievers rescued from shelters. The latter perform a variety of tasks, such as picking up objects, providing mobility assistance for farmers with impaired balance, or going for help if the farmer is unable to summon assistance. So far, Jackie has placed a total of eight PHARM Dogs with farmers, including six in 2011-12, and she plans for at least six more placements in 2013.





Jackie Allenbrand and her first demonstration dog Kristi

Raising and training PHARM Dogs isn't cheap. Jackie estimates that it costs about \$1,650 to raise a puppy, and approximately \$5,000 to train service dogs. While some farmers are able to cover such costs themselves, Jackie also engages in fund raising and is working with the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to explore paying for the training of the service dogs.

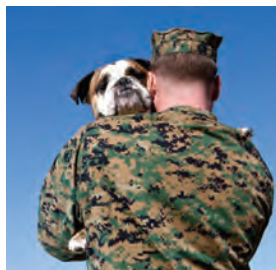
In regard to therapeutic benefits, Jackie notes that

PHARM Dog recipients have reported lower levels of depression and stress, and traumatic brain injury survivors have shown less nausea and dizziness. "The reactions of the farmers are what you need to see and hear in order to understand the value of the program," she said having seen tough farmers begin to cry when they get their dogs. One stated, "This dog is going to help me keep my cattle, whereas I might have had to sell them."

### Similar Programs Help Veterans

Many groups, including the U.S. Congress, have recognized the value of animals in assisting veterans with a variety of issues. Representative Michael G. Grimm of New York introduced the Veterans Dog Training Therapy Act, which passed the House in 2011. The bill proposed a pilot program that recruited veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder to train dogs from shelters to become service animals that would be given to other veterans with disabilities, thus providing therapy and assistance to both groups.

Similarly, a number of nonprofit groups like Pets for Vets, Veterans Moving Forward, and Paws for Veterans train shelter dogs for service and companionship to veterans with various types of disabilities.



### Other AgrAbility-Linked Initiatives

Missouri isn't the only AgrAbility Project with connections to programs involving animal service and therapy. While not funded through AgrAbility grants, THE CHAPS therapeutic horseback riding program at Purdue University was managed under the auspices of the Breaking New Ground Resource Center, current lead organization for the National and Indiana AgrAbility Projects. THE CHAPS stood for Therapy, Health and Education through Children and Horses As PartnerS. The program functioned from 1993 to 2005, and focused on helping children with disabilities gain coordination, balance, muscle control, and confidence. As former director Sheri McCormick said, "When they're on the horse and able to control it and direct it, they get a positive feeling of self-confidence and courage. The horses' legs become their legs. The horses give them a feeling of freedom and mobility that many of them don't have."\* The program benefited hundreds of children in the Lafayette, Indiana, area and utilized many Purdue students as volunteers.

Colorado AgrAbility also worked with a rancher who knew both the therapeutic and practical benefits of horses. The late Gail Claussen received significant media attention for his "seeing eye horse," Silk Shotgun. Claussen had macular degeneration that progressively robbed him of his eyesight. However, he and his horse had developed such a close bond that Claussen was able to continue working cattle even after his eyesight had degenerated into what was called a "dense fog."



Participant and volunteers at THE CHAPS

### Conclusion

Resources available to assist agricultural workers with disabilities come in many forms, including the four-legged kind. For more information about PHARM Dog, visit [www.pharmdog.org](http://www.pharmdog.org). Of course, the NAP's [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org) website is a great source for all types of helpful information on disability in agriculture, including new assistive technology devices that are continually added to The Toolbox Online at [www.agrability.org/toolbox](http://www.agrability.org/toolbox).

\* "Horsin' around therapeutic for kids," <http://www.purdue.edu/uns/html4ever/1997/9711.McCormick.CHAPS.html>

### ***Laying Up Firewood: Products that Make the Job Easier and Safer***

Cutting, splitting, loading, transporting, and stacking logs for firewood present physical and safety challenges, especially for those with strength, endurance, and back limitations. Included in AgrAbility's online Toolbox are these products designed to address those challenges:



The **PowerNow Battery-Powered Chainsaw** starts without a pull-cord, needs no warm-up time, and runs only when the trigger is engaged. It reportedly handles logs up to 12 inches thick with no power fade and cuts over 100 two- to three-inch branches on a single charge (up to 250 with the optional Endurance pack). It also features a built-in chain-sharpening system, which, with the pull of a lever, re-sharpens a dull chain in 3-5 seconds. Visit [www.oregoncordless.com](http://www.oregoncordless.com).



**ProChaps Chainsaw-Safety Chaps** provide the extra leg protection needed when cutting wood or performing other tasks with power equipment. Made of denier Cordura nylon over lightweight Prolar padding, this product will reportedly stop (or slow down) a running chainsaw on contact. Features include: wrap-around apron design, quick-release leg buckles, zippered pockets, safety-orange color, and choice of three leg lengths. Visit [www.elvex.com](http://www.elvex.com).



For those selling firewood as an enterprise, the portable **Twister Firewood Wrapper** stretch-wraps bundles of firewood. Handling logs 12 to 24 inches long, it is designed to produce either round or square bundles at a rate of 45 bundles per hour. Mounted on a frame with 8-inch wheels, the Twister is powered by a 115-volt, 1/4-hp gear motor drive, converts from one bundle size to another, and is height-adjustable. Visit [www.twister-industries.com](http://www.twister-industries.com).



Mounted to skid steer or track loaders with quick-attach plates, **Inverted Log Splitters** provide an alternative to physically lifting and positioning the logs, operating the splitting machine, then loading or stacking the wood. Some models split the logs on the ground then lift and transport; others lift, transport, then split them into a trailer or wood pile. Most utilize hydraulic cylinders that provide massive force to their splitting wedges and handle logs up to 24 inches long. Visit [www.ceattachments.com](http://www.ceattachments.com), [www.erskineattachments.com](http://www.erskineattachments.com), or [www.quickattach.com](http://www.quickattach.com).



# Resources for Success

## New NAP Work Plan

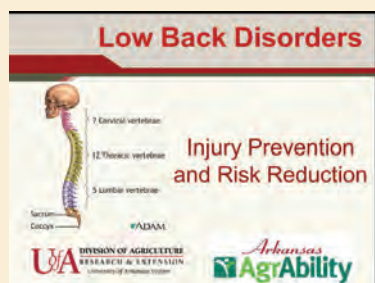
The National AgrAbility Project (NAP) has developed a new work plan for the next four-year grant cycle. It outlines the major objectives for the NAP in the major program areas of **education, networking, direct services, marketing, and program evaluation.**

Some highlighted resources include an upcoming publication on back impairments in agriculture, similar in format to the popular *Arthritis and Agriculture* booklet, an enhanced online training component that includes a minimum of six webinars per year (in contrast to the former two), and an expanded evaluation effort that seeks to quantify the outcomes of those who receive AgrAbility services in comparison with those who don't.

The work plan can be viewed at [www.agrability.org/About-AgrAbility](http://www.agrability.org/About-AgrAbility). Since it is updated every year, please feel free to email any thoughts, questions, or suggestions about it via [agrability@agrability.org](mailto:agrability@agrability.org) or call 800-825-4264.

## SRAP Resources

Not all of AgrAbility's resources are produced through the National Project. Many of the State & Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs) also develop excellent resources, often geared toward the specific needs of agricultural producers in their regions or related to particular areas of expertise within their staffs. Here are just a few examples of resources recently produced by SRAPs.



**Arkansas AgrAbility** completed an educational program on preventing low back injuries that includes publications on prevention/risk reduction and injury prevention exercises, plus a low back disorder survey, an injury prevention lesson guide, a lower back poster, and a low back disorder PowerPoint presentation.

**CalAgrAbility** (California) developed two arthritis management resources in Spanish and English. *Taking the Reins: Living and Working with Arthritis on California Farms* is a two- to three-hour bilingual prevention/management program for farm families. *Get Moving: Arthritis Prevention and Pain Management Exercise Workshops* include ten fun, rhythmic exercise classes designed for farm families.

**Maine AgrAbility** developed a poster for dairy farmers to hang in their barns that illustrates a 5-minute stretching routine to increase strength, flexibility, and balance during the day.

**Mid-Atlantic AgrAbility** developed a "Technology Facts" factsheet titled, *Using Technology to Make Farming Easier, Safer and More Productive*, which includes topics like access and efficient operation of equipment, mobility around the farm, and technologies for animal facilities.



**Missouri AgrAbility** has developed a variety of resources, including publications and a website dealing with accessible gardening and many resources related to arthritis and agriculture. Recently, the team produced an arthritis prevention and self-management program for migrant and seasonal farmworkers that includes a training curriculum, in both English and Spanish, on CD and an instructional flipchart for use by the lay health workers in delivering one-on-one or group educational sessions.

**Ohio AgrAbility** has published 24 AgrAbility fact sheets on a variety of topics, including *Assistive Technology for the Farm*, *Secondary Injury Prevention*, *Managing Stress for a Healthy Heart*, and *Farming with Parkinson's Disease*.

**AgrAbility of Wisconsin** developed the AgrAbility Assistive Technology Training (AATT) to help VR counselors and staff members increase their awareness and understanding of the unique situations and circumstances inherent to the business of agriculture. It consists of a six-week online course that includes five modules on AgrAbility-related topics.

**Wyoming AgrAbility** made new additions to its "Solutions for Living" publication series: *Personal Protective Equipment for Agriculture and Solutions for Living: Tools for the Enabled Garden*. The project also recently developed fact sheets on hearing loss for youth and adults.



For more information on these and other SRAP resources, see the Project Contact List at [www.agrability.org/Contact-lists](http://www.agrability.org/Contact-lists).

# Partner Updates

## **Goodwill of the Finger Lakes**

Goodwill is not a new name to the AgrAbility community. For the past four years, Goodwill Industries International was a national disability partner for the NAP. The torch has now been passed to Goodwill of the Finger Lakes (GWFL). Even before joining the NAP, GWFL successfully hosted two AgrAbility events, most recently a regional conference focused on veterans in agriculture, which took place in Rochester, NY in May 2012.

As a dynamic member of the Goodwill enterprise, GWFL will work with other affiliate members to provide new resources to the NAP, SRAPs, and the individuals they serve. GWFL has over 100 years of experience as a provider of specialized services for the blind and visually impaired, employing many individuals with visual handicaps and other barriers within its social enterprise. Leveraging this expertise as well as that of Goodwill affiliates, GWFL will provide educational webinars and conference presentations on topics identified as areas of interest by the SRAPs, clients, and partners.

The GWFL Contact Center is a 24/7 operation that serves many state and national contracts, as well as providing 2-1-1 and crisis services. Two of GWFL's work plan priorities during this first project year will be to provide live answer telephone coverage for NAP callers during non-business hours and connecting all 2-1-1 and information referral systems in the nation with AgrAbility and its regional contacts.

The Goodwill of the Finger Lakes team supporting the AgrAbility partnership consists of: JoBeth Rath, workforce development manager; Dawn Miner, workforce navigator; and Judy Gillis, administrative assistant. With support from Carol Borsa, GWFL's vice president of business development, the team is eager to help facilitate AgrAbility initiatives and meet the needs of the AgrAbility community.



Carol Borsa, Judy Gillis, JoBeth Rath, Dawn Miner

## **USDA/NIFA**

The AgrAbility Program is authorized through the Farm Bill and is under the jurisdiction of the USDA. Within USDA, responsibilities for AgrAbility fall under the authority of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Since AgrAbility's inception more than 21 years ago, **Brad Rein** has served as the national program leader within USDA. With NIFA reorganization, he is now Division Director for Agricultural Systems in NIFA's Institute of Food Production and Sustainability. Recently, Brad has worked with NIFA leadership to identify a new national program leader for the AgrAbility Program.

While Brad will continue to provide guidance for AgrAbility as a division director, the new national program leader for AgrAbility is **Dr. Aida Balsano** of the Division of Family and Consumer Sciences within NIFA's Institute of Youth, Family, and Community. Her appointment with AgrAbility will enable the leveraging of synergies between two different NIFA institutes and will enhance institutional knowledge of AgrAbility within USDA.

While oversight for NIFA programs rests with the national program leaders, many of the day-to-day responsibilities are handled by program specialists, and NIFA has recently added two new ones to assist with AgrAbility.

**Alexandra Wilson** is the primary program specialist for AgrAbility. She holds a master's degree in sustainable systems and worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras prior to joining USDA. Her responsibilities at USDA also include working with the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program.

Also assisting Brad and Aida with AgrAbility is program specialist **Camielle (Cami) Compton**. While her main responsibilities lie with NIFA's Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification Program, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program, and the Agricultural Food and Research Initiative, Cami will provide additional support for AgrAbility when needed.

You can find out more about NIFA at [www.nifa.usda.gov](http://www.nifa.usda.gov) and get contact information for AgrAbility's NIFA representatives at [www.agrability.org/Contact-lists/usda.cfm](http://www.agrability.org/Contact-lists/usda.cfm).





# patchwork

AN ASSORTMENT OF SUNDRY NEWS ITEMS

## New Addition

The National AgrAbility Project's engagement coordinator Kylie Hendress and her husband Nick, of Reynolds, Indiana, welcomed the birth of their first child, Kenzie Raelynn on March 21, 2012. Kenzie weighed in at 6 pounds, 5 ounces and measured 19.75 inches.



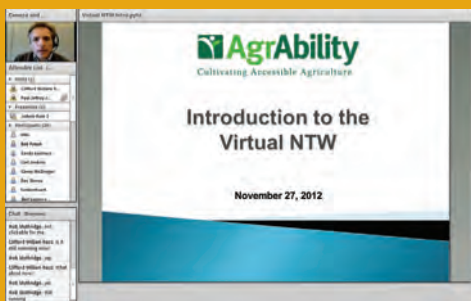
Princess Kenzie

## Regional AgrAbility Workshops

In addition to the NTW, the NAP is planning regional AgrAbility workshops – one during the first grant year and two each year thereafter – to promote professional development. Being smaller in scale than the NTW, these events will allow for more intensive, personalized training on topics such as conducting on-site assessments. Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, which is coordinating these efforts, is currently considering Mobile, Alabama, and Yuma, Arizona, as locations for the first workshops. Check back to [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org) for updates.

## Virtual NTW

The AgrAbility National Training Workshop (NTW), traditionally held in the fall, has moved to the spring due to technical issues with the grant cycle (see the back page for information on this year's event). Therefore, to update the State & Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs) on the new NAP and provide educational opportunities last fall, the NAP presented the first-ever Virtual NTW on November 27-29, 2012. Approximately 60 people participated in seven webinars, with the total combined attendance for the seven sessions at more than 190. All the webinars are now archived at [www.agrability.org/Online-Training](http://www.agrability.org/Online-Training).



The Virtual NTW provided new training opportunities

## Veterans and Agriculture

The NAP and many of the SRAPs have initiated efforts to assist veterans interested in pursuing agricultural careers.

This past November, Indiana AgrAbility and the National AgrAbility Project sponsored Veterans and Agriculture: Opportunities for Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Enrichment, a workshop for veterans and the professionals who work with them. Approximately 60 veterans and professionals participated in the two-day event, and presentations are archived at [www.breakingnewground.info/vets](http://www.breakingnewground.info/vets).

Texas AgrAbility has sponsored three veterans and agriculture workshops and is planning a fourth. A total of 150 participants have attended so far, and pre-/post-testing has revealed a knowledge gain of more than three points on a five-point scale.

The AgrAbility Projects in Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri worked with the Farmer Veteran Coalition (also a partnering collaborator with the NAP) to conduct several workshops for veterans interested in agriculture. In addition, Kansas AgrAbility used a grant from Assistive Technology for Kansans for construction of a hoop greenhouse to provide horticulture therapy for wounded soldiers at Fort Riley, Kansas, some of whom were able to help in assembling the building.



Indiana "veterans and agriculture" participants view an on-farm biomass burner



## AgrAbility Tweets

You can now follow the National AgrAbility Project on Twitter. Keep up with current news and upcoming events by visiting [www.twitter.com/NatlAgrAbility](http://www.twitter.com/NatlAgrAbility) or click the Twitter icon on the NAP homepage, [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org).

# AgrAbility Harvest

Breaking New Ground Resource Center  
Purdue University  
ABE Building  
225 South University St.  
West Lafayette, IN 47907

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The National AgrAbility Project is a partnership between:

**PURDUE**  
UNIVERSITY

Breaking New Ground

**Goodwill**  
of the Finger Lakes

**ARTHRITIS**  
FOUNDATION®  
Take Control. We Can Help.™

**ILLINOIS**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

**Colorado State**  
University

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity institution.

## ON THE HORIZON

Join AgrAbility on April 8-11 in Minneapolis, Minnesota for the **National Training Workshop (NTW)**, the premier training event addressing issues of disability in agriculture. Professionals and consumers from all over the country will participate in four days of plenary sessions, breakouts, tours, networking, and special events. This year's conference headquarters is the Doubletree Bloomington-Minneapolis South, located just a short shuttle ride from the airport and Mall of America. Rooms are available at the special conference rate of \$121 per night. A dedicated website will be available soon for room registration. Check [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org) for detailed conference information and a link to conference registration.



Photo courtesy of Meet Minneapolis

### 2013

<b>February 13-16</b>	<b>National Farm Machinery Show</b>	Louisville, KY	<a href="http://www.farmmachineryshow.org">www.farmmachineryshow.org</a>
<b>February 20-22</b>	<b>2013 Western Forum for Migrant and Community Health</b>	San Francisco, CA	<a href="http://www.nwrpca.org">www.nwrpca.org</a>
<b>February 28</b>	<b>Webinar: Vision Impairments and Agriculture</b>	Worldwide	<a href="http://www.agrability.org">www.agrability.org</a>
<b>February 25-March 2</b>	<b>28th Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference</b>	San Diego, CA	<a href="http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference">www.csun.edu/cod/conference</a>
<b>March 1-2</b>	<b>Mid-South Farm &amp; Gin Show</b>	Memphis, TN	<a href="http://www.farmandginshow.com">www.farmandginshow.com</a>
<b>April 8-11</b>	<b>AgrAbility National Training Workshop</b>	Minneapolis, MN	<a href="http://www.agrability.org">www.agrability.org</a>
<b>April 25-28</b>	<b>AOTA Annual Conference and Expo</b>	San Diego, CA	<a href="http://www.aota.org">www.aota.org</a>
<b>June 5-7</b>	<b>World Pork Expo</b>	Des Moines, IA	<a href="http://www.worldpork.org">www.worldpork.org</a>
<b>June 20-24</b>	<b>RESNA Annual Conference</b>	Bellevue, WA	<a href="http://www.resna.org">www.resna.org</a>
<b>June 23-27</b>	<b>International Society for Agricultural Safety &amp; Health (ISASH) Annual Conference</b>	Sandusky, OH	<a href="http://www.isash.org">www.isash.org</a>
<b>June 27-29</b>	<b>Amputee Coalition National Conference</b>	Orlando, FL	<a href="http://www.amputee-coalition.org">www.amputee-coalition.org</a>
<b>July 21-24</b>	<b>ASABE Annual International Meeting</b>	Kansas City, MO	<a href="http://www.asabemeetings.org">www.asabemeetings.org</a>
<b>August 27-29</b>	<b>Farm Progress Show</b>	Decatur, IL	<a href="http://www.farmprogressshow.com">www.farmprogressshow.com</a>
<b>September 10-12</b>	<b>Husker Harvest Days</b>	Grand Island, NE	<a href="http://www.huskerharvestdays.com">www.huskerharvestdays.com</a>
<b>September 25-27</b>	<b>2013 North American Agricultural Safety Summit</b>	Minneapolis, MN	<a href="http://www.ashca.org">www.ashca.org</a>
<b>October 1-5</b>	<b>World Dairy Expo</b>	Madison, WI	<a href="http://www.world-dairy-expo.com">www.world-dairy-expo.com</a>
<b>October 15-17</b>	<b>Sunbelt Ag Expo</b>	Moultrie, GA	<a href="http://www.sunbeltexpo.com">www.sunbeltexpo.com</a>
<b>October 25-28</b>	<b>APRIL Annual Conference</b>	Tulsa, OK	<a href="http://www.april-rural.org">www.april-rural.org</a>
<b>October 30-November 2</b>	<b>National FFA Convention</b>	Louisville, KY	<a href="http://www.ffa.org">www.ffa.org</a>

**AgrAbility**  
Cultivating Accessible Agriculture

800-825-4264  
[www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org)