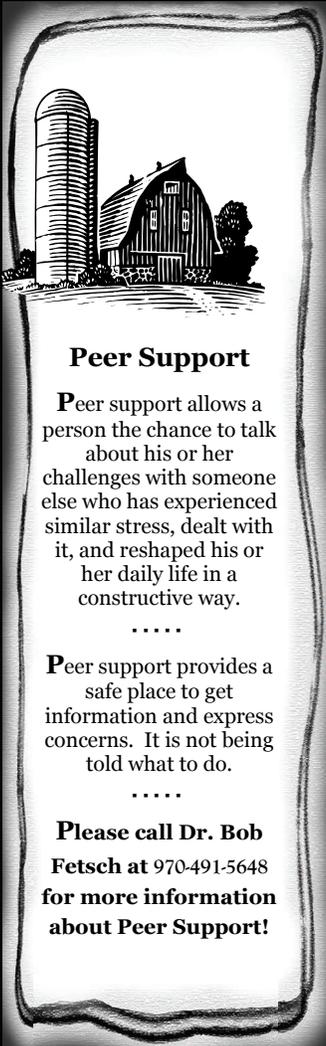




# THE BALING WIRE

Fall 2007 Edition

Promoting Independence in  
Agriculture



## Peer Support

Peer support allows a person the chance to talk about his or her challenges with someone else who has experienced similar stress, dealt with it, and reshaped his or her daily life in a constructive way.

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Peer support provides a safe place to get information and express concerns. It is not being told what to do.

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**Please call Dr. Bob Fetsch at 970-491-5648 for more information about Peer Support!**

## A Story of Hope, Part 1

Imagine this...A single day changed Joseph and his family's life forever. Joseph, a family farmer in southeastern Colorado, survived a tragic accident leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. While maneuvering a turn on a steep hill, Joseph's tractor overturned, pinning him to the ground. He felt happy to be alive, but soon the reality of the situation hit. Difficult questions and emotions racked Joseph's brain and the challenges he faced left him feeling blue. How would he continue farming while using a wheelchair? How would he provide for the family? What would happen to the farm? Joseph felt hopeless. Soon a friend referred him to AgrAbility and he learned about assistive technology and other ways to remain an independent farmer. Things were looking up for Joseph, but he still experienced feelings of sadness and anger over his disability. The transitions and changes he faced were just so much to handle, but then he remembered the peer support number he had received from AgrAbility. Joseph picked up the phone and dialed...Be sure to read the next edition of the *Baling Wire* to hear the rest of Joseph's story and read ahead to learn more about the Colorado AgrAbility Peer Support Program.



### *What is peer support?*

The Colorado AgrAbility Peer Support Program connects ranch and farm families who are facing challenges from injury, illness or disability with other farmers and ranchers who have come to accept their own disabilities. Individuals who are currently struggling with a newly acquired disability or illness may benefit from talking with another rancher or farmer who has already been through some of the same challenges. Talking with someone who has learned how to provide effective peer support can help a person know when feelings they may be experiencing are normal and when it's time to seek professional help. A trained peer support volunteer provides a safe

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# AgrAbility Baling Wire



place to get information and express concerns. Talking with a peer support volunteer can reduce feelings of stress, isolation, and depression often associated with adjusting to an illness or disability. Peer support volunteers are trained to listen, to empower ranchers and farmers, and to help them find and use their own strengths and resilience.

## ***What is peer support not?***

Peer support is *not* professional counseling or therapy. The goal of peer support is to listen and be attentive, *not* to tell someone what to do or to solve their problems for them. Peer support volunteers show empathy (identify and relate with another's experiences) *not* sympathy (share or agree with another's feelings). Peer support is *never* blaming or judging and is *always* compassionate.

## ***Who is ready to become a peer support volunteer?***

Anyone struggling with a disability or illness can call for peer support (see below for contact information), but providers of peer support must first complete satisfactorily a special training and demonstrate their full acceptance of their disability or illness. The Denial-Acceptance Continuum, developed by Robert J. Fetsch, Ph.D., provides ten stages which many people often experience who are adjusting to an acquired disability or illness. The stages are as follows: 1) Denial and shock, 2) Mourning and withdrawal, 3) Anger and blame, 4) Bargaining, 5) Depression, 6) Reassessment and Reaffirmation, 7) Coping and Mobilization, 8) Dialogue, 9) Self-Acceptance and Self-esteem, and 10) Joy of life. Folks usually bounce around from one stage to another before eventually (often after a couple of years) come to self-acceptance and joy of life. If you feel that you've successfully navigated through these stages and have learned to fully accept your disability, you may be ready to help other farmers and ranchers through similar struggles to which you have adjusted in healthy ways. Folks who are struggling with denial, anger, or depression may not yet be ready to provide peer support, but are welcome to talk with other peer support volunteers (see contact info below).

## ***How can you become a peer support volunteer?***

Any farmer/rancher and their caregiver who has or has had any type of physical, cognitive or illness-related disability and who has come to a healthy acceptance of their disability and who wants to assist other farm and ranch families is encouraged to call Bob Fetsch about participating in the Peer Support Training. Caregivers are also encouraged to consider calling about participating in the training to provide peer support for other caregivers. Stay tuned for the next edition of *The Baling Wire* where more information about the Peer Support Training will be provided.

Can't wait for more information? If you are interested in knowing more about the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Peer Support Training or if you are interested in receiving peer support now, contact **Robert J. "Bob" Fetsch, Director Colorado AgrAbility Project (970-491-5648).**





## What's a joint like this doing in a nice guy like me?

Here are some thoughts from our OT student Michael Covey. Can you relate to his story?

Ouch, my thumb/wrist joint hurt. Is that why I dropped a glass door that I held in a pinch grip? An X-ray showed arthritis. What to do? An article from the Mayo clinic said that I can avoid unnecessary joint strain and pain. Well, that got my interest! Happily they had some useful guidelines.

- Understand the difference between general discomfort and the pain from overusing a joint. Joint pain that lasts more than an hour after an activity indicates that the activity was too stressful. Think of ways to modify the activity.
- With stiffness, move each joint slowly through its full pain-free range of motion at least once a day. This maintains full joint motion. They said that the amount I'm able to move each joint, without pain, may vary from day to day.
- Avoid making a tight fist. I should use thick or built-up handles on tools. They will be easier to hold.
- Avoid pinching items between my thumb and my fingers. I should hold a book, plate or mug in the palms of my hands. If I'm reading for long periods, I should use a book holder.
- An angled work surface for reading and writing is easier.
- When I'm standing, the work surface height should allow me to work comfortably without stooping.
- A higher chair will decrease the stress on my hips and knees as I get up and down.
- To pick up items from the floor, stoop by bending my knees and hips, or sit in a chair and bend over.
- Carry heavy objects close to my chest, supporting the weight on my forearms.
- Poor posture causes uneven weight distribution and may strain ligaments and muscles.
- Use the strongest joint available for the job. For example, carry bags on my shoulder instead of at my elbow, wrist, or fingers.
- Avoid keeping joints in the same position for a prolonged period of time.
- Balance periods of rest and activity during the day. This isn't easy for me to do: work at a steady, moderate pace and avoid rushing; rest before I become fatigued or sore; and alternate light and moderate activities throughout the day.



They let me off the hook by saying that I don't have to make all of these changes at once. Gradually incorporating these methods into my day-to-day activities, I am more likely to stick with them. I'm trying to keep an open mind about how I do everyday tasks. I might have to change some old habits, but the reward is that my joints will cause me less pain. Good Luck!

# EASTER SEALS – COLORADO AGRABILITY PROJECT



*Promoting Independence in Agriculture*

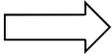
Easter Seals Colorado  
5755 W. Alameda Ave.  
Lakewood, CO 80226

Phone: 303-937-7713 x224  
Fax: 303-233-1028

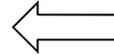
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[www.cahs.colostate.edu/AgrAbility](http://www.cahs.colostate.edu/AgrAbility)



This year the Colorado AgrAbility Project will offer free workshops in communities throughout the state. On most days there will be a workshop in the morning and a workshop in the afternoon. The morning workshop for farm and ranch families is titled "Got Knee/Hip/Joint Problems on the Ranch/Farm?" They will run from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. with a free lunch served from 12-1p.m. for those who pre-register a week ahead of time.

The afternoon workshops are for professionals who work with farm and ranch families with disabilities. The workshop will focus on "AgrAbility & Utilizing Knee, Hip, and Joint Problem Resources with Farmers and Ranchers with Disabilities." Times vary for these workshops, so please call about the workshop you are interested in.

If you are planning on attending a workshop please call Bob Fetsch (970) 491-5648 or email [fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu](mailto:fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu) for more information and to register so that a lunch can be provided for you.

- ⇒ **Monte Vista:** January 29, 2008, San Luis Valley Information Center with Eleanor West (719) 852-7381.
- ⇒ **Trinidad:** January 30, Trinidad Junior College Sullivan Student Center with Dean Oatman (719) 846-6881.
- ⇒ **Westcliffe:** January 31, Cliff Lanes with Karen Crumbaker (719) 783-2514.
- ⇒ **Sterling:** February 5, Logan County Extension Office with Bruce Bosley (970) 522-3200, ext. 285.
- ⇒ **Yuma:** February 7, First Presbyterian Church with Dennis Kaan (970) 345-2287.
- ⇒ **Aurora:** February 8, Arapahoe County Fairgrounds with Dale Edwards (303) 738-7907.
- ⇒ **Meeker:** February 20, Meeker Extension Office with Bill Ekstrom (970) 878-9490.
- ⇒ **Walden:** February 21, Soil Conservation District Building with Debbie Alpe (970) 723-4298.

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