

Baling Wire Newsletter

Colorado AgrAbility Staff Update- Out with the Old & In with the New

As many of you have become aware Colorado AgrAbility Project has had a few staff changes since the first of the year. First, Jason Beck who has done an outstanding job leading this project for the past six years accepted a new job in January putting his mechanical engineering education to use.

Next, we were blessed to have Carla Wilhite come back to the program that she started. However, the opportunity arose for Carla to follow her dreams and she accepted a teaching position for the University of North Dakota-Casper College OT Department in July.

Vince Luke joined AgrAbility as the case manager in April after working for the Easter Seals Colorado Para-Transit Certification Department. Vince hails from Iowa, but has lived in CO for the past 10 years. He brings a wealth of knowledge about disabilities and rehab with him and has been very interested in learning the ropes of farming.

Lastly, Jill Sump came aboard as the AgrAbility project manager in July. Jill was raised on a farm in north central Kansas and still enjoys going back for harvest. Jill is an occupational therapist and has been working in a hospital for the past two years. Jill learned from the best as she was Carla's OT student at the OK AgrAbility Project while she was in school.

The foundation of the Colorado AgrAbility Project has remained untouched as Dr. Robert Fetsch continues to lead as project director from Colorado State University Extension. Dr. Fetsch has held this position for the past 11 years. He also directs the AgrAbility peer support program and teaches at the University in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

About Colorado AgrAbility Project

Now that you know who we are, let's talk about what we do. The Colorado AgrAbility Project is a partnership between Colorado State University Extension and Easter Seals Colorado.

- **History:** The AgrAbility Project was written into the 1990 Farm Bill and is funded by a grant from the USDA. Currently 27 states offer this project.
- **Mission:** Promote Independence in Agriculture.
- **Serve:** Any farmer or rancher or family member who has a disability, injury or illness that has difficulty with activities in the home or on the farm/ranch and lives within the state of Colorado.
- **Provide:** On-site assessments from an occupational therapist, make recommendations for assistive technology, home modifications and equipment adaptations, research funding sources, offer peer support through our Neighbor-to-Neighbor Support program, and provide referrals to other professionals that can help with physical, emotional, and mental health needs.
- **All services from Colorado AgrAbility Project are free of cost!**



Colorado AgrAbility Project
Fall 2008



Vince Luke and Jill Sump

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AgrAbility Client News Story— by Erich Kirshner

Carol Carrington, a Jefferson, Colorado rancher who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 1986, has benefited from AgrAbility. Carrington runs a horse breeding operation and raises Highland Cattle. She was able to obtain an enclosed, heated Kawasaki Mule Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) with assistance from AgrAbility and the Colorado Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. The UTV allows her to check on her animals and maintain her ranch's irrigation system.

"I felt like a 16 year-old kid getting my first car when I first got it," said Carrington, who can no

longer drive an automobile because of her MS. "It goes through the ditches. It is really amazing what it can go through."



This year the Colorado AgrAbility Program will offer 19 free workshops in 10 communities throughout Colorado. On most

days there will be a workshop in the morning and a workshop in the afternoon.

The morning workshop is titled "Living with Multiple Sclerosis and Other Disabilities on the Ranch/Farm." This workshop is from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. with a free lunch served from 12–1 p.m. for those who pre-register at least one week prior to the workshop they plan to attend. Persons planning to attend a workshop should call Dr. Bob Fetsch (970) 491-5648 or email

fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu for more information and to register so that a lunch can be provided for you.

Politicians Accident— AhaJokes.com

A bus load of politicians were driving down a country road one afternoon, when all of a sudden, the bus ran off the road and crashed into a tree in an old farmer's field.

Seeing what happened, the old farmer went over to investigate. He then proceeded to dig a hole and bury the politicians.

A few days later, the local sheriff came out, saw the crashed bus, and asked the old farmer, "Were they all dead?"

The old farmer replied, "Well, some of them said they weren't, but you know how them politicians lie."

AgrAbility Client News Story— by Erich Kirshner

Marty McMillan, a Branson cattle rancher with multiple sclerosis, got help obtaining a power wheelchair and assistance with the purchase of a wheelchair accessible van.

"I would suggest anybody in a situation like mine contact AgrAbility," McMillan said. "They have a lot of resources they can tap into. They have notebooks full of information on projects

they've worked on, so they have lots of solutions for people with MS and other disabilities."



McMillan, who still helps with the books at his 7,000-acre ranch, met the staff with AgrAbility at a Lamar Ag Day event many years ago. He said he was immediately impressed that the AgrAbility staff knew about disabilities, and how to identify and utilize resources to help farm and ranch operators stay on their farms and ranches.

Winter Workshops – Coming your Way!

During the months of November, January, and February AgrAbility staff travel to the far corners of the state and areas in between to present educational materials to farmers and ranchers as well as professionals including: therapists, extension agents, other health care professionals and rural health specialists.

The topic for this year's winter workshop is multiple sclerosis and how to adapt equipment or practices to continue farming and ranching.

The workshop is beneficial to anyone with a disability, illness or injury who is involved in farming or ranching, or for someone wanting to learn about better practices for health issues with farming/ranching.

The workshops are free of cost and lunches are provided.

Workshop Information

> **Cortez:** November 5, 2008 Cortez Public Library at 202 N. Park St. with Tom Hooten (970) 565-3123.

> **Durango:** November 6, 2008 (noon to 1:00 p.m. for professionals only) Mercy Regional Medical Center at 1010 Three Springs Blvd. with Myoung Fry (970) 764-3340.

> **Meeker:** January 21, 2009 Meeker Extension Office at 779 Sulphur Creek Road with Bill Ekstrom (970) 878-9490.

> **Walden:** January 22, 2009 Soil Conservation District Building at 312 Fifth St. with Debbie Alpe (970) 723-4298.

> **Monte Vista:** January 28, 2009 San Luis Valley Information Center at 947 1st Ave. with Eleanor West (719) 852-7381.

> **Trinidad:** January 29, 2009 Trinidad Junior College Sullivan Student Center at 600 Prospect Ave. with Dean Oatman (719) 846-6881.

> **Pueblo:** January 30, Pueblo County Extension Office at 212 W. 12th St. with Marvin Reynolds (719) 583-6566.

> **Aurora:** February 10, Arapahoe County Fairgrounds at 25690 East Quincy Avenue with Dale Edwards (303) 738-7907.

> **Yuma:** February 11, First Presbyterian Church at 110 W. 4th Ave. with Dennis Kaan (970) 345-2287.

> **Sterling:** February 12, Logan County Extension Office at 508 South 10th Ave., Suite 1 with Bruce Bosley (970) 522-3200, ext. 285.

Winter Workshop Information at a Glance

Energy conservation includes 3 basic principles...

The use of good body mechanics

- Use good posture
- Work at proper heights
- Avoid unnecessary lifting, reaching, and stooping
- Slide objects along a counter rather than lifting or carrying when possible
- Use two hands instead of one
- Use the stronger, larger joints for a task (i.e. "push rather than pull" and "lift with your with legs, not your back")
- Carry objects close to your body, at waist level with elbows bent at your side
- Avoid staying in one position too long

Time Management- Remember the 3 "P's"

Priority setting, Planning, and Pacing

- Spread heavy and light tasks throughout the day and week
- Set limits on how much you need to do in one day and/or week
- Be realistic about your limits
- Schedule your most strenuous activities when you have the most energy
- Allot the appropriate amount of time to complete activities and avoid rushing
- Allow frequent short rest periods when doing an activity
- Avoid activities than cannot be stopped
- Work at a consistent rate
- Consider using slow music to help you set the pace

Work Simplification

- Sit to work when possible
- Get everything out that you need before beginning a task
- Avoid unnecessary trips
- Eliminate unnecessary details and steps of a process
- Use adaptive equipment to decrease energy use (i.e. a reacher, sock-aide, shoehorn, raised toilet seat, grab bars, shower chair)
- Let family and friends assist



OT/PT Workshop

Our second annual training workshop was held in June. Entitled “Rehabilitating the Colorado Farmer and Rancher” the workshop’s overall goal was to show participants that farming and ranching are not just ways of earning a living but are part of a particular culture—a way of life—and the characteristics of this culture are important to consider for those who offer care to farming or ranching families.



Hands-on learning about agricultural equipment and those who use it.

Physical and occupational therapists and other professionals were invited from around the state. One therapist came all the way from Oregon to attend. The workshop was presented at CSU’s Agricultural Research, Development and Education Center (ARDEC)—a working farm used to train CSU students and visiting groups.

Twelve hours of education, which included continuing education credit, over 2 days included experience on the farm as well as classroom presentations which offered background data, special considerations, and resources for therapists who work with farmers and ranchers.

As a result of the workshop, attendees were able to return to their practices with a better understanding of farming and ranching as both a career and a way of life.

Next June’s OT/PT/Professionals Workshop will be held June 25-27, 2009 at ARDEC in Ft. Collins, CO. Contact AgrAbility for more information and details will follow in spring.

Mini-Grant Awards

This summer Sodexo/ National Easter Seals set-up mini-grant awards in the amount of \$1000 to go towards helping farmers/ranchers/family members with a disability benefit from assistive technology, adaptive equipment or home safety equipment. CO AgrAbility is proud to have had two recipients of those awards.

Our first recipient Ruth B. received an Alert One medical system that she can use to summon the EMS in an emergency situation. Next, two-way radios were purchased so that Ruth and her husband can remain in contact while he is outside in the far fields or with the cattle. Even with low vision, Ruth can now safely get back to gardening with her new 6’x8’ greenhouse. Lastly, grab bars were purchased to ensure Ruth’s safety while accessing the shower.

Our second recipient George G. can now access his tractor with less difficulty and strain on his joints with a new step kit and hand rail. Furthermore, George will ride in his tractor more comfortably with the new tractor seat with swivel and suspension all awarded from the mini-grant.

Another mini-grant was provided from National AgrAbility and its purpose was the same: to assist farmers/ranchers/family members with a disability by benefiting from assistive technology, adaptive equipment or home safety equipment. CO AgrAbility is proud to have one recipient from that grant.

Nancy M. will be receiving assistance to go towards a therapy pool cover lifter. After a serious back injury Nancy now relies on time in her therapy pool to be able to perform daily tasks and activities. However, due to the weight and size of the pool cover Nancy has difficulty accessing it without the risk of further back injury. The grant will allow Nancy the freedom to continue with her exercises and prevent more injury.

It has been our pleasure assisting these three well-deserving clients with equipment that will positively impact their well-being either in home, work or leisure.



New tractor seat with swivel and suspension



For more information on **Colorado AgrAbility Project**:
<http://www.hdfs.caahs.colostate.edu/AgrAbility/agrability.htm>

For more information on **National AgrAbility Project**:
<http://www.agrability.org>

Promoting Independence in Agriculture

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Our Partners



If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please contact Jill Sump at 877-279-1638

Special Thank-You!!!!

- Kim Chamberlain, CSU OT student completed a three month fieldwork experience with AgrAbility. We are very appreciative of the hard work and dedication Kim had with assisting our clients!
- Jessica Mills, CSU OT student spent 40 hours learning about AgrAbility, helped in developing the winter workshop information, and researched adaptive solutions for clients.
- Springfield FFA– manufactured and installed a ramp for an AgrAbility client’s home– Thank You!

Springfield FFA showing off the new ramp they built and installed





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