



CSU Extension



FALL 2019 Newsletter

Welcome to our Fall 2019 newsletter! We here at the Colorado AgrAbility Project (CAP) invite you to enjoy our articles and please note the dates for our Winter Work shops!

Understanding Mental Health Key for Farmers

A nationwide poll was conducted April 4-10 2019 . This poll was authorized by the American Farm Bureau Federation to determine how mental health issues were affecting America’s farmland. It received far too little attention. Polled were 2004 adult, rural farm folks of which 81 were active farmers.

Results of this poll strongly support the ongoing need for more mental health (we prefer the term behavioral health) programming in rural America. Compared to a decade or more ago, rural residents and farmers have greater knowledge about behavioral health issues. The following statistics are accurate to within plus or minus 2 percent:

- 91% of rural dwellers and 82% of farmers/farmworkers feel that behavioral health issues are important to them or their family
- Rural residents are more likely to say mental health is a major problem (38%) than are farmers (30%).
- Media is seen as attaching fair amounts of stigma to mental health issues by 58% of rural responders and 53% of farmers
- 66% of Farmers and 75% of rural residents feel that it is Important to reduce stigma.
- About 2/3rd of every farmer (66%) and rural resident (65%) know where to find mental health resources.
- Farmers (46%) find it more difficult to access therapy or substance abuse counseling in the community than do rural adult responders (28%).
- Most rural adult responders (73%) express confidence that they could identify mental health warning signs in a family member or close friend while far fewer famers (55%) felt they could.
- A significant majority of farmers (87%) say that cost, embarrassment (70%) and stigma (65%) are obstacles to treatment while among rural residents cost (70%), embarrassment (65%) and stigma (63%) the numbers are fewer.

“ Negative stigma and access to services, continue as impediments to obtaining necessary help”



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All respondents reported that the most trusted source of information about mental health is a primary care doctor (residents 78%, farmers 81%). The next most trusted are family (67% and 60%), close friends (55% and 65%), and faith-based counselors (55%, 60%).

- Both rural and farmers (72%) would be comfortable talking with a therapist.
- Rural respondents generally feel that financial issues and fear of losing a farm impact the mental health of farmers (81%), however 91% of farmers think financial matters adversely affect their mental health and fear of losing the farm (87%) and farm economics (89%) are nearly as stressful.

This survey does indicate that rural residents and farmers are more informed about mental health than in past studies. There are indicators that knowledge of behavioral health needs are spreading out into rural communities. For the complete study please see

[https://www.fb.org/files/AFBF Rural Stress Polling Presentation 04.16.19.pdf](https://www.fb.org/files/AFBF_Rural_Stress_Polling_Presentation_04.16.19.pdf)

(acknowledgement to Dr. Mike Rosmann for some content)

Talking About Mental Uwellness

Mental health issues can be “the elephant in the room”. It weighs heavily on everyone and yet no one wants to discuss it. With nearly half of all Americans experiencing a behavioral health issue at some point in their life, most of us have felt the heaviness in the family or at work among family or friend. Still, when it happens, we find it difficult to know what to say or how to begin a conversation.

It seems that we can catch a cold or the flu and have no problem telling those around us that we feel ill. On the other hand, if our issue is depression, a mental based illness is seen a weakness and we want to hide it from those around us. Even if we did open up, the listener is likely to feel uncomfortable and won't know how to respond.

Well even if it is uncomfortable, it is a conversation that must be had. With the suicide rate remaining even or accelerating, we must push through the discomfort and talk to family or friends in distress.

You may be the first one in their lives to break the barrier and tackle the tough subject matter. In so doing, you might be the beginning of their mental health support and help them find a way to needed treatment.

“Having an initial conversation about mental health is hard. But with every uncomfortable conversation, we can address Stigma, break down barriers, and help those closest to us When they need it most.”

There may never be a perfect time but sooner is better than later. Many people with a mental health crisis feel that no one really cares and that they are essentially on their own. So while it may be an awkward moment, the most genuine way to begin is simply to ask if they are OK and do so in an authentic and caring way. Look at them as you speak and express that you are concerned about them and are available to just listen. They may or may not want to talk just then and that is OK. Just reaching out to them in a genuine way to let them know that you want to hear them, that you can just listen and will be available any time to have that talk will let them know that someone cares.

Be prepared for them to disclose their feelings. They may well feel relieved that someone will listen and open up. Should that happen, your role is to listen in a non-judgmental way. Mostly provide emotional support by not interrupting and letting them vent their fears and concerns. Let them know you are there to help and support them and if they want treatment, you will assist them in finding resources. This is a difficult conversation to have for both of you, and it might be the first time they are acknowledging their mental health challenges

This video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fV1CQaTTvzE&t=>) from Mental Health First Aid provides additional insight on how to navigate awkward conversations about mental health. If you're still not sure what to do, [take Mental Health First Aid](#). The course will teach you a concrete action plan for starting or continuing a conversation about mental health or substance use, and steps to help your loved ones find appropriate support.

Our Merger is Official!

Goodwill Industries of Denver and Discover Goodwill of Southern & Western Colorado have finalized a merger between the two organizations.

Discover Goodwill®, based in Colorado Springs, and Goodwill Industries of Denver will maintain their current administrative offices, retail stores, donation centers and other localized programs that together serve more than 100,000 individuals throughout Colorado each year. Both organizational boards approved the merger, and with the Goodwill Industries International Board of Directors approval of the consolidation of territory, the two organizations combined operations in June 2019.



Operating as one organization will allow both regions to leverage their collective expertise in community programming to expand Goodwill’s mission of employment placement and job training across the state and help even more Coloradans with disadvantages achieve greater independence. The combined organization will now serve all 64 counties in Colorado with localized career development programming, 43 retail stores, four outlets, 12 stand-alone donation centers, employing more than 2,700 workers.

Program Manager, Candiss Leathers advises that the mailing address for AgrAbility has not changed and will remain 6850 Federal Blvd. Denver, CO 80249. Matters involving Accounts Payable or Accounts Receivable should be mailed to Discover Goodwill of Southern & Western Colorado, 1460 Garden of the Gods Rd. Colorado Springs, CO 80907. Please call her if there are any questions about which address to use.

Meet Ryan Davis, Arriba, CO.

Ryan grew up on his family farm in the eastern plains of Colorado. His family represents several generations of farmers and Ryan had thought he too would continue this path.

An auto accident in 2014 changed all that. A spinal cord lesion at the T-6 level left Ryan in need of using a wheelchair for his mobility. His life had been dramatically changed and working on the family farm presented many physical obstacles he felt he could not overcome. After high school graduation he attended coll-



Ryan Davis Cont'd

lege and concentrated on Ag related goals, such as Ag Economics, Business and Agronomy. But he still desired to help his family with more “hands on” help with their farm.

Ryan and his folks attended a Winter Workshop February 2019 in Limon. The Davis’s were interested in learning more about AT that would provide access to large farm equipment the Davis’ use in their production Ag business. Candy Leathers, AgrAbility Program Manager put them in touch with another AgrAbility client in the area, who provided a demonstration of a flatbed lift, a truck lift that would lift him from the truck cab, or ground level and insert him into the cab of a tractor, combine, or back hoe so he can perform daily work activities. This was such a revelation to the Davis family and got them thinking of all the work that Ryan could do for the farm.

Although Ryan had worked with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the past, after meeting with the AgrAbility staff he felt he had a new vocational direction that would allow him to combine his educational goals with his employment goal of working on the family farm. DVR requested CAP complete a formal Farm/Ranch Situational Assessment with Ryan and provide them with recommendations and ideas to address the limitations he was experiencing completing work tasks. Through the combined efforts of both programs and with coordination, collaboration, creative and open mindedness Ryan is excited and encouraged about working safely on the farm once again. He hopes to receive support from DVR to work towards making necessary modifications to farm equipment and work tasks through assistive technology to allow him to access farm fields, workshops, tools, and farm equipment.

Ryan shared his personal goals were to be able to improve his overall mobility on the farm, accessing the farm yard, fields, buildings, and equipment and to operate and repair equipment and machinery.



“Accessing tools from a wheel chair is a challenge”

The usual devices that can be used to aid a mobility impaired farmer access to a farm site is the ATV or UTV. Due to balance and core strength deficits the ATVs were not an appropriate recommendation



for this client, and in using the UTV he was confronted with difficulty loading and unloading his wheelchair, and then once he accessed the building he could not enter with such a large mobility device, and using his manual wheelchair was extremely difficult to move in the deep gravel, narrow pathways and rough terrain. Presenting the possibility of incurring a secondary injury to his shoulders. Accessing work benches and tool cabinets from a sitting position also presented many barriers for Ryan.

Suggestions for DVR's consideration to address some of these barriers were to explore the value of the Life Essentials, Flatbed lift for accessing large farm machinery. This device can lift the client up to 10 feet and out 12 feet so he can access even the largest combines. His shop space access issues are suggested to be addressed by using a standing wheel chair from the Standing Chair Company.



with fewer people on the farm, freeing farmers to work in the factories and offices of a growing industrial economy. The industrial strategy was a big success. It did what it was designed to do. But, now the job is done.

Today, society certainly has nothing to gain from forcing more families off their farms. We have no good paying factory and office jobs begging for good workers. We have exported most of those jobs to other countries. Today, displaced farmers are far more likely to end up with a minimum wage job in some local fast food joint than in some high-paying, high-tech job in the city.

Today, American consumers, on average, spend only about a dime from each dollar of disposable income for food. From this dime, the American farmer gets less than a penny the rest goes to pay for purchased inputs and for marketing services. In fact, we pay more to those who package and advertise our food than to the farmers who produce it.”

John Ikend Professor U Of MO



Out and About

Well we have been on the road a bit. This summer CAP set up our little road show and attended a Goodwill fundraising golf tournament in Littleton, the Colorado State Fair, a Discover Goodwill Farmers Market in Colorado Springs, and an El Paso County Health Fair in Callahan.



“Ryan and his mother Jill show how a standing chair Helps access bench tools “



This device can navigate in smaller spaces and lift the client to a standing position improving reaching ability. It will need to be equipped with enhanced stabilizers and large nubby tires.

Many other recommendations were provided to the client and his counselor for consideration but these two major tools will greatly enhance Ryan's ability to assume farm work tasks and improve his independence and safety.

If you would like to learn more about farm/ranch worksite modifications or to request an onsite assessment of your farm or ranch, please outreach to the Colorado AgrAbility Project. Call Candy @ 720-539-44335 or Jim @720-737-3686.



CAP booth at State Fair

Our photos from the Goodwill annual fundraising Golf Tournament makes it look idyllic but note the umbrella. it was hot! And while our visits with all of the hundred and some golfers was enjoyable, we made sure to keep up our hydration.



Agriculture Economics Insight

“The only societal justifications for agricultural industrialization were to make food cheaper for consumers and to free people from the drudgery of farming so they could take better jobs in factories and offices. As farming became more efficient, agricultural production increased, prices of farm commodities declined, and consumer food prices fell, or at least increased slower than the prices of most other things. As farms grew larger, America could feed more people better

Center For Independence

Low Vision and Assistive Technology Expo

October 29,, 2019

The Southwest Center of Independence has organized a Low Vision & and Assistive Technology expo co-sponsored by the Center, the Durango Public Library, and Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.

This event will take place from 9 AM to 3 PM at the library 1900 E 3rd Ave, Durango. There will be a series of workshops on advances in technology related to low vision and other physical impairments that affect both employment and activities of daily living. You will hear some personal stories and learn ways to seek funding and supports to become or remain more independent.

For more information on this event, contact Susan Weiss at 970-259-1672 or 970-903-5885 or email at susan@swilc.org



Did you Know?

That an agricultural worker or self employed individual who is required to purchase adaptive equipment in order for them to be able to work, can take a business expense deduction on their tax return for the entire cost of the equipment? That deduction is not limited to the 7.5% rule on deduction as a medical expense. According to IRS, you have a disability if you have :

- *A physical or mental disability (for example, blindness, deafness) that functionally limits your being employed; or*
- *A physical or mental impairment (for example, a sight or hearing impairment) that substantially limits one or more of your major life activities, such as performing manual tasks, walking, speaking, breathing, learning, or working.*

This deduction is called an impairment-related expense. The expense is defined as those ordinary and necessary expenses that are:

- *Necessary for you to do your work satisfactorily;*
- *For goods and services not required or used, other than incidentally, in your personal activities; and*
- *Not specifically covered under other income tax laws.*

As an employee you would report this deduction on IRS form 2106. Self employed individuals would report it on their usual IRS schedule C, C-EZ, C, or F .

Interesting Facts About Agriculture

- Agriculture is the single largest employer in the world.
- There are 914 million acres of farmland just in the U.S.
- The average U.S. farmer can feed 155 people.
- Beef farming accounts for 29% of American farms.
- In 2015, \$133.1 billion worth of American agricultural products were exported around the world.

How many farmers are in the US in 2019?

While farmland **may** stretch far and wide, **farmers** and ranchers themselves make up just 1.3% of the employed **US** population, totaling around 2.6 million people. Today, there are about 2 million **farms** in operation in the **US**, a steep decline from 1935, when the number of **farms** peaked at nearly 7 million. *May 30, 2019*

What is the average salary for a farmer?

According to **salary** data for **farmers**, ranchers and other agricultural managers from May 2016, the **average salary** is \$75,790 a year. In contrast, they make a median **salary** of \$66,360, with half getting lower **salaries** and half being paid more. *Mar 26, 2018*

Agriculture is one of the United States' most important industries, employing more than 24 million workers or 17 percent of the country's total work force.

Fun Facts About Agriculture

- Like snowflakes, no two cows have exactly the same pattern of spots.
- There are 47 different breeds of sheep in the U.S.
- Pork is the most widely eaten meat in the world.
- Elevators in the Statue of Liberty use a soybean-based hydraulic fluid.
- The longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds.
- The average dairy cow produces seven gallons of milk a day, 2,100 pounds of milk a month, and 46,000 glasses of milk a year.
- One pound of wool can make 10 miles of yarn.
- There are 150 yards (450 feet) of wool yarn in a baseball.
- Soybeans are an important ingredient for the production of crayons. In fact, one acre of soybeans can produce 82,368 crayons.
- The heaviest turkey ever raised weighed 86 pounds, about the size of an average third-grader.

Winter Workshops Are Almost here!

Each year your Colorado AgrAbility staff hold educational workshops across Colorado. We call them “Winter Workshops” because, well they are held during the winter. We choose that time frame inasmuch as most of our clients (farmers and ranchers) generally have more potential time available to be off the farm attending training during the winter season. For our Professional attendees, it is probably as good of time as any as they are always busy but hopefully not too busy to attend these informative outreaches to their respective communities.

We are going to continue a theme that we began last year, “Continuing the Conversation”, about mental wellness in rural America. We are seeing our farmers and our rural communities having an increasing need for professional care to address holistic health care concerns. Pain medication misuse and suicides rates continue to be high. We need to make it OK to ask for assistance. If we have a veterinary need that we don’t have the expertise to handle we have no problem calling a vet. But if we are suffering with pain, depression, or thoughts of self-harm we tend to think it is weakness to ask for help. It’s not. No one can do everything. We all need to learn to speak with a professional when we are overwhelmed.

The program being offered at each workshop will address learning objectives on the Colorado AgrAbility Project and Assistive technology , Financial issues for those engaged in AG work and Farm Bill updates as well as a section devoted to increasing our awareness and offering some resources and actions you can take to talk with a family member, friend, or co-worker about suicide, and drug misuse.

As we continue to work out the details for the 2020 Winter Workshops, we do have the dates and locations for your review. Look over the schedule and if interested in attending please contact Candy Leathers, @ 720-539-4435 or email her @ cleathers@goodwilldenver.org or outreach to your respective extension agent. Don’t forget to put a date and location in your calendar. Thanks, we hope to see you in the New Year!

January 14– Mancos/Cortez

Pueblo community College
SW Campus
33057 Highway 160
Mancos, CO 81326
Room– TBD
Host– Tom Hooten

January 16– Montrose

Friendship Hall
1001 N 2nd St..
Montrose, CO 81401
Pioneer Room
Host– Doug Dean

February 4th– Wray

TBD
Host– Travis Taylor

February 11– Rocky Ford

Arkansas Valley Research Center
27901 CR 21
Rocky Ford, CO 81067
Host– Bruce Fickenscher

Februray 18– Greeley

Weld County Extension Office
525 N. 15th Ave.
Greeley, CO 80631
Host-Keith Maxey