

## Managing your Arthritis Symptoms

The Wisconsin Arthritis Program has offered the Arthritis Self-Management Toolkit free to the first 50 AgrAbility clients requesting the kit. Since it is often hard to find time away from farming to attend an arthritis self management class in town, this toolkit provides the same resources to use at home.

The Kit will help you construct a personal approach to managing your arthritis-- through exercise, pain management, and relaxation. It encourages you to set goals, develop an action plan you can handle, and think and act proactively to manage your disease. Each kit contains the Arthritis Helpbook by Lorig and Fries, a Self-test, an Exercise Action Plan and a Relaxation CD and 2 Exercise CDs.

If you are interested, contact Mary Beck at 608-262-9336 or aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu by May 1, 2009.

## Ag Equipment Exchanges Valued at \$20,000

Current items available on the Ag Equipment Exchange website include a calf cart, medi-dart system, easyline milker track, automatic take-offs, platform lift, hydraulic controls, step kit, and hand clutch.

We have had 4 farmers exchange the following; a suspension seat, a drive-thru gate, small bale wagon, automatic hitches, and power chair lift for a total estimated value of \$20,000. These exchanges were donated by farmers in the AgrAbility program for other farmers in the program.

Want to post an item or search for something? Check out the exchange site at <http://farm.eastersealswisconsin.com/index.html> If you need help posting equipment, finding equipment, or responding to a post, call Bruce Whitmore at 920-675-0570. If you do not have Internet connections and would like to post an item, call Bruce or Melba Brown at the FARM Program, 1-800-422-2324 Ext 106.

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### FEATURING:

Outagamie Farmer Gives Back

Partners...  
Laura Bahn,  
Americorps Member

Safety First:

Free Arthritis Toolkit

Ag Equipment Exchanges Valued at \$20,000

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UW  
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# AgrAbility of Wisconsin Plowing Ahead

## OUTAGAMIE FARMER GIVES BACK

All Keith said he ever wanted to do was farm. He had worked through his school years and into early adulthood for his neighbor and had hoped one day to buy a farm and have his own operation. But, at the age of 23, Keith Posselt thought his career plans might be shattered after he fell 38 feet down the chute of a silo and injured his spinal cord—resulting in permanent paralysis.

With the support of his family, his employer and neighbor, Willard, Keith was encouraged to continue working. Six months after his 1997 injury, Keith mounted his tractor from the bucket of a skid loader. Thinking that wasn't the safest way to "get to work"; Keith applied for services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR referred Keith to AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW) for a farmsite assessment and suggestions for adapting or accommodating Keith at his work.

Paul Leverenz, AAW Easter Seals, visited Keith and his employer, Willard, to observe what Keith's responsibilities were and any obstacles he faced to completing them. Keith's employer owned the land and equipment and Keith housed his cattle in one of the employer's barns. Prior to his injuries, Keith did the round baling, corn chopping, picking corn, chisel plowing, disk-



*Posselt points out feed conveyor he installed in his barn*

ing and field cultivating for his neighbor. He also fed and cared for his cattle which required him to work between the two farmsteads which are across the road from one another.

The major barriers for Keith were; mobility between and around the farmsteads, access to the field equipment, and feeding and caring for his livestock. His employer was amenable to any accommodations that would help Keith return to work. AAW recommended to DVR that they purchase a lift to enable

*continued on page 2...*

Keith to mount and dismount the tractor and hand controls to operate the brakes and clutch enabling him to complete field work. AAW also suggested that Keith use a utility vehicle as a mobility aide to get around the two farms which DVR also purchased. Being able to get from the gator into the tractor, made me "able to do what I enjoy doing---not many can say that", Keith added. The Appleton Easter Seals agency provided Keith with handheld radios to use in case of emergencies.

Other AAW recommendations, Keith purchased and had installed. A feed conveyor system with a control panel was added so Keith could safely and independently feed his animals. A breezeway was built and a wall removed between the barns to improve his mobility within the structures.

In 2005, Keith purchased the farm belonging to his employer and the place where he housed his livestock. The purchase of the barn and 25 acres was particularly satisfying because the farm had been in the Posselt family before his employer bought it and because it marked the fulfillment of Keith's dream of operating his own business.

A new tractor was purchased when Keith's employer started growing different crops. DVR re-opened his case and purchased a lift for the new tractor, a utility vehicle with a cab and heater for traveling between the farms and a quick hitch to attach implements without having to leave the operator's seat.

Besides farming, Keith has become active with the AgrAbility Project and received a scholarship to attend the National AgrAbility Workshop in 2007 in Sacramento, CA. For the second year, Keith has been raising a calf for the AgrAbility of Wisconsin's disability partner, Easter Seals FARM program. Several former recipients of AgrAbility's services are raising calves, selling them and donating the proceeds to Easter Seals FARM program so services are available to other farmers in need. Keith said,



Posselt shows the red and white holstein he is raising for AAW Calf Project

"I heard about the calf project and felt this was a good way to give back to AgrAbility". Both Easter Seals FARM program and AgrAbility greatly appreciate Keith's generosity.

### **Plowing Ahead**

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## Partners...

My name is Laura Bahn and I am working with the Easter Seals FARM Program as an Americorps member. My duties include working closely with the Rural Rehabilitation Specialists and contacting vendors to gather estimates for assistive technologies to help the farmers we serve. I absolutely love this job, because it brings together my two passions in life: agriculture and helping people with disabilities.

I grew up in Green Lake County, Wisconsin, on a small dairy and cash crop farm. The cows were sold in 2007, and we have since grown our cropping

acres and still raise some beef cows and steers. We now grow approximately 1,800 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa.

I am currently a senior at UW-Madison, majoring in dairy science and ag business. I'd like to work in ag extension someday as well as have a small farm of my own.

*Laura Bahn*  
Americorps Member-Easter  
Seals FARM Program

## Wisconsin Farm Technology Days OFFERS DISCOUNTS FOR MOBILITY SCOOTERS AND WHEELCHAIRS

Tens of thousands of farmers and non-farmers attend Wisconsin Farm Technology Days (WFTD), our state's largest outdoor agricultural show. It's an opportunity to get away and learn about new technology, products and ideas to make farm life a little easier.

For some show visitors, however, the 60+ acres of educational exhibits, entertainment, commercial booths and field demonstration area presents a physical challenge. In the past, WFTD, formerly known as Farm Progress Days, provided resting areas and special handicapped parking and shuttles. As helpful as this was, visitors with mobility issues still found it difficult to attend the show.

In recent years, the show hosts have offered mobility scooters for rent which helped some who might not otherwise be able to attend. Volunteers planning the 2009 WFTD show at the Crave Brothers Farm near Waterloo July 21-23 were concerned about high rental fees. The planning committee again sought financial assistance to off-set the cost and found that assistance from the Watertown Agri-Business Club.

Dave Frohling, executive chairman for Dodge County's WFTD said the club's donation of \$4500 is very appreciated because we "want people to be able to see the show and we want to keep it affordable". Steve Zillmer, WFTD's Hospitality committee chair,

says there will be 75-80 carts available from Mobility Rental Service based in Kansas. The company will offer a rental rate of \$25 for mobility scooters and \$10 for wheelchairs. Sue Kelly, Mobility Rental's event coordinator, says the scooters work well, even at outdoor shows and were a huge success at the 2008 WFTD in Brown Co. A handicapped sign or license plate will get you into the handicapped parking area and the mobility devices will be near that entrance.

Wisconsin Farm Technology Days features guided tram tours of the Crave Brothers farm and an opportunity to see a fully automated, odor reducing manure digester that collects valuable biogas from manure to produce renewable energy. The tour also visits the on-farm cheese plant that turns the milk from the brothers' 1200 cow dairy herd into award-winning cheese marketed around the country.

The three-day event showcases the latest technology in production agriculture and will have more than 1000 commercial exhibitors. There will be numerous educational and entertainment opportunities as well as arts and crafts, antique power machinery, and field demonstrations. To learn more about the show or about the mobility scooters, visit [www.dodgefarmtech.com](http://www.dodgefarmtech.com).

Submitted by Gloria Hafemeister