



# Plowing Ahead

Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Summer 1999  
Volume 8 No. 1

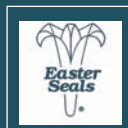
### FEATURING:

- Plum City Farmer Demonstrates Hay Equipment
- Include *Safety* When Shopping for Tractors!

### ALSO LOOK FOR:

- Partners...  
by Ron Schuler
- Cimmaron Air Milking Stool Enters Market
- 1999 National AgrAbility Training Workshop

AgrAbility of Wisconsin is a partnership between the UW Cooperative Extension Service and Easter Seals Wisconsin. Printing donated by Rural Insurance Companies.



## Plum City Farmer Demonstrates Hay Equipment

On June 1, 1999, AgrAbility of Wisconsin staff were invited to attend a field day at Steve Abel's farm located in Plum City, WI. Several individuals were invited to attend, including those from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, State legislature, newspaper staff, agricultural agents, friends and neighbors. The reason for the field day was for Steve to showcase his recently purchased haying equipment.

Steve was diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome as a result of an industrial injury a few years ago. Carpal tunnel syndrome left Steve with permanent nerve damage in his hand and therefore limiting some of his daily vocational activities. He had hopes of one day taking over the family dairy farm, but at the time, part of Steve's support for the family came from his working off the farm. Because of his disability, Steve was forced to make some decisions regarding his future in farming because he was no longer able to continue in both the factory and dairy farm.

Steve contacted AgrAbility of Wisconsin in 1997. Paul Leverenz, the Director of the Resource Center for Farmers with Disabilities performed a farmsite assessment with Steve. Paul worked with Steve to develop a plan. The plan included matching Steve's skills with his goals in farming and also discussing alternatives in agriculture. With the help of extension agents Greg Andrews of Pierce County and Robert Cropp of Pepin County, Steve researched the possibilities of several enterprises. He finally decided that

a haying operation was the direction that he and his wife Mary wanted to pursue.

During the planning process, Paul worked with Steve to determine and locate the most appropriate equipment needed for haying. They located a Hoelscher system that allows Steve to do the baling, accumulating and stacking of the hay entirely by himself on the tractor. The purpose for the Hoelscher system is to handle 50-lb. bales in larger numbers to eliminate the large amount of handwork otherwise needed. Paul also recommended that Steve modify the hand controls on his machinery in order to minimize the amount of hand movement. This machinery included tractors, a feed cart and skid steer. Paul also recommended the use of various power tools. He also worked with Steve to develop ways that would allow Steve to still participate in some of the duties of dairy farming like feeding and doing miscellaneous chores.

Steve was the driving force in the entire process. In 1997, Steve began to pool his resources, which included AgrAbility, Pierce and Pepin County Extension agents, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and State legislature. Greg Paquette of the Eau Claire DVR office mentioned that Steve's initiative and enthusiasm were key elements in the process. He stated that, "DVR is happy to be part of the team," to implement the Abel's plan. The plan of action was put into play in December 1998. Since then, the Abel's have been rapidly expanding their acreage and they are currently renting and owning a total of 360 acres. They are also working hard to market their product with horse owners as their target. "There is a growing need for quality hay," Steve stated. The Abel's are constantly learning the challenges of managing a new enterprise.



# Include Safety When Shopping for Tractors!

The used tractor market can provide good opportunities to purchase horsepower at a lower price. However, there can be a problem with shopping on the used farm equipment market; not all the tractors will have the latest safety features that are available. But some of these older tractors in today's agriculture do not have to be as dangerous as they are.

An older tractor can be updated in many ways to provide safe working conditions for the operator. Many of the safety features that make a new tractor safer to work with can be added to older machines with little difficulty.

These categories of safety equipment apply to all farm tractors and machinery:

- Protection from hazards of operation
- Visibility and recognition
- Improved stability
- Operator comfort

Rollover protective structures (ROPS) are readily and economically available for many older tractors, providing safety equivalent to the new tractors. It is never a good idea to build your own ROPS. You never know if it is strong enough. A safe, commercially made ROPS is carefully designed and tested to provide operator safety. Check with your dealer or extension ag safety specialist for the availability of ROPS for your tractor.

Bypass starting is a dangerous practice. All tractors, new and used, should have a shield to prevent it. Most machinery dealers can readily provide bypass starting shields. These shields cover the starter motor terminals that make bypass starting a temptation. Safe and proper booster starting is not hindered with a bypass shield in place.

Every PTO-equipped tractor should have a master shield over the PTO stub shaft. Retrofit PTO shields are available to provide better protection than the tractor may have had originally, so check with your dealer. The master shield should cover the top and sides of the stub shaft and be able to support a 265-lb. man stepping on it.

Be sure that the drawbar and other hitching features are adequate and in good repair. Proper hitching and attachment will reduce the chance of a rear overturn. Proper ballasting of older tractors will improve their stability. Adding ballast weight and dual rear wheels must be done carefully so tractor parts are not overstressed.

Better seating can provide improved ride and comfort as well as making it easier to reach and operate all the controls safely. Improved operator comfort will reduce the stress from long days on the tractor.

Older tractors can be retrofitted with lighting systems to make them as visible as any. Lighting systems can provide operator convenience and safety equal to that found on new tractors. Turn signal systems and flashing hazard lights as well as reflectors and taillights can be installed to improve safety on the roadway.

Safety equipment that comes with a tractor will be less costly than adding the same equipment to a tractor that does not have it. The safety equipment that is already on a tractor should be a major consideration when shopping in the used tractor market.

If you have to add safety equipment to a tractor after you bought it, there is a chance that it won't get done. But it is definitely worth doing. Adding safety equipment to your tractor and other machinery is an investment in your future. It pays you back every morning when you get out of bed to start a new day.

*Reprinted with permission from "AgrAbility in Dakota News"*



**Plowing Ahead**  
Editor and Layout designer:  
Amy Jo Bazile  
Published by AgrAbility of Wisconsin  
Please direct inquiries to:  
  
**AgrAbility of Wisconsin**  
460 Henry Mall  
Madison, WI 53706  
(608)262-9336 Voice  
(608)262-1228 Fax

## **PARTNERS** by Ronald T. Schuler

Since 1990, AgrAbility of Wisconsin, the partnership of Easter Seals Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin-Extension has grown and evolved into one of the most successful programs for farmers with disabilities in the United States. The partnership was started before federal support was available in the Farm Bill administered by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Over the past nine years we have had many challenges to meet the needs of Wisconsin farmers with disabilities. Additional funding was obtained from many sources when funds were limiting. Staff with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation performed an important task to insure continued success by providing the much needed assistance to the farmers. The AgrAbility team has expanded beyond the two team members we had when the team was formed. This does not only include DVR staff and funding supporters, but also farmers who participate in our network and speaker's bureau.

In October, we have another large challenge, hosting the National AgrAbility Conference in Madison. Although the National Easter Seal staff does much of the detailed organizing of the conference, this national conference will include numerous speakers from Wisconsin and tours of farms in the Madison area where farmers with disabilities are using numerous adaptive devices. We will change this new challenge into an opportunity to share the success of AgrAbility of Wisconsin with people from other programs. It also provides an opportunity to learn from the other programs. I hope many of you can join us during this very exciting conference.

### **Cimmaron Air Milking Stool Enters Market**

Over the past several years, Robert Bartels, a farmer from Darlington, WI has been working to perfect the latest in milking stools. His product has been named the Cimmaron and has recently begun to be marketed. The stool was constructed with the idea for use in stall barns and flat parlors. One of Robert's main goals for the constructing of the Cimmaron was to reduce the stress and strain on one's back and knees while milking. He has found this to be true after using the product himself for the past few years.

The operation of the stool is simple. The stool operates by the use of an overhead supply hose with valves and a self coil-hose to supply air to the valve. Each valve and hose combination allows the farmer to reach fifty feet on each side of the valve. Therefore, the length and layout of the barn determine the number of valves needed. There are switch controls located on the stool to allow the farmer to raise and lower the seat at a desirable speed.

The stool is comprised of a stainless steel cylinder with a spring coil to allow for comfort while using. The sturdy seat is equipped with a comfort harness. The speed control valve is designed to minimize noise while operating. The design of the Cimmaron is lightweight and compact. It is resistant to barn acid, non-electric and easy to install. Prices for the air stool and supply system vary according to the size of the barn.

If you are interested in learning more about the Cimmaron and its features, you can contact Robert Bartels at (608) 776-2995 and locate him at 10129 Hwy F, Darlington, WI 53530.

### **A Farmer's Creed**

I believe a man's greatest possession is his dignity and that no calling bestows this more abundantly than farming.

I believe hard work and honest sweat are the building blocks of a person's character.

I believe that farming, despite its hardships and disappointments, is the most honest and honorable way a man can spend his days on this earth.

I believe farming nurtures the close family ties that make life rich in ways money can't buy.

I believe my children are learning values that will last a lifetime and can be learned in no other way.

I believe farming provides education for life and that no other occupation teaches so much about birth, growth and maturity in such a variety of ways.

I believe many of the best things in life are indeed free; the splendor of a sunrise, the rapture of the wide open spaces, the exhilarating sight of your land greening each spring.

I believe true happiness comes from watching your crops ripen in the field, your children grow tall in the sun, your whole family feel the pride that springs from their shared experience.

I believe that by my toil I am giving more to the world than I am taking from it, an honor that does not come to all men.

I believe my life will be measured ultimately by what I have done for my fellow man, and by this standard I fear no judgement.

I believe when a man grows old and sums up his days, he should be able to stand tall and feel pride in the life he's lived.

I believe in farming because it makes this possible.

## Wisconsin to host 1999 National AgrAbility Project Training Workshop

Over 200 professionals and farmers from across the country attend this workshop every year. This year, the workshop offers unique opportunities for Wisconsin individuals to learn about AgrAbility and other topics. The conference begins with a kick-off reception at the University of Wisconsin Agricultural Engineering Lab on the evening of October 5. Here, people will get a chance to visit with one another and look at some of the latest ideas in assistive technology.

On Wednesday, October 6, AgrAbility staff will participate in an all-day meeting discussing various project issues. Others who attend the workshop will have a chance to learn about the many aspects of AgrAbility and the services that AgrAbility provides. During the evening, there will be a presentation and discussion of a play which is commissioned by the University of Minnesota Extension's Partners for Farm Health and Safety. The play will be performed by Theatre at Work and is entitled "Farm Alarm: Coping with Stress."

Thursday's activities will include opportunities for all workshop participants to be involved in concurrent workshops. Pre-registration is required. The concurrent sessions include demonstrations of assistive technology, utility vehicles, farm visit and needs assessment for new AgrAbility staff, and how to cope with stress. Other topics that will be discussed later that day include the needs of farm women, needs of farmers with cerebral palsy, low-cost milking parlors as well as others.

Finally, the workshop concludes on Friday, October 8 with a farm visit to a past AgrAbility client. The farm visit will allow individuals to get a first-hand look at modifications made to the work environment.

This workshop is an excellent chance to explore the AgrAbility project. It also allows individuals to become familiar with issues related to farming with a disability. If you would like more information about the workshop, please call Amy at (608) 262-9336.



**AgrAbility of Wisconsin**  
**460 Henry Mall**  
**Madison, WI 53706**

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Madison, WI  
Permit No. 658