

## SAFETY: 1999 Wisconsin Farm-Related Fatalities

Twenty-six fatalities related to farm work or work site activities occurred in Wisconsin in 1999, compared to 29 fatalities in 1998 and 41 in 1997. Wisconsin has averaged 33.4 such fatalities per year over the past five years.

The 1999 Wisconsin farm fatality rate (number of fatalities per 100,000 workers) was 26.5, based on an estimated average of 98,000 workers in production agriculture in Wisconsin in 1999, as reported by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (including farm operators, unpaid family labor, and hired workers, but excluding service workers hired through agricultural labor contractors). This compares to rates of 28.2 and 38.9 for 1998 and 1997, respectively.

Fatalities	1999	1998	1997
Number	26	29	41
Rate*	26.5	28.2	38.9

\*(per 100,000 workers)

Fatalities	1999	1998	1997
Tractors	13	15	11
Farm Machines	7	8	10
Confined Spaces	1	2	2
Falls	0	1	6
Animals	1	1	7
Trees/Woodcutting	0	0	0
Trucks/Vehicles	0	0	1
Other	4	2	4
Total	26	29	41

### TYPES OF FARM-RELATED FATALITIES

Farm tractors were involved in 13 (50%) of the 26 fatalities. Other farm machines were involved in seven (26.9%) of the 26 fatalities. There was one confined space fatality, involving silo gas. There was one animal-related fatality, involving a bull attack. The other four fatalities involved a trench collapse, an electrocution, a child being crushed by a falling gate, and a documented case of death due to farmer's lung disease.



A complete copy of the 1999 Wisconsin Farm-Related Fatalities Report can be found at <http://bse.wisc.edu/wiscash> under Statistics and Documents.

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Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

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### FEATURING:

**Iowa County Farmer Utilizes Creative Thinking to Stay Farming**

**Gutknecht Earns Easter Seals Media Award**

**Getting the Word Out -- Farmers Helping Farmers -World Dairy Expo 2000**

### ALSO LOOK FOR:

**Partners... by Sheri Hicken**

**Safety... 1999 Wisconsin Farm-Related Fatalities**

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AgrAbility of Wisconsin

# Plowing Ahead

## Iowa County Farmer Utilizes Creative Thinking to Stay Farming

Imagine as a farmer being told, "You should look for a new occupation. Usually, a person doesn't stay in the field she is struggling with." Followed by the question, "Are you sure you want to continue farming?"

These were the messages Mary Dunn, Dunndale Swiss Farm, received as the arthritis she had lived with since the mid-1970's continued to progress—now affecting her feet, knees, back, hips, and shoulders. Mary, however, had and continues to have a strong commitment to farming and what she refers to as a "bull-headed attitude." She wasn't ready to quit the occupation she loved—farming. Mary did realize though that she needed to make changes in order to keep with it. That's where AgrAbility came into play.

### AGRABILITY IN ACTION

Introduced to the AgrAbility program by a friend, Mary began working with Paul Leverenz, Resource Center for Farmers with Disabilities (RCFD-Easter Seals, an AgrAbility Partner) Director in the summer of 1994. During a farm site visit, the Division for Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and AgrAbility worked together with Mary to determine ways to reduce

*Modification made with tractor step kit.*



Original steps.



During a site visit, Mary explains she has come to rely on her additional equipment—especially her John Deere Gator. Pictured back: Paul Leverenz, RCFD Director, Rhonda Gildersleeve, Iowa County Ag Agent, Anne Bertinuson, USDA AgrAbility Administrator. Front: Ron Schuler, National AgrAbility Project Director, Mary Dunn, Dunndale Swiss Farm.

walking and repetitive tasks on Mary's 220-acre, Brown Swiss operation. With an incline or decline almost anywhere you go from the house to the barn or from the barn to the shed, the terrain of this Iowa County farm was also kept in mind throughout discussions. As a result, DVR purchased equipment which included two push feed carts with bicycle-type tires, an electric feed cart, an automated feeding system with grain bins and augers, extended steps and handrails for the tractors, as well as a John Deere Gator. The addition of this equipment not only allowed Mary to travel to many areas throughout the farm where walking would have been nearly impossible, but it also made entry and exit of tractors much easier, and reduced the strain caused on her joints from carrying feed.

### CREATIVE THINKING AIDS SUCCESS

This, however, was not *the rest of the story*. Mary's arthritis still continues to progress causing her to continually make accommodations to her machinery and equipment. During a National AgrAbility

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continued from page 1...

Project farm site visit this fall (pictured on page 1), Mary explained that she has gotten into a "creative thinking mode" which she utilizes to make modifications and changes on her farm. An example she shared with the visiting group was the modification of her truck's clutch. Because Mary now has difficulty moving her foot forward, she needed to do something different or not use the truck at all. Her answer was a wooden block and some electrical tape. A simple solution, but not something she would have thought to do seven years ago.

**CREATING AWARENESS IN OTHERS**  
"Mary's attitude and efforts have had a greater impact for everybody," explained Leverenz. The interactions Mary has had with local dealers, such as Hennessey Implement, McCarville Sales and Service and Mt. Horeb Implement, has been helpful both for Mary, as well as other farmers who require modified equipment due to a disability or health condition. Initially, Mary approached the dealers asking if they could "devise" something to make her tasks easier. Once introduced to different ideas, the dealers have gotten into what Mary refers to as "that creative thinking mode." As an awareness of other farmers with disabilities develops so has the potential for creative solutions.

**DECISION MAKING COMPARABLE TO MOST**  
Leverenz relates Mary's constant consideration of her disability in the decisions she makes on her farm from year to year to any other farmer's decision making for improvements and modifications they

make to be successful with their operations. Since her initial farm site assessment, Mary has kept Leverenz as a resource—someone to bounce her ideas off of. "Sometimes just talking with Paul and brainstorming gave me ideas," explained Mary. She relates talking with Paul to talking with a librarian. If there is something out on the subject he will help you in the direction to find it. Even though Mary hasn't formally worked with AgrAbility since receiving the equipment from DVR in December of 1995, she continues to utilize her creative thinking to find new options for herself allowing her to stay with farming. In Mary's eyes, when something new comes along opportunities are opened up. Her recent modifications include custom-made boots with inner soles and orthotics allowing her to stand again, trading her old skid steer for a hand operated skid steer with a step mounted in the bucket, an E-Z line track for milkers to be installed in her stanchion barn, a trade-in for a more reliable gator, and a partnership with her neighbor allowing for the purchase of round bale hay machinery requiring less manual operation.



Custom-made work boots provide an artificial arch for Mary's feet.

**ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING**

Mary's positive attitude and dedication not only for her success but others' success in agriculture is evident. Sometimes Mary questions why she opens herself up to the public by participating in such things as the AgrAbility Speakers' Bureau or telling her story for yet another article, but in the end she notes that "it may help another family or save an operation." That makes it all worth it. ■



Bill Holley, Easter Seals Board of Directors, presents the Outstanding Media Award to Jim Zell, Mosinee dairy farmer, who accepted on Kurt Gutknecht's behalf.

## Gutknecht Earns Easter Seals Media Award

Kurt Gutknecht, The Wisconsin Agriculturist, was recognized with the Outstanding Media Award during the Easter Seals Wisconsin Annual Awards Luncheon held on Saturday, October 28 at the RainTree Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Gutknecht was honored for demonstrating an active involvement with the Easter Seals Resource Center for Farmers with Disabilities through his efforts in promoting and attending last spring's AgrAbility Field Day held in Marathon County at Jim Zell's dairy farm. His articles not only enhanced the public's awareness of people with disabilities, but they also resulted in more than 20 new referrals to the AgrAbility program. Jim Zell accepted the award on Kurt's behalf. Zell shared his appreciation and enthusiasm for Gutknecht's and others' efforts to continually get the word out that AgrAbility is a program available to help farmers with disabilities succeed in agriculture. ■

**NOTICE:**  
AgrAbility of Wisconsin  
Advisory Council Meeting  
Thursday, Nov. 30, 2000  
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Easter Seals Wisconsin  
Madison, WI  
For more information,  
call (608) 262-9336.

### Plowing Ahead

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-----Check out our web-site at <http://bse.wisc.edu/agrability>.-----

## Partners...



As a teenager growing up in Baraboo, I can vividly remember bus trips taken to the out-of-town ball games at Reedsburg. It was these trips that made me feel "embarrassed" about agriculture and my own family's livelihood—our hog farm. Growing up and working on my parent's farm, I became accustomed to the strong odor from hog manure. This, however, was not the case for my teammates. During those bus trips, almost on cue the entire bus would moan in disgust, "Ahhhh, that stinks!" and I would sink into the bus' big green seat hoping that no one would connect me with that awful aroma coming from the farm we were passing—my home.

When I think back to those years, I don't understand why I was so afraid to stand up for agriculture and take the time to explain things that others didn't understand. It seems so silly to me now, because I truly feel blessed to have grown up on a farm and to have enjoyed so many adventures in agriculture through my involvement in both 4-H and FFA. Those experiences helped me to realize just how important agriculture and farming is not only to Wisconsin, but also how much it really meant to me.

Interested in keeping agriculture part of my life, I went to college at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, where I majored in agricultural education. Following my student teaching, I was not certain that teaching was "my cup of tea," so I took a position as a marketing coordinator with an engineering firm. This position allowed me to utilize my creative talents and brought greater understanding of the engineering industry, but my heart wasn't in the job—it wasn't agriculture.

Taking on the role of Outreach Specialist with the AgrAbility program, I am excited to have the opportunity to continue to work with agriculture and the many great people that have made this number one industry part of their lives. As the days pass, I become more aware of the many ways that AgrAbility of Wisconsin helps to enrich the lives of both individuals served and those who have the privilege to work with them. I realize that with change comes challenges and a lot of learning, but it also brings a refreshing and renewed outlook for something that I have enjoyed all along—agriculture.

Take care,  
*Sheri Hicken*  
AgrAbility of Wisconsin  
Outreach Specialist

## Getting the Word Out

### Farmers Helping Farmers

AgrAbility of Wisconsin provides opportunities for farmers to share their story and in the process lend a helping hand through the Farmer Network and the Speakers' Bureau. Nearly twenty Wisconsin farmers play the role of a voice for the AgrAbility program as they answer questions from fellow farmers.

*"It is so important for farmers to talk to other farmers...there is something about the level of trust and the bond that exists when talking to another farmer."  
--Jim Zell, Farmer*

The **FARMER NETWORK** includes farmers who have worked with AgrAbility in the past. These farmers share their experiences with other farmers in their area who are interested in getting involved in the AgrAbility program. Network participants can share as much or as little about their disability or health condition as they wish along with how

they got involved in the program. They might also explain how AgrAbility and other organizations were able to help.

The **SPEAKERS' BUREAU** also includes farmers who have been involved with AgrAbility. Individuals on the Speakers' Bureau help promote AgrAbility of Wisconsin in their local area. Speakers' Bureau members may be asked to give small, informal presentations to local

groups, take displays to county fairs and help staff AgrAbility booths at farm shows, such as Farm Progress Days, the Madison Farm Show and the Green Bay Power and Equipment Show, depending on their comfort level. AgrAbility provides program videotapes and display materials for these activities, and the farmer shares his/her program experiences with the audience.

It can be said that the easiest way to get from point A to point B is a straight line. The same is true with getting the word out about AgrAbility. A greater understanding is gained by a farmer talking to a farmer. For more information, contact Sheri at (608) 262-9336.

### World Dairy Expo 2000

AgrAbility Display  
Madison, WI

