

SAFETY: Caring for the Caregiver

Caregiving of a loved one with a disability can be physically and mentally draining. In addition to new caregiving tasks there are often changing responsibilities on a family farm. The result is very stressful for spouses, children and other family members. In times of stress, accidents are more likely to happen so caring for the caregiver is also important to a family dealing with the effects of a disability.

Caregivers may need to master how to:

- ◆ Set goals and make action plans.
- ◆ Identify and reduce personal stress.
- ◆ Make thoughts and feelings work for them, not against them.
- ◆ Communicate feelings, needs and concerns in a positive way.
- ◆ Cope with difficult situations, including asking for help and setting limits.
- ◆ Deal with emotions, especially feelings of anger, guilt, and depression.
- ◆ Make tough caregiving decisions.

ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CAREGIVING:

- Do you ever find yourself trying "to do it all"?
- Do you ever say to yourself "I should be able to," "I can never ...," or similar statements?
- Do you ever ignore your feelings or find that they are overwhelming?
- Do you ever get frustrated because of something you can't change or someone who won't change?
- Do you resist seeking, asking for, or accepting help?
- Do you feel that your family or others just don't understand what you are going through as a caregiver?

A "yes" answer to any of these questions indicates an area of self-care you might want to work on. For more information on caring for caregivers in rural areas, contact AgrAbility at (608)262-9336.



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



Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Summer 2000
Volume 9 No. 1

FEATURING:

Prairie Farm Dairy Farmer Finds New Mission

AgrAbility Field Day a Success

National AgrAbility Training Grant comes to Wisconsin

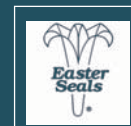
ALSO LOOK FOR:

Partners... by Amy Jo Bazile

Safety...Caring for the Caregiver

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

UW Extension



AgrAbility of Wisconsin

Plowing Ahead

Prairie Farm Dairy Farmer Finds New Mission

On a June summer day in 1998, Dennis Robinson was ending a day of chopping haylage. It was the last load of the day and the field was done. As soon as he finished unloading, there would be evening chores and an off-farm job waiting. Dennis was making good time that day. Then frustration set in when the apron on the chopper box broke making unloading difficult.

"It was my own fault," said Dennis, "I filled the chopper box too full."

Dennis could still unload the feed; he just had to get it to the front of the box. He was using a fork to pull the feed forward into the beaters and his sweater got caught. In a split second he was pulled into the chopper box head first and the beaters were cutting into his arm, shoulder and body.

Then, according to Dennis, it was "nothing but a miracle" when the two main drive chains broke cutting the power to the augers. Dennis was then able to yell for help. His son, John, 16 at the time, came to his aid and shut off the PTO and then ran and called 911. Dennis was rushed by ambulance to a hospital in Eau Claire, and then flown by helicopter to Rochester, Minn. to the Mayo Clinic. During his first operations, doctors pulled handfuls of haylage from the wounds in his stomach. Dennis lost most of muscle in the left side of stomach and skin grafts had to be taken from his leg to cover the wound.

Back on the farm, Peggy and Dennis' sons, friends and neighbors helped to milk the cows and operate the 160-acre dairy farm near Prairie Farm, Wisc. Dennis said many neighbors

and family pitched to harvest first crop hay soon after he was in the hospital, as well.

"Chopper boxes were lined up from the barn to the road," he said.

Dennis returned home one month after the accident. Dennis said that it was good to be home, but he still had plenty of healing to do. Soon after his return home, Peggy slipped on some manure in the barn one day and tore the rotator cuff in her shoulder. John and Peggy's stepbrother, Levi, pitched in to help with chores for the fall and winter of 1998 while Dennis and Peggy rehabilitated together.

AgrAbility contacted the Robinsons' after seeing an article in the Country Today newspaper about the accident. Paul Leverenz, Director of Easter Seals Resource Center for Farmers with Disabilities, one of AgrAbility's partner organizations, visited Dennis and Peggy in the fall of 1998. Paul pointed them in the direction of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

Dennis was assigned a DVR counselor, Sue Olson, based out of the Eau Claire office, who helped him through the process of getting back to work on the farm.

"She was really super," said Dennis.

"Sue was so supportive of us throughout the entire process," added Peggy.

With the help of DVR and Sue Olson, the Robinsons' were able to modify their farm so Dennis could get back to work. Dennis cannot do any heavy lifting because many of the stomach

continued on page 2...

continued from page 1...

muscles that are used in that process were removed in the accident. In addition, he cannot raise his arm very far without pain, however, with the use of assistive technology, Dennis takes care of the feeding and Peggy continues to milk the cows.

"I used to have a full-time job at night, so Peggy always milked," said Dennis.

With the help of DVR, Dennis was able to get an automatic feed cart, which eliminates shoveling feed. The Robinsons changed the way they store feed to accommodate Dennis' needs. They decided to store feed in piles, and DVR helped to get an area prepared for that type of storage. A loader for the tractor was also purchased which Dennis uses to load feed and carry heavy items around the farm. He also has a cherry picker in his shop to help with heavy lifting.

DVR also helped to purchase a new gutter chain and replace stalls in the barn, making barn cleaning and maneuvering easier to do.

"They (DVR) have done so much for us," said Dennis.

Dennis and his family have been able to continue farming for the past two years because of the help they have received from friends, family, AgrAbility, DVR and God.

"The original plan," said Dennis, "was to farm for the rest of our lives, but now we have felt

another calling."

Dennis and Peggy have recently become involved with a program called Missionary Builders. This program raises money and provides coordinators to help congregations throughout the United States build churches. The money raised goes to pay for the coordinators and the labor to construct the church building. The congregation only needs to supply the materials and a church can be built at about half the original cost.

Dennis and Peggy hope to be raising money for their mission beginning in September. According to the program it may take a year or two to build up the money needed for them to begin, but Dennis hopes they can do it a little sooner. The Robinsons will then purchase a winterized fifth wheel camper in which they will travel. They will be assigned a project and will stay on the building site until the project is completed, usually about a year, before moving on.

Dennis and Peggy plan to keep the farm, which will be operated by Peggy's mother and step-father.

"It will be hard leaving the farm," said Dennis, "but God has called us to this work and we are very excited!"

The farm will always be home and agriculture will be a part of their lives, but Dennis and Peggy hope that by taking their story and experiences on the road, they will help others here and throughout the country.

*Dear AgrAbility and DVR,
We just want you to know that you have made a real difference in our lives.
Because you cared enough to reach out and give of your time and also purchased equipment to make our lives livable, you gave us hope that life is worth living. You also came through and helped us see where we could modify some of our equipment and buildings to make it possible for us to keep on farming.
I know without a doubt, that my husband would not be doing the things he is today if it were not for all of you. He was able to go out and help make the decisions and try to help in the barn, when he tired he could come in and lay down or sit down out there. You made it possible for Dennis to see light at the end of the tunnel.
You are very special people to us and you've made a beautiful difference in our lives. We just want you to know we will always be grateful. (Thanks Sue!)
Dennis and Peggy Robinson*

Note from the editor: Dennis Robinson's success was due in part to the unwavering support of Sue Olson, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. It was DVR that funded the equipment and services mentioned in this story.



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...

It's the middle of summer already and we are over half way through the year 2000. My mother always told me that time seems to go faster the older you get—guess she was right about that too. The spring and its heavy rains all of a sudden turned to summer and now we haven't seen rain in over two weeks. The seasons change, the weather changes--change is just a part of life.

AgrAbility of Wisconsin is changing too. August 2 will be my last day with AgrAbility of Wisconsin. My family is headed to the west coast in pursuit of a new job and lifelong dreams. While I am thrilled to take on the challenge of a new place to live and new work to do, I am sad to leave my midwestern home and this program that has been so close to my heart. Through AgrAbility I have learned the joys of service and have witnessed great acts of courage, faith and hope. Thank you all for enriching my life.

Holly Allen, Consumer Services Assistant, will also be leaving the program. She is completing her graduate studies and venturing out into her own professional career. So soon, there will be new voices on the phone for all of you to hear.

Another change on the wind is the National AgrAbility Training Program, which is finding a new home at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the past nine years, National AgrAbility has been housed at Purdue University in Indiana. And now, the UW is gearing up to provide resources and training opportunities in a bold new way to the 18 state projects.

Downstairs from my office, in the main hall of Biological Systems Engineering, there is a framed picture that says, "Noble are the works of that man who, nurtured by the soil, labors to make it forever fruitful." The work of AgrAbility, the farmers and producers throughout Wisconsin and our partner organizations is noble and worthwhile. I will miss AgrAbility and all of the friends I have met over the years. But change can be very good and I am looking forward to a new adventure.

Farewell for now,

Amy Jo Bazile

*AgrAbility of Wisconsin
Outreach Specialist*

AgrAbility Field Day a Success

AgrAbility of Wisconsin and Marathon County Extension hosted an educational Field Day on Thursday, April 27, in Wausau, WI for area farmers and health care and rehabilitation professionals. The Field Day informed over 50 participants about the many services offered by AgrAbility.

Participants had the opportunity to learn about AgrAbility from farmers with disabilities who had worked with the project and hear their stories. Other service organizations also presented information about their programs. The afternoon caregiving session focussed on the effects of disabilities and serious illnesses on families and how to deal with them.

The highlight of the day was the afternoon farm tour of Springdale farm owned by Jim Zell. Zell had a back injury and has modified his farm with the help of AgrAbility and DVR. He grazes his dairy cows as a way of reducing feeding chores and field work. He also uses a John Deere Gator to get around the farm and steps and hand rails on his tractors, making it easier to get on and off.

Coffee and donuts in the morning were donated by Springdale Farm and lunch was provided by Ellenbecker Sales, Inc.

National AgrAbility Training Grant comes to Wisconsin

Beginning August 1, 2000, the partnership of the UW-Cooperative Extension and National Easter Seals will direct the National AgrAbility Project.

On the UW side, Ron Schuler will serve as the project director and will be responsible for the overall management and reporting activities. Cheryl Skjolaas, who worked with AgrAbility of Wisconsin from 1991-95, will serve as program manager, coordinating the technical assistance and information dissemination activities. The technical director, Therese Wilkomm, will direct the rehabilitation training and technical support. An agricultural technologist will be hired to provide training and technical assistance on agricultural machinery and equipment with assistive technology. A program assistant will provide clerical support, maintain the website and answer the 800 number.

At Easter Seals, Carol Maus will continue her role as Program Director, coordinating technical assistance and information dissemination. Ellie Depuydt, former member of the Minnesota AgrAbility Project, will serve as Rural Rehabilitation Technician, providing training and technical assistance. An administrative assistant will provide support to the staff and answer phones, including the 800 number.