



AgrAbility of Wisconsin

Plowing Ahead

Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Summer 2003
Volume 12 No. 1

FEATURING:

Crawford County Farmer Gains Whole New Perspective

National AgrAbility Training Workshop

Farm Technology Days Celebrates 50 Years

ALSO LOOK FOR:

**Partners...
by Roger James,
Wisconsin Farm Center**

AgrAbility of Wisconsin is a partnership between the UW Cooperative Extension Service and Easter Seals Wisconsin.

Printing is donated by Rural Insurance Companies.



Crawford County Farmer Gains Whole New Perspective

Don Dudenbostel pauses to look out over the beautiful rolling hills of Southwestern Wisconsin. These hills have been a part of his life ever since he was born. "Farming is something I enjoy doing. Agriculture is in my blood," says Don. The Dudenbostel family resides near Steuben, Wisconsin where Don, along with his wife and children raise about 75 head of beef cattle, along with small calves. In addition, the farm boasts over 400 acres of corn, soybeans and alfalfa, which keeps Don's day full of activity. With the average Wisconsin farm consisting of 210 acres, it is notable that Don and his seasonal help can work 400 acres, finishing everything from planting to mechanical maintenance to harvesting.



Don recently added a squeeze chute to his corral, which will allow him to handle cattle much easier than having to "muscle them around."

to the free stall barn that had been converted into housing for the many calves that the Dudenbostel family raises. Don is also planning to modernize his corral, which will allow him to sort cattle more efficiently and safely. He recently added a squeeze chute to his corral, which will allow him to handle cattle much easier than having to "muscle them around."

VISIONS OF CHANGE

Three years ago the Dudenbostel farm consisted primarily of dairy cattle, but Don's interest in beef cattle has influenced the focus of the family farm. In five years, Don hopes to have even more beef cattle, and more land for grazing. One of the modifications Don has made to prepare for this change is by adding modifications

“AgrAbility changed my way of thinking. Now I know that having the use of one arm doesn't mean that I can't do different things, it just means I have to do them a little smarter.”

-- Don Dudenbostel

Because of accommodations that were made, certain activities on the farm have become easier for Don who has limited use of his right arm. "I have had this from birth, so I have learned to adapt, but as I got older there were different activities that were getting hard for me...it was hard for me to use my [left] arm because

I was overworking it," Don explained.

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“That’s when I started looking for some help, and I read about AgrAbility [of Wisconsin] in a newspaper article.”

After contacting AgrAbility of Wisconsin, Paul Leverenz, Easter Seals Wisconsin Farm Assessment and Rehabilitation Methods (FARM) Director and AgrAbility partner, visited with Don on his farm. Leverenz looked at the farming operation and suggested ways Don could reduce his workload and how he might perform different procedures in an easier manner. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) served as another important resource for Don as they provided help through a local contact. They also supported Don by helping to provide funding for the purchase of assistive technology.

“Physically, I can do anything that everyone else can do, sometimes it just takes me a little longer to do it. Things like running the combine were pretty stressful because all of the controls were on the right-hand side and by the end of the season, I was worn out. It wasn’t a problem four years ago because I had a different combine and was a little younger, and it just hadn’t caught up to me until now.”

A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

After the visit to the farm, AgrAbility of Wisconsin made recommendations that

helped Don create a more pleasant working environment. Machinery such as the combine that had been so stressful is now operated with ease as hydraulic lines were moved and the controls were placed on the left side of the operator’s chair. Instead of lifting heavy bags of seed into a planter, Don now uses a loader on the front of a tractor to raise a large

“*Now I look at ten years down the road--what kind of shape will I be in if I keep continuing to do what I’m doing right now?*
-- Don Dudenbostel”



Don is able to harvest crops with more ease after moving operating levers to the left side of the steering wheel.

bulk seed container over a gravity box that is equipped with a seed auger. The seed auger has a telescoping end of it, allowing Don to fill the planter with ease. Extra steps were added to the tractors to prevent Don from having to use his left arm to pull his entire weight into the tractor. Don contacted a local welder to help him adjust levers inside the tractor so he could operate them with his right hand, instead of having to steer the tractor and maneuver the levers at the same time. Don explained, “There were things that Paul caught that I just took for granted as something that I had to do everyday. He saw the problems and he opened my eyes.

Now I look at ten years down the road--what kind of shape will I be in if I keep continuing to do what I’m doing right now?”



Don, working with DVR, contacted a local welder to help him adjust the levers in one of his tractors, reducing the stress of operating this piece of equipment.

Don shared that even after one farm visit had occurred, it helped him to think about what he could do differently to improve his situation for the future. Don says that decisions he makes on the farm are approached differently now.

He always thinks about how it will affect his family and himself in the future.

“AgrAbility changed my way of thinking. Now I know that having the use of one arm doesn’t mean that I can’t do different things, it just means I have to do them a little smarter. When I was younger I used to jump off the tractors, [which can] impact your knees and your whole body. When you are young, you think you’re invincible. I hope that I can instill the idea into my children that there are easier ways to do things without hurting yourself. AgrAbility has given me a whole new perspective of thinking this way.” ■

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Partners...

As an employee of the Wisconsin Farm Center, former dairy farmer, and a person with a disability, I find my work with AgrAbility very interesting and rewarding. I have worked for the Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) in the Farm Center for the past 13 years as a financial analyst helping farmers across Wisconsin to resolve various financial problems. The AgrAbility program has always been a resource the Farm Center has relied on when helping those farmers with disabilities stay active in farming.

I was born and raised on a dairy and beef farm in southwestern Wisconsin and was an owner – operator of a 130 cow dairy in the same area until 1982. Due to an inherited eye disease that was taking my vision, I decided to leave farming and change careers. With the help of DVR, I was able to obtain a college degree from UW-Platteville. I began working with the Farm Center, then the Farmers Assistance Program, in 1990. In the mid-1990's, I served on DVR's statewide advisory council.

My job with the Farm Center is to assist Wisconsin farmers analyze and resolve financial concerns. I help farmers who are having financial problems as well as those looking to make changes in their current farming operations. I am also currently



Roger James, WI Farm Center

involved with assisting AgrAbility and DVR in analyzing the financial feasibility of farming operations in need of services from the two agencies. I feel my experience in agriculture as well as my experience with DVR gives me a great insight into helping farmers and especially those farmers with disabilities.

Over the years of working for the Farm Center, I have seen many farmers benefit greatly from the help they have received from AgrAbility and DVR. It is important to me that persons with disabilities have the opportunity as well as the ability to work in a career of their choice. AgrAbility of Wisconsin has helped many disabled farmers do just that.

Roger James

Financial Analyst, Wisconsin Farm Center



For more information on the Wisconsin Farm Center, please call toll-free 1-800-942-2474 or visit their website at <http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/core/agriculture/farm-center/>.

A New Face at AgrAbility of Wisconsin

Hello! My name is Melissa Copas and I am the new Consumer Services Assistant at AgrAbility of Wisconsin.

Growing up in Plainfield, Wisconsin, I have always been involved in agriculture by working on my family's Black Angus beef and cash crop farm. I have been very involved in student organizations such as FFA and 4-H. This involvement has



strengthened my passion for helping others within agriculture.

Currently, I am a junior at the University of Wisconsin where I am

double-majoring in Agricultural Education and Agriculture Journalism – Business. I am certainly looking forward to meeting and working with you throughout the summer as I visit various counties for Safety Day Camps, Farm Technology Days and other agricultural events.

If you have any questions about the AgrAbility program, feel free to contact me by e-mail at mlcopas@wisc.edu or call (608) 262-9336. I will be happy to help in any way that I can! For additional program information or to view past newsletters, you can also visit us on the web at <http://bse.wisc.edu/agrability>. ■

This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under special project number 2002-41590-01371. UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA. If you need this material in another format, please contact AgrAbility of Wisconsin at (608) 262-9336.

Wisconsin Farm Technology Days Celebrates 50TH Anniversary

Wisconsin Farm Technology Days, formerly known as Wisconsin Farm Progress Days, celebrates its 50th anniversary with a return to Waupaca County on July 15-17, 2003. The Clinton Farm, which was the site of the 25th anniversary show, will be the host farm again this year. The farm is located on State Highway 22 just 8 miles south of Clintonville and 3 miles west of Bear Creek.

Tent City, which will rise out of an alfalfa field, is comprised of over 600 commercial and educational exhibits. Visitors have the opportunity to see the latest agricultural technology, machinery, facilities, products and services as well as a number of exhibits dealing with rural living. While visiting the Clinton Farm, be sure to stop by the Progress Pavilion Tent to visit with AgrAbility of Wisconsin. Other popular events taking place at this year's show include the forage field demonstrations and the Heritage Tractor display.

Entrance fees for this year's show are \$3 per person. With an official handicap mirror tag, visitors will have access to two handicap parking areas; one located on the North side of Highway 22 for those coming from the East, and the other is located on the East side of Tent City, for those coming from the West. To access the handicap parking areas, stay in the right-hand lane on Highway 22 while approaching the Clinton Farm. Two golf carts are being designated specifically for transporting individuals with disabilities from the designated handicapped

parking areas to any of the four information booths on the fringe of Tent City. The carts will run every thirty minutes, from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. No calling in advance will be necessary. For more details on the show, including an up-to-date list of exhibitors, check out the website at www.wifarmtechnologydays.com. ■



Nebraska to Host National Workshop

The 2003 National AgrAbility Training Workshop will be held November 11 – 14 in Omaha, Nebraska. Do not miss this opportunity to hear distinguished guest speakers and workshop leaders present a wealth of information and ideas relevant to anyone interested in assisting people with disabilities who are involved in production agriculture. The workshop sessions will be organized into four tracks:

1. Equipment and Assistive Technology
2. Farm Business and Financial Management
3. Independent Living and Health
4. Support Services and Delivery Systems

Two sessions will include site visits to facilities involved with creation or testing of farm/ranch equipment and irrigation systems. For more details about the conference, please visit the National AgrAbility Project's website: <http://www.agrabilityproject.org/events/workshop2003.cfm> or call 1-800-914-4424. ■



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