



# Plowing Ahead

Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Fall 2004

Volume 13

No. 2

## FEATURING:

**Plymouth Man Regains Farming Lifestyle**

**Safety First: Fieldwork? Don't Forget the Fire Extinguisher**

**2004 National AgrAbility Project Workshop**

## ALSO LOOK FOR:

**Partners... by Cally Abplanalp  
AgrAbility of Wisconsin Outreach Specialist**

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

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## Plymouth Man Regains Farming Lifestyle

The 150-acre Plymouth, Wisconsin, dairy farm has been an important part of Bob Huibregtse's life for 25 years. After growing up on a farm, Huibregtse wanted to continue farming—even though his father urged him not to. Now, with 90 cows and a 25,000 pound herd average, Huibregtse knows he made the right decision.

Huibregtse worked full time in construction and farmed with his wife, Debby. The extra income from the construction business allowed Mrs. Huibregtse to stay at home and raise the children. "It was just easier that way," Huibregtse explained. Three years ago, his life changed after falling on the ice and breaking his wrist.

"It started out such a simple, little thing," said Huibregtse. The problems have now escalated to the point that he may lose his right hand. Although he is in constant pain, it is hard for him to deal with the situation. Huibregtse said, "I'd be better without it, but I can't convince myself to go have it done." While dealing with his wrist, Huibregtse

also underwent heart surgery. For a year, he was unable to milk cows. His wife and children: Amy, 23; Abby, 22; Ashley, 20; Adam, 18; and Alex, 9; took over most of the dairy's daily respon-



*The feed cart has been modified for one-handed control, with the power button located on top of the handle so that Huibregtse can use his thumb to operate it.*

sibilities. "I was frustrated because I liked working and could not do it anymore," said Huibregtse.

While speaking with employees at Froedtert Hospital,

Huibregtse learned about AgrAbility of Wisconsin. The hospital staff contacted AgrAbility of Wisconsin on his behalf. When Huibregtse learned about the program, he was skeptical. He had a negative attitude about his future in agriculture because he thought his farming life was over.

Due to the loss of the use of his hand, feeding

cattle was next to impossible for Huibregtse. Corn silage was fed by hand, taking several hours each day. Milking was another difficult task that led Huibregtse to believe that AgrAbility of Wisconsin would not be able to help him. When Bruce Whitmore, a rural rehabilitation specialist from

the Easter Seals Wisconsin FARM program, first visited the farm, Huibregtse knew right away that Whitmore was "the kind of guy that he could get along with." Because of the assistance of AgrAbility of Wisconsin,

*"I was frustrated because I liked working and couldn't do it anymore"*  
-- Bob Huibregtse

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the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation (DVR) and the suggestions provided by Whitmore, Huibregtse was able to purchase equipment needed to continue

“  
*The feed cart was the best thing that ever happened to this farm. If we wouldn't have the feed cart and that mixer, we wouldn't be farming anymore.*  
”

-- Bob Huibregtse

farming. The purchase of a TMR mixer and feed cart allowed Huibregtse to cut down the feeding time to one hour and easily perform the tasks on his own. The feed cart has been modified for one-handed control, with the power button located on top of the handle so that Huibregtse can use his thumb to operate

it. “The feed cart was the best thing that ever happened to this farm. If we wouldn't have the feed cart and that mixer, we couldn't be farming anymore,” said Huibregtse. DVR also purchased a skid loader with an enclosed, heated cab that keeps Huibregtse's temperature-sensitive hand warm during the winter. The skid loader is further modified with a left hand control and foot controls. These modifications allow him to easily maneuver the equipment without using his right hand.



*The purchase of a TMR mixer allowed Huibregtse to cut down the feeding time to one hour and easily perform the tasks on his own.*

To aid him further in his day-to-day activities, DVR helped to fund automatic take-offs for the milkers and a gravity box with an attached auger.

Huibregtse credits his wife and children for their hard work and commitment after his accident. He truly believes that is how the farm survived. Thanks to the modifications, the farm has gone from “a four-person operation to a two and a half person operation.” Even though he is limited in what he can do, Huibregtse plans to farm for another 10 years. If any of his children decide to continue farming, he plans to help them as much as he can, for as long as he can.

Huibregtse appreciates everything that AgrAbility of Wisconsin has done for him. “The reason we still have cows is because of Bruce (and AgrAbility of Wisconsin). Otherwise we wouldn't be farming anymore.” ■



## SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR AGRABILITY CLIENTS TO ATTEND NATIONAL WORKSHOP

A reminder that the 2004 National AgrAbility Training Workshop will be held in Springfield, Illinois from November 16-19, 2004. Do not miss this opportunity to hear distinguished guest speakers and workshop leaders present a wealth of information and ideas relevant to anyone: farmers, ranchers and agricultural workers with disabilities remain productive members of America's agricultural community.

Scholarships to attend the workshop will be available to farmers and ranchers through the National AgrAbility Project on a first requested-first provided basis. Available scholarships may include registration fees, hotel expenses, and travel costs.

Interested AgrAbility of Wisconsin clients or their representatives should determine which expenses they would like covered by a scholarship (if travel costs are requested, the approximate amount must be submitted), and then provide that information to Cally Abplanalp, Associate Outreach Specialist at AgrAbility of Wisconsin by calling (608) 262-9336. ■



### Plowing Ahead

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# Partners...

*When I think about my childhood, I realize how fortunate I was to be raised on a small family dairy farm in Juda, Wisconsin. As a child, I loved being outside and in the barn, but as I grew into a teenager I grumbled about the farm work. I was the typical teen, resenting the fact that I had chores to do before I could go out with my friends and how lucky my "town" friends were because they didn't have to worry about chores.*

*Showing cattle and a variety of other animals at the county fair and being apart of such a unique culture never struck me as something I would cherish in the future. I was involved in 4-H, FFA and numerous agriculture groups in my county. The experiences and opportunities available to me because of my family's way of life were unlike anything my town friends would ever experience. It wasn't until I had to really think about what I wanted to do after high school that I realized just what kind of emotional hold agricultural had on me.*

*Since I realized I wanted to stay involved in agriculture, I attended the University of Wisconsin-Platteville for two years, majoring in agriculture business and then transferred to the University of Wisconsin-Madison so that I could add agriculture journalism as a second major. Some difficulty followed in finding a position in agriculture, which involved working in several different positions that gave me valuable experience, but didn't fulfill my desire to be in agriculture.*



Cally Abplanalp,  
AAW Outreach  
Specialist

*Accepting the position of Associate Outreach Specialist with AgrAbility of Wisconsin was an exciting opportunity for me. Even though I miss being a part of my family's dairy farm, I can still be apart of the agriculture community because of my activity in the program. Growing up on a dairy farm allowed me the chance to gain an appreciation of production agriculture and the difficulties that come with success. I personally had not heard of*

*AgrAbility of Wisconsin until I applied for the position, however after learning about the program and what a benefit it can be to farmers, I look forward to increasing awareness of the program throughout Wisconsin's agriculture and professional populations.*

*As I continue to familiarize myself with the position, I have come to realize just how important this program is to many people in the agriculture industry. I have had the opportunity to meet many incredible people involved in the program and to hear the success stories of former clients. Even though I don't live and work on my family's farm anymore, my life will always be tied agriculture in one form or another. AgrAbility of Wisconsin allows me to actively stay a part of a special community and to help others continue in a challenging but rewarding way of life.*

## Cally Abplanalp

Associate Outreach Specialist  
AgrAbility of Wisconsin

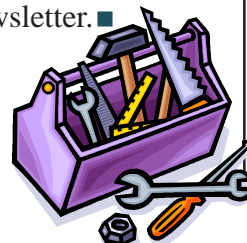
## ILLINOIS TO HOST 2004 NATIONAL AGRABILITY PROJECT WORKSHOP

The 2004 National AgrAbility Project Workshop will be held on November 16-19 in Springfield, Illinois at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Extension educators, occupational therapists, physical therapists, vocational rehabilitation specialists, rural health care providers, farmers, ranchers, & farm workers who have disabilities & their families are all welcome to attend.

A wide array of sessions will be offered to increase knowledge of strategies for farmers, ranchers and farmworkers to use for continuation in production agriculture. The sessions will provide information related to the overview of the vocational system and federal disability policy, applications of assistive technology to agriculture, as well as trends in medical rehabilitation for improvement of functional ability.

**If anyone is interested in attending or learning more about the 2004 workshop, please visit the National AgrAbility Project website at [www.agrability-project.org](http://www.agrability-project.org).**

Scholarships are still available for any AgrAbility clients interested in attending. Information regarding the scholarships can be found on the previous page of this newsletter. ■



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# SAFETY FIRST

*During Wisconsin's Harvest Season*



## Fieldwork? Don't Forget a Fire Extinguisher

It's the perfect fall day for harvesting - cool, crisp, and dry. You've done the daily maintenance on the machinery and checked the fuel, oil, tires and belts. While your plans for the day would not include having a tractor or combine start on fire, the possibility exists. Did you remember a fire extinguisher?

Combine and tractor fires cause more than \$20 million in property losses each year. Fires also cause 40 or 50 serious injuries each year, and occasionally a person is killed because of a farm machinery fire, according to Cheryl Skjolaas, University of Wisconsin-Extension agricultural safety specialist.

Skjolaas recommends carrying at least one fully charged ten-pound ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher in a combine. For a tractor, you need a five-pound extinguisher. You may want to mount one extinguisher in the operator's station and another unit where it can be reached from the ground.

Fire extinguishers should be checked, too. Check with your local fire department or insurance company to see if they can check the extinguisher for you. Does the pressure gauge show adequate pressure to discharge the powder in-

side the extinguisher? Once an extinguisher has been discharged, even the slightest amount, it needs to be fully charged again.

### Here's how to react if machinery catches fire:

First, turn the engine off, grab the fire extinguisher, and get out. If you didn't grab the fire extinguisher to start with don't go back for it. Fires can spread quickly and you could get trapped in the cab. Next, call for professional assistance. It's a good idea to have a cell phone or two-way radio along for these types of unexpected emergencies.

If you decide to approach the fire, use extreme caution. Fires need air, so opening a door or hatch to gain access to the source of the fire may cause the fire to flare up. Use the flexible hose of the fire extinguisher to shoot the chemical at the base of the flames from a safe distance.

Liquid fuels compound the dangers of this situation, so you may not be able to put the fire out with the extinguisher or it may be too dangerous to stay close to the machinery. In that case, move a safe distance away and wait for professional assistance to arrive. ■

*Submitted by: Cheryl Skjolaas, UW-Extension Outreach Safety Specialist*



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