

## Upcoming Events:

AgrAbility of Wisconsin will be attending a number of events in the coming months to promote our services. If you are in the neighborhood, or are attending any of these shows or conferences, please feel free to stop by and say hello.

January 13-14: Midwest Farm Show, LaCrosse Center.

March 2 -3: Eau Claire Farm Show, Eau Claire Indoor Sports Center.

March 6: Fond du Lac Area Ag Showcase, Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds.

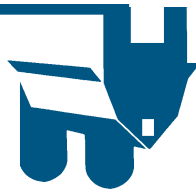
March 30 - April 1: WPS Farm Show, EAA Grounds, Oshkosh, WI.

## Helping Farmers Help Themselves Ag Equipment Exchange

The vast majority of equipment that is recommended and placed on farms remains there and is being used. A study conducted to learn more about what happens to assistive technology (AT) showed that 96% of the equipment purchased by DVR for AgrAbility clients in Wisconsin remains on the farm and in use. Note: Some equipment has been sold or is broken and is not available. Much of the remaining equipment is no longer used and is available to other farmers in need. Current items available on the Ag Equipment Exchange website include a calf cart, medi-dart system, easyline milker track, automatic take-offs, Life-Essentials platform lift, hydraulic controls, tractor step kit, and hand clutch.

Want to post an item or search for something? Check out the exchange site at <http://farm.eastersealswisconsin.com/index.html> If you need help posting equipment, finding equipment, or responding to a post, call Bruce Whitmore at 920-675-0570. If you do not have an Internet connection and would like to post an item, call Bruce or Melba Brown at the FARM Program, 1-800-422-2324 Ext 106.

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### FEATURING:

Training by AgrAbility of Wisconsin

Partners...  
Bob Meyer, Outreach Specialist

Farmer Networks  
Building Support for the Program.

Upcoming Events:  
Midwest Farm Show  
Jan. 13 - 14 LaCrosse

Eau Claire Farm Show  
March 2 - 3

Ag Equipment  
Exchange Project  
Updates

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

UW  
Extension



# AgrAbility of Wisconsin Plowing Ahead

## AgrAbility of Wisconsin Provides Training

The AgrAbility Program was established to provide education and assistance to farmers with disabilities. As part of our education initiative, AgrAbility of Wisconsin provides training to individuals interested in learning more about conducting on-farm assessments and working with farmers and ranchers with disabilities.

In June, we hosted 18 people from 11 state AgrAbility projects in Madison and at the farm of Bob and Monica Ziegler for a three day workshop on conducting an on-farm assessment.

AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW) hosted an Agricultural Assessment Training Program from June 1st through June 3rd. This training program enabled a conversational flow of information between various programs and also provided special training experiences including presentations by AAW specialists, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) staff, and National AgrAbility Project staff, as well as an on-farm visit.

Training program participants were greeted on Monday evening, where they visited and introduced themselves over dinner. After dinner, they listened to the stories and experiences of clients, Mike and Deb Hanson and Larry and Patty Kuhl. Both clients were affected by disabilities and helped by their families and the strong partnership between DVR and AAW. These farmers were very open about their experiences and pro-



*Bob and Monica Ziegler, (center) tell their story to the Ag Assessment training participants. FARM Program Specialist, Bruce Whitmore, right.*

vided accounts of their process, then answered questions.

The first formal presentation, offered Tuesday morning by Mary Beck and Paul Untiet, was about the AAW case management process. Of particular interest was the efficiency of the Centralized Database Management utilized by AAW and Wisconsin DVR.

Paul Leverenz of AAW & Easter Seals Wisconsin led a discussion about agricultural assessments before an on-farm training session about conducting farm assessments. At the farm of Bob and Monica Ziegler, the group was able to see accommodations made to a farm in response to a unique set of circumstances faced by the host farmer. Due to a copper deficiency, Bob has difficulty with balance and mobility. He fell forward if he looked down, or backward if he looked

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up. Specific modifications were needed to ensure his safety on the farm. Modifications included added steps on two tractors and two Life Essentials lifts for the combine, one for the operator's platform and one for the engine compartment. The sprayer was modified so that pesticides can be added to the system while standing on the ground. Zielger obtained a utility vehicle to improve Bob's mobility and a skid steer loader to reduce physical labor when handling feed and manure. DVR provided support for these modifications and equipment. Seeing the difference these accommodations made for this client was a new experience for many in attendance, and the visit served a crucial role toward understanding the process as a whole.

On the final day of the program, visitors learned about data collection and analysis, the post-assessment process, and the Client Assistance Program (CAP). They also learned about various tools and resources available to them and were informed of National AgrAbility Project updates.

The program was a successful step toward furthering partnerships among the programs in attendance. It offered members of various service agencies an opportunity to talk with each other and share ideas and issues.



*Project Director, Ron Schuler describes sprayer modifications to the participants during the site visit.*

AAW would like to extend a special thanks to Bob and Monica Zielger for hosting the on-farm visit and to all in attendance—with a special thanks Larry and Patty Kuhl and Mike and Deb Hanson for sharing their experience.

## Partners...

Hello, my name is Bob Meyer. I'm the new outreach specialist for AgrAbility of Wisconsin at UW-Madison. I'm not really new to AgrAbility as I worked with Ron Schuler and the rest of the team during the first 4-year grant when UW-Madison served as the National AgrAbility Project. During that time, I was responsible for the evaluation activities of the National Project. I am very glad to be returning to the AgrAbility team and to have a chance to make contact with and support farmers in Wisconsin as this is a wonderful and rewarding program.

I grew up in Indiana and Colorado and was active

in 4-H. I've worked in agriculture since 1991 in the Peace Corps, in West Africa and as a recruiter for Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance. My interest in farming in healthy and safe ways continued with the Healthy Farmers, Healthy Profits project at UW-Madison and during graduate school. I have a special interest in the ergonomics of farming and will continue to work toward a PhD in that area.

If there is anything I can do feel free to contact me at the Madison office (608) 262-9336, or [aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu](mailto:aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu).

**Bob Meyer**  
Senior Outreach Specialist  
AgrAbility of Wisconsin

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## Farmer Networking Opportunities: Neighbor to Neighbor Assistive Technology Exchange Farmers Network Advisory Council

One of our program goals is to facilitate and promote "networking" that allows for more farmer to farmer exchange of ideas, information and even equipment. For AgrAbility of Wisconsin, this takes multiple forms.

Three AgrAbility of Wisconsin "Neighbor to Neighbor" meetings were held around the state this fall. These meetings are informal gatherings that allow the host farmers to discuss their operation and the process they went through with AgrAbility, Easter Seals FARM program, and DVR. It allows them to share their story with clients who may be new or re-opening their cases.

This year, clients met and discussed among themselves the ins and outs of working with a disability, the farmsite assessment process, the importance of working with your DVR counselor, and the tools and technologies that make their farmwork manageable.

Some of the technologies discussed included: motorized feed carts, added steps for tractors, camera systems that allow you to view implements without twisting or turning, conveyor feeding systems, mobility devices, such as utility vehicles, door openers, heating in milking parlors, floor mats that reduce fatigue, and lever systems for opening silo/storage doors to reduce ladder climbing. Farmers attending these meetings enjoyed learning about other operations and sharing their own experiences.

Next year, we'll conduct three more Neighbor to Neighbor meetings. If you are interested in hosting one in your area, let your Easter Seals FARM specialist know or call the UW office and visit with Bob.

The assistive technology exchange website is up and running (see article, back page). This website was developed as a way for farmers to connect with one another and exchange some equipment that may no longer be needed or may be useful for someone else.

If you need help posting equipment, finding equipment, or responding to a post, call Bruce Whitmore at 920-675-0570. If you do not have Internet connections and would like to post an item, call Bruce or Melba Brown at the FARM Program, 1-800-422-2324 Ext 106

The Farmers Network is a group of interested farmers who have volunteered to visit with others who are starting in the program, or to speak with their local organizations about AgrAbility. We are always looking for new members for our Farmers Network -- if you are interested, please call the UW office at 608-262-9336 to have your name added to our list.

Finally, we have an Advisory Council. This group is made up of people from the program and from state agencies that provide advice for us and resources for our clients. This year, we met on December 3rd to discuss the previous year's work and what we propose to do during the next four year grant. If you are interested in learning more about the Advisory Council, or would like to volunteer, please call the UW office or visit with your Easter Seals FARM specialist (Bruce Whitmore, Jeff Kratochwill, Paul Leverenz, Paul Untiet or T Ellenbecker). The Easter Seals 800 number is: 1-800-422-2324.

These networking events allow farmers to work together, to build support networks, to exchange of information and ideas outside AgrAbility services, and to create a community to support the broader project goals.

### **Plowing Ahead**

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