

Update on the Ag Equipment Exchange: It Works!

You may have read about the Ag Equipment Exchange website in the Fall Plowing Ahead Newsletter so we thought you might like to know that it works! AAW had the first exchange of equipment occur last December. Mike was in need of drive thru gates and Don had to replace his seat suspension. The two farmers made the exchange, at no cost to either, and now have equipment that makes it easier for them to farm. The added bonus is that equipment is being used and not abandoned.

For those unfamiliar with the Ag Equipment Exchange initiative, it is a craigslist-style website

that allows farmers to donate or sell machinery no longer in use to other farmers who have that need. Anyone- farmers, dealers, vendors- can post equipment on the website. It is free. But because a farmer's resources might be currently impacted by a chronic health condition or disability, it is our hope that items can be made available at no cost or a reduced cost. The website can be found at <http://farm.eastersealswisconsin.com/>. Click on Ag Equipment Exchange. Post directly to the site or contact Bruce Whitmore at 1-800-422-2324 for assistance.

AAW is updating it's mailing list for the Plowing Ahead Newsletter. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please contact Mary Beck at 608-262-9336 or email at aaw@mailplus.wisc.edu. Thank you.

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FEATURING:

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Plowing Ahead

Farmer Gets a "Lift" After Injury

Polk County farmer, Larry Kuhl, has farmed all his life. In fact he said he's never had a real job! Hard to believe when you consider the farm he and his brother own. Larry and brother, John, operate Kuhl Acres on a farm started by their grandparents in 1919. Over the years, their business has grown and today they own 1200 acres, rent another 500 and till 900 acres to grow corn, soybeans and some alfalfa. Their farm consists of 80 milk cows, an 80-head replacement herd, 100 steers, 40 elk, a 25-head beef cow/calf operation and 8 sheep.

Larry and his wife, Patty, have farmed their entire married life, raising their three children, Brian, Lisa and Laura on the farm. With Patty teaching Business Education at their local high school and Larry farming plus volunteering for community and church organizations, life was always busy for the Kuhls. They did, however, manage to enjoy time at their northern Wisconsin cabin. In March, 2007, Larry, his wife Patty and daughter Laura, and son-in-law, Brian, decided to go to the cabin to take measurements for re-roofing it. They never expected to spend the rest of the weekend in a hospital after Larry slipped off the 10 foot high roof, severing his spinal cord. The incident resulted in paralysis of his lower body and legs.

While Larry had a couple of job offers after his injury, his heart was



Larry on his Ventrac.

in farming and he longed to return. During his eight weeks at North Memorial Hospital in the Twin Cities, a social worker suggested Larry contact AgrAbility of Wisconsin (AAW) for assistance getting back to work. He contacted Jeff Kratochwill, AAW Farm Specialist as soon as he got home.

Following the injury, Larry and his brother decided that Larry would assume responsibility for the field crops and business aspects of their partnership and John would manage the dairy. Because he used a manual wheelchair, they needed to find a way for Larry to mount and dismount his equipment and get around the farmstead. He needed to be able to attach implements to the farm equipment as well. Another responsibility he talked about was feeding the replacement herd that is housed on his farm. Someday he also hoped that he could use his woodworking shop located in the basement for 4H woodworking activities.

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When Jeff visited Larry he was surprised that Larry was getting into his combine by sitting in a chair strapped to a pallet that was then lifted by the skid steer up to the combine cab. Jeff and Larry quickly agreed that there had to be a better and safer way to mount and dismount his machinery. Jeff referred Larry to Gail Hauser, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselor at the Rice Lake VR office. Gail met with Larry and commented that at first it was "tough for him to come in and ask for help. But once he realized he could farm again, he was ready to go. He was a really nice fellow to work with, always receptive and open to new ideas."

Gail contracted with AAW to conduct a farmsite assessment and make suggestions for worksite accommodations that would allow Larry to do the field work. Jeff analyzed his work problem areas and provided a list of options that could accommodate his disability-related needs. DVR provided the resources to purchase pilot lifts for his two tractors and combine, hand controls for his tractors, a Ventrac utility vehicle designed for wheelchairs that provided outdoor mobility, and an automatic hitching system. Larry purchased a van and DVR paid for the van conversion enabling

Larry to drive. Larry purchased the stair lift to his basement.

Being able to work, "makes me feel whole. When I'm in my tractor, I don't feel handicapped anymore." said Larry.



Larry using his Pilot Lift to mount his tractor

Larry continues to work 10-12 hour days for Kuhl Acres during the tillage and harvesting season and does most of the purchasing and marketing of the commodities. He continues to serve on two coop boards, his church board and volunteers for AgrAbility and 4H activities.

Larry and Patty, who recently retired, took a cruise to the Bahamas this winter, something they probably wouldn't have done before the injury. The injury "changed my life a lot but not all of it has been bad", said Larry, looking at Patty, "we get to spend more time together". With a smile, Patty agreed and said, "Thank God we had all these resources to help us".

2009 Winter Farm Shows

- February 26 Shawano Farm Show, Community Hall, Shawano
- March 3-4 Eau Claire Farm Show, EC Indoor Sports Center, Eau Claire
- March 7 Fond du Lac Farm Show, Fairgrounds, Fond du Lac
- Mar 31-Apr 2 Wisconsin Public Service Farm Show, Oshkosh

*WPS offers Free motorized scooters, manual wheel chairs and wagons for attendees who need mobility assistance.



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Partners...

Hello, I'm Mary Beck, the new UW Extension outreach specialist for AgrAbility of Wisconsin. I'm not really new to AgrAbility. In fact, Cally Ehle, my predecessor, and I conducted several training workshops together during my six years with the National AgrAbility Project.

I grew up in Forest County, Wisconsin, where my folks had various small businesses; a resort, an A & W Root Beer stand and a mink ranch. After earning my Rehabilitation Counseling degree at University of Wisconsin-Madison, my work experiences have

involved helping people find a vocation that matches their interest, skills, and values. I've provided job placement services for adults with disabilities, helped high school students assess their vocational skills, worked with employers across the state to develop inclusive hiring practices, operated my own small business, Employment Works!, taught Technical College students, and, of course, my work with AgrAbility.

If you attend one of the Spring Farm Shows and see the AgrAbility of Wisconsin booth, I hope you will stop by and say HI!

Mary Beck

SAFETY FIRST

Ice Safety... "Thick and blue, tried and true. Thin and crispy, way too risky."

Winter in Wisconsin means cold weather and snow; but it also means time for winter sports like ice fishing and snowmobiling. Traveling on frozen Wisconsin lakes, especially with Spring coming, can be dangerous so its vital to practice safe measures while out on the ice.

Ice thickness is the single most important factor to keep in mind when it comes to safety. As Spring approaches, it is easy to forget that the ice could be changing. Thickness can be tested with an ice chisel, ice auger or even a cordless 1/4" drill with a long bit. Use the following ice depth guide for isafety on the ice.

- 2" or less - STAY OFF
- 4" - Ice fishing or other activities on foot
- 5" - Snowmobile or ATV
- 8" - 12" - Car or small pickup
- 12" - 15" - Medium truck

Lake ice can be deceiving. White ice or snow ice has a white appearance which is caused by bubbles in the water. This makes the ice about one-half as strong as new clear ice so the above thicknesses should be doubled.

Ice thickness can differ across a body of water due

to underwater currents. It may be 12" in one area and 2" in another. Only drive on the ice if absolutely necessary. If driving at night, don't "overdrive" because it can take a much longer distance to stop on ice than your headlight shines, causing an inability to avoid holes or thin ice in time.

If your snowmobile or car does break through the ice, jump off quickly or jump out a window if the doors are held shut by water pressure. If you cannot escape before the vehicle is fully submerged it is likely that it will tip forward, and possibly roll over onto its roof due to the weight of the engine. Once the vehicle is filled with water you may find it easier to escape through a door or kick out the front or back window.

Other safety tips while traveling on ice include; refrain from alcoholic beverages, wear a flotation device under your snowmobile suit and carry a pair of ice picks that can help you pull yourself up onto land. Having a cell phone handy could be very helpful.

Sources: Wisconsin DNR: Ice Fishing Safety http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/faq/icefis_safety.htm and Minnesota DNR: Ice Safety. <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/ice/index.html>