

Mr. Bradshaw suffered a spinal cord injury in 1996 at the L3 level which resulted in paralysis from the waist down. He had been an automotive mechanic for 13 years prior to his injury but was unable to return to work due to symptoms and issues related to his injury. For seven years, Mr. Thompson has been receiving Social Security Disability Insurance as his only source of income.

He had been raising meat goats for personal consumption and realized that he could expand his operation and potentially become self-sufficient as a producer of meat goats. He spoke with his DRS counselor about getting assistance in purchasing a mobility vehicle and was then referred to AgrAbility Virginia. Before DRS could assist him, he developed a business plan for the meat goat enterprise. Mr. Thompson and an AgrAbility Virginia staff member then met with the Small Business Development Center for assistance with the business plan. Others involved in the business plan development were the Virginia Department of Agriculture, Virginia Tech, DRS, Virginia State University, and VCE. Mr. Thompson also received assistance from the Benefits Specialist from Centers for Independent Living (CIL) and the Social Security Administration, specifically the PASS cadre. He has submitted his business plan to DRS and did receive funding for a mobility aid, thus increasing his abilities to be productive with his farming operation.

The impact of AgrAbility Virginia in this case is not just the cooperation between providers and agricultural members, but potentially to the meat goat market in the state of Virginia. Regional slaughterhouses sometimes have difficulty buying from local suppliers since the supply is not sufficient. Customers are demanding more goat meat each month and the supply is generally imported from other states. Mr. Thompson is entering a growing market and has the potential to be successful meat goat producer.