

AgrAbility Virginia



Creating solutions, changing lives.

AGRABILITY PROJECT



NEW FACES AT AGRABILITY VIRGINIA

AgrAbility Virginia is pleased to welcome Kirk Ballin, Joseph Young, Tristan Robertson, and Debra Rouse to the AgrAbility team. As Program Coordinator, Kirk oversees the entire program, as well as provides direct services to farmers and their family members. Joseph, the Service Coordinator for the Richmond area, and Debra, the Service Coordinator for the Roanoke area, will also provide direct services. Tristan oversees all Easter Seals Virginia programs, including AgrAbility Virginia. AgrAbility Virginia is very fortunate to have a team of individuals that offer so many strengths, experiences, and diverse backgrounds.



Kirk Ballin

Kirk comes to AgrAbility Virginia with a diverse range of experiences. He is a Unitarian Universalist minister, who also has training as a cultural anthropologist and counselor. Kirk has worked as director, advocate, or board member for several community service organizations, as well as working with Carilion Health System as a trauma unit counselor. Much of his time in the 1970s was spent living and working in farming communities in California and Virginia; his family continues to own a small farm in Augusta County.



Tristan Robertson

Tristan began her career with Easter Seals Virginia in 1996, as a Child Development Specialist, and is now the Director of Programs and Administration. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology in 1996. She enjoys grant writing, working with children, and is a Certified Infant Massage Instructor (CIMI), through the International Association of Infant Massage.



Debra Rouse

Debra grew up in Danville, Virginia, and was raised by grandparents who worked in the tobacco industry for many years. She graduated from Howard University, Washington, D.C., where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications. She has always tried to give back to the community, and worked for a number of non-profits over the years, including: The Society for Underprivileged and Handicapped Children, of Silver Spring Maryland, MD, The Juvenile Diabetes Foundation of NYC, NY, and The Muscular Dystrophy Association of Albany, New York, among others. Debra recently moved to Roanoke with her husband from upstate New York.

Joseph Young

Joseph resides in Richmond, Virginia. He worked for Allstate Insurance for many years, and in 2004, he received a dual degree, a Masters in Arts in Christian Education and Divinity. He is a graduate of Virginia State University, with a degree in Agriculture.



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“Promoting success in agriculture for people with disabilities and their families.”

Message From Kirk Ballin, AgrAbility Virginia Program Coordinator

Greetings. You will have seen on the front page of this issue of the AgrAbility Virginia Newsletter a little background information about the AgrAbility Virginia staff. We are all relatively new to AgrAbility Virginia. I joined AgrAbility Virginia in January 2005, while Joe came on board in February, and Debra just started in June. So together we are still learning the ropes while also redefining the structure and implementation of AgrAbility Virginia.

But the mission of AgrAbility Virginia still remains the same: “Promoting Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families”. In other words, the goal is to help keep the farmer farming, in spite of his or her disability, and to prevent secondary injuries that might ensue as a result of the disability. Additional important consequences of AgrAbility Virginia’s work are to preserve a way of life, and to deter the disappearance of farm land.

The real success of AgrAbility Virginia is in being able to empower disabled people in agriculture and their family members. This success depends upon a trusting relationship between AgrAbility Virginia staff and the clients. But it is also very dependent upon the collaborative relationships that AgrAbility Virginia cultivates with its Rural Rehabilitation partner agencies. For without their involvement AgrAbility Virginia is hard pressed to be more than just a project with a lot of good intentions. These other agencies are: The Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension Office and its numerous agents throughout the Commonwealth; The Department of Rehabilitative Services; The Virginia Assistive Technology System; Centers for Independent Living; Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center. We also plan to be working more closely with the Virginia Rural Health Association and the Virginia Arthritis Task Force (Virginia Department of Health), and with Virginia State University.

One of our goals in the coming months is to further develop these partnerships so that we can more effectively and efficiently identify and serve our clients. Over the next several months Debra, Joe and I will continue to be in contact with representatives of the different partners so that we may be more familiar with those representatives and the services offered, and they with us and what we have to offer. We will also continue to spread our message at as many events as possible throughout Virginia. So if you have an event taking place or know of one that might be of interest to us, please let us know. We would love to be there! I look forward to staying in touch with you. Thanks -- Kirk

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology commonly refers to both assistive and adaptive devices, which may either be high or low technology, and various services such as evaluations, fabrication and training. Examples of high through low technology assistive devices which farmers and ranchers with disabilities might find beneficial, could range from mounted chair lifts to easy grip hand tools respectively.

There are four major concepts relating to assistive technology and the delivery of AT services, they are:

The Impact of Environmental Demands

People with disabilities often experience difficulties coping with the demands that are placed upon them from the environment.

The National Assistive Technology Research Institute (NATRI) conducts assistive technology (AT) research, translates theory and research into AT Practice, and provides resources, for improving the delivery of AT services.

For example, people with severe visual impairments may encounter problems in traveling from place to place. Those with hearing losses may have difficulty understanding information presented on television. Children with severe speech impairments may have difficulty communicating with others in school. Others with physical disabilities may be unable to control common appliances in their environment. It is possible to use a variety of devices and services to respond to needs such as the ones just described. Some devices help people with disabilities perform a given task. These often are called assistive devices.

The Federal Definition with Embellishments

The potential of assistive technology was recognized through the enactment of PL 100-407, the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act. The definition of assistive technology that was included in PL 100-407 was modified slightly in the federal regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL 101-476) to make the definition more applicable to children with disabilities.

The Assistive Technology Continuum

When many people think of assistive technology, they think primarily about computers or sophisticated electronic devices. However, it is important to realize that assistive technology applications can be viewed as a continuum that ranges from "high-tech" to "no-tech". **High Tech**—High-tech devices incorporate sophisticated electronics or computers. **Medium Tech**—Medium-tech devices are relatively complicated mechanical devices, such as wheelchairs. **Low Tech**—Low-tech items are less sophisticated and can include devices such as adapted spoon handles, non-tipping drinking cups, and Velcro fasteners. **No Tech**—solutions that make use of procedures, services, and existing conditions in the environment that do not involve the use of devices or equipment. Includes such services as physical and occupational therapies

The Importance of Assistive Technology

One of the greatest potentials for the use of technology is in the education of children with disabilities.

In one of the first published reports on the implications of technology in special education, Blackhurst (1965) speculated about ways that a variety of technological devices could be developed to enhance the learning and independence of students with a variety of disabilities. Devices such as computer assisted instruction, adjustable electronic magnification of text, touch sensitive response pads, specialized switches, and auditory displays were envisioned, among others. Within the ensuing 15 years, many of those devices (and others) were developed, thus confirming those earlier speculations. As noted in their review of the history and status of technology, Blackhurst and Hofmeister (1980) concluded that applications of technology could have significant implications for special education. The early work in technology, particularly after the invention of the personal computer, often focused more directly on equipment and devices that were available and training programs concentrated primarily on how to operate them. Often, the emphasis was on computer programming and other technical considerations rather than on the best ways to integrate those devices into the lives of people with disabilities. Fortunately, this trend is changing.

Borrowed from an article by The National Assistive Technology Research Institute (NATRI)
<http://www.vats.org/> (Virginia Assistive Technology System)

Communicating Effectively With People Who Have a Disability

Nearly one out of every five Americans has some type of disability. Some disabilities are visible and readily apparent. People with mobility impairments often use wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, or other assistive devices. People who are blind or visually impaired sometimes use service animals or white canes. But many other disabling conditions are invisible, such as deafness, hard of hearing, mental illness, autism, heart and respiratory conditions. A lot of progress has been made toward breaking down barriers in employment, education, and accessibility, but actual communication and interaction with people with disabilities still needs attention. Many people are afraid of accidentally saying something that will offend a person with a disability, so they say nothing and avoid contact.

Ten Commandments of Communicating

1. Speak directly to the person, rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter who may be present.
2. Offer to shake hands when introduced.
3. Always identify yourself, and others who may be with you, when meeting someone with a visual disability.
4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted.
5. Treat adult as adults.
6. Do not lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair or pet a service animal.
7. Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish.
8. Place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair or on crutches.
9. Tap a person who has a hearing disability on the shoulder or wave your hand to get his or her attention.
10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions, such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about this?," that seem to relate to a person's disability.





Summer Safety Tips

Heat exhaustion is one of the milder heat-related illnesses you may encounter during hot summer months. Others include heat stroke, heat rash, and sunburn. People most prone to heat exhaustion are elderly, those with high blood pressure, and people working or exercising in a hot environment. Some warning signs of heat exhaustion include: heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, and fainting. If the symptoms are severe or the victim has a heart problem, seek medical attention immediately. Otherwise, help cool the victim off, by giving them a cool non-alcoholic beverage, encourage them to rest, have them take a cool shower or sponge bath, and if possible move the victim to an air conditioned space, and have them put on light clothing.

Remember—if you know you will be out in the heat for extended periods of time, drink two to four glasses of water each hour, find a shaded area to rest in on occasion, always wear sun block—SPF 15 or higher, use sunglasses

Hurricane Season Is Here. Are You Prepared?

Hurricane season began June 1, and 60 percent of those most at risk are unprepared, according to a national poll released by the American Red Cross. But the good news is, there is still time to get ready. “While most people are not prepared for hurricane season, there’s still time to pull together a plan and a kit,” said Bobby Grisso, Extension Engineer at Virginia Tech. “please take an hour out of your day to lay out an emergency plan with your family and throw together a disaster supply kit with everything you need. Preparing brings peace of mind.” On a positive note, the survey indicates that coastal residents who do make preparations take the issue very seriously. Of those households with an evacuation plan, 84 percent have included their children in the disaster planning process. Additionally, 71 percent of families who have a person with a disability or health problem have special plans to take care of their needs—a significant increase from 50 percent in 2001. The Atlantic hurricane season officially will last until November 30. Protecting yourself and your family should be the highest priority. As communities prepare for hurricane season, the Red Cross recommends the following safety steps and tips:

- **Assemble a disaster supplies kit:** Gather emergency supplies including emergency medications, nonperishable food, a non-electric can opener, bottled water (at least 3 gallons per day per person), a battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries, extra clothes, important documents, cash and credit cards, a first aid kit and other items for infants, elderly or disabled family members and pets.
- **Store supplies** in a waterproof, easy-to-carry container, such as a plastic tub with handles.
- **Prepare a personal evacuation plan:** Identify an evacuation route ahead of time, and discuss it with family members. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. In case of evacuation to an American red Cross shelter, be sure to bring the disaster supplies kit, medications, extra clothing, pillows and blankets, and other hygiene and comfort supplies. Make advance preparations for pets so you can bring them with you when you leave. But remember, because of health department regulations, pets aren’t allowed in public shelters.
- **Prepare for high winds:** Measure windows and obtain shutters or cut plywood to cover each one. Remove diseased and damaged tree limbs well before a storm strikes. Strengthen garage doors with vertical support beams made from 2. 4s and “L” brackets. Get professional help if needed.
- **Pick up free copies** of American Red Cross Hurricane Readiness Guide or review webpage at: <http://www/redcross.org/services/disaster>.