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AgrAbility Virginia Grant Renewed For 2006 -2010

AgrAbility Virginia will continue to direct its service delivery through facilitation of the Virginia Rural Rehabilitation Partnership for the next four years! The Partnership is a collaborative program through the cooperation of Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension (VCE), National Easter Seals (NES), Easter Seals Virginia (ESV), Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS), Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC), Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), Virginia Farm Bureau (VFB), the Virginia Rural Health Association, and the Virginia Department of Health (Virginia Arthritis Action Coalition), and other local resources.

Additional cooperation through local Centers for Independent Living (CIL's) will provide resources for training, community awareness, information, referral and follow-up, and peer counseling in most geographical areas of Virginia. The extraordinary emphasis on disabilities related to arthritis will be assisted by the Virginia Department of Health's Arthritis Action Coalition (of which AgrAbility Virginia is an active member). In addition AgrAbility Virginia will make use of the diverse resources in a new partnership with the Virginia Rural Health Association to further identify clients and rural resources, so as to better serve AgrAbility families. Each of these partner organizations will offer their talents and resources in a cooperative effort to meet the unique needs of farm and ranch clientele throughout Virginia.

During this new grant cycle, particular attention will be given to identifying, and developing special programs that serve the growing number of Virginians in agriculture who are afflicted with a degenerative diseases like arthritis. AgrAbility Virginia will also cultivate a working relationship with the Old Order Mennonite in the Shenandoah Valley, to better serve the disabled members. The Old Order Mennonites are a culturally unique community within Virginia. This unique cultural identity defines Mennonite farming practices as well as relationships with the larger non-Mennonite community. The Partnership enables AgrAbility Virginia to identify and respond to the unmet needs of farmers and ranchers who are falling through the cracks of the service delivery network due to their rural locations. It will empower Virginia's existing rural rehabilitation and education professionals with knowledge, skills, and information needed to maintain an agricultural focus for their clientele.

Particular attention will also be aimed at preventing secondary injuries to those farmers and ranchers who are already struggling with a disability, by identifying risks and hazards that exist on the farm or ranch, and the day to day practices of a farmer or rancher that may be increasing his or her risk of injury. Assistive technology, new work habits and routines, and farm or ranch site modifications may all be required to facilitate both effectiveness of work and reduced risk factors.

AgrAbility Virginia also plans to move towards developing a statewide volunteer program, using the recently developed AgrAbility Volunteer Manual assembled by the National AgrAbility Project and Easter Seals.

RURAL MEDICARE GUIDE

The "Medicare Guide to Rural Health Services Information for Providers, Suppliers and Physicians" is now available in both print and CD-Rom formats from the Medicare Learning Network's at on the CMS website,
http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearnnetworkgeninfo/01_overview.asp

The Medicare Learning Network is a brand name for official CMS national provider education products designed to promote national consistency of Medicare provider information developed for CMS initiatives. The Network plays a key role in furthering the Agency's culture of responsiveness.

The Medicare Learning Network uses a variety of mechanisms, such as the Internet, national educational articles, brochures, fact sheets, web-based training courses, and videos, to deliver a planned and coordinated provider education program. The Network uses these different mechanisms to provide educational opportunities that accommodate the healthcare professional's busy schedule, with the least amount of disruption to normal business functioning. (see page 4 for some comments by the AgrAbility Virginia Program Coordinator)

THE ALWAYS ABLE GARDENER

Spring has sprung and along with it is the impulse to plant and to grow, to cultivate gardens and to pursue other horticultural efforts. Gardening has multiple benefits for the body and mind, as well as producing great, fresh foods to eat, and flowers and shrubs to enjoy, as well as being a source of income for many people.

The downside of gardening however can be when the proper tools are not used and thereby stresses and strains are put on the body, and even causing injuries. This is particularly true for people who are dealing with chronic conditions such as arthritis or orthopedic issues, as well as for people who are functioning with assistive devices such as walkers, and wheelchairs.

The good news is that this does not need to be the case. There are numerous quality tools out there that reduce the effort to garden, while preventing the stresses and strains that lead to bodily strains and injuries.

There are also great options for gardening for those who are living with wheelchairs or other assistive devices. An extensive but certainly not complete list of web sites offering information on many of these tools, ideas and practices to promote and support the “Always Able Gardener” is available on our website. (www.agrability.ext.vt.edu) Gardening should always be the healthy, therapeutic, and enriching experience that it is meant to be.

WELCOME NEW STAFF

AgrAbility Virginia welcomes new staff member, Steve Bridge, who joined AgrAbility Virginia as a Service Coordinator on February 10th. Steve will be based out of his home in Lyndhurst, Virginia, Augusta County. Steve was with Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center for thirty years. He is a lifelong part-time farmer, sits on the Augusta County Planning Commission, coaches youth basketball, and has one daughter playing basketball for Roanoke College and one daughter playing for Lynchburg College. Steve will be covering much of the western part of the Commonwealth, and will be giving particular attention to developing a relationship with the Old Order Mennonite community in the Shenandoah Valley. Steve can be reached at, 540-312-3023 (cell), 540-777-7325 x123, or sbridge@va.easterseals.com.

A TRACTOR SAFETY CHECK LIST

1. Hydraulic components in good repair and free of leaks? 2. All belts, chains and shafts adequately shielded? 3. Tires inflated to recommended pressure? 4. Reflectors and SMV emblems clean, unfaded and undamaged? 5. Safety hitch pins available and used? 6. Is the PTO master shield in place and in good condition? 7. Fuel, oil and hydraulic systems free of leaks and maintained at recommended levels? 8. All the lights and flashers work? 9. Are the operators’ platforms free of grease, mud and tools? 10. Is a first-aid kit always available? ***Take a few extra minutes to check these out. Possible serious and fatal injuries may well be avoided. To learn more about safety issues with machinery and on the farm, check with your local Cooperative Extension Agent.***

SOME UPCOMING EVENTS OF RELATED INTEREST

- April 3, Rural Rehab Partnership Planning Conference, at the Virginia Tech Conference Center, 8am-3pm.
- May 18-19, The Annual Regional N.E. AgrAbility Conference, Lancaster, PA

Thoughts from the AgrAbility Virginia Program Coordinator, next page



READY TO ROLL

Greetings to everyone from AgrAbility Virginia. As our front page story indicates we were pleased to receive confirmation of the renewal of our grant for the next four-year cycle. As anyone who has done grant writing knows you put a lot of time and tedious work into bringing the grant together — then you just hold your breath waiting until something comes through to let you either breathe again — or pass out. We are happy to breathing again.

But we also have a lot ahead of us in order to develop AgrAbility Virginia to a point where we are running at our full and most effective capacity. The next four years will be guided by the three E's. 1.) Being more Efficient in our efforts to identify clients, assess clients and bring services to clients. 2.) Making the process of serving our clients more Expedient, i.e. removing some of the obstacles to getting access to services and thereby decreasing the time it takes to benefit from the services. 3.) Assuring that the services we ultimately are able to provide and identify are as Effective as possible in accomplishing the goals of our clients.

Along with the Rural Rehab Partnership we will begin addressing these and the other goals we have set for ourselves, on April 3, at an all day retreat at The Inn at Virginia Tech. And throughout the next four years we build on the assets each of the partners brings to this collaborative endeavor, and develop more efficient, expedient and effective means by which to improve the quality of life of Virginia farmers and ranchers. There are always more ways and better ways to continue to Promote Success in Agriculture for People with Disabilities and Their Families.

Thanks,

Kirk Ballin
Program Coordinator

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