

AGRABILITY VIRGINIA



North Carolina & Virginia



Cultivating Accessible Agriculture



E-NEWS – WINTER/SPRING 2015

Contents: AgrAbility Virginia Grant Funded; AgrAbility Virginia Team; AgrAbility Virginia Rural Rehab Partners and Advisory Committee; Featured Clients: Ron Burelson and Grayson Kirby; AgrAbility National Workshop: Rochester, NY, April 13-16

Welcome to AgrAbility Virginia E-News! This edition is an introductory edition for the new 2014-2018 AgrAbility Cycle. Thus much of this edition is devoted to introducing the Grant, Staff, and Partners. But the two featured clients are what AgrAbility is all about, as is the information about the National Training Workshop! So enjoy and help us make a difference in the lives of farmers and ranchers who seek to keep on working!

AGRABILITY VIRGINIA FUNDED!

As of September 1, 2014, the **AgrAbility Virginia Project** was officially funded by the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agricultural for the Project Period of 2014-2018, with annual renewal reviews for each of the four years. **Virginia Tech and Easter Seals UCP NC/VA** are honored to be able to continue to provide the services that help transform the lives of those people in agriculture who have illnesses, injuries, or disabilities that impede their abilities to work safely, effectively, and productively. These services will be the result of the AgrAbility Team (below) and in partnership with the **Rural Rehab Partnership** (below), and with the guidance of the newly formed **AgrAbility Virginia Advisory Committee** (below).



AgrAbility Virginia is funded in part by AgrAbility Project, USDA/NIFA Special Project 2014-41590-22326 and administered by Virginia Tech, Easter Seals UCP North Carolina/Virginia, Inc. and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, veteran status, national origin, disability, or political affiliation.
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AGRABILITY VIRGINIA (AV) TEAM



Dr. Kim Niewolny, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education at Virginia Tech, is the Project Director (PD) overseeing the AgrAbility Program. Kim's academic work centers on participatory forms of community education and development in agrifood systems. Current funded research and extension initiatives center on beginning farmer training and program development, community food security, and farm-to-school program development. Kim also serves as the PD of the Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Program (VBFRCP), a state-wide and coalition-based Extension program that aims to improve opportunities for viable farm start-up and sustainability. In addition to

extension and research responsibilities, Kim teaches a number of undergraduate and graduate courses in community education and development in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech.



Tristan Robertson, a Roanoke native, has been with the Easter Seals family since 1996. She holds a Bachelor's in psychology and a Master's in Education. Tristan has held numerous positions within Easter Seals including Child Development Specialist, Early Intervention Program Coordinator, Director of Programs and currently Community Director. Tristan's roles and responsibilities include program oversight, public education, developing community collaborations, implementing new service programs, and program fiscal management. Her experience has resulted in successful implementation of new programs serving individuals with disabilities in Virginia, including the AgrAbility Virginia Program and its

partnership with Virginia Tech, since 2001.



Kirk Ballin has been the Program Coordinator of the AgrAbility Virginia Project since 2005. Kirk, as a staff person of Easter Seals UCP NC/VA, and in partnership with Virginia Tech University, oversees the implementation of AgrAbility Virginia. In addition to overseeing the administrative side of the Project, he works closely with the AgrAbility Service Coordinators, and the AgrAbility Rural Rehab Partners to ensure that services are provided to those in need. Kirk's academic background includes degrees in Anthropology (Colorado College; University of Virginia), and a Master in Divinity (Harvard University), as well as training in counseling, and numerous agricultural courses over the past ten years. He is an ordained

minister, having served numerous congregations, and has worked as a Trauma Unit Chaplain (Carilion), Executive Director of the National Conference for Community and Justice, and ran his own counseling service, before joining AgrAbility Virginia.



Joe Young brings a range of experiences to his work with AgrAbility Virginia. Along with his BS in Agricultural Education degree from Virginia State University, Joe has a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological School of Theology, and currently serves as a church pastor. He also was an Allstate Insurance Company Claims Analyst for 27 years, and taught Voc-Agricultural/Mathematics and Science in the Surry County Public High Schools. Joe joined AgrAbility, as a Service Coordinator (caseworker), in 2005 and has served the eastern part of Virginia, earning the respect of farmers and professionals alike!



Steve Bridge is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, with a B.S in Health and Physical Education. Living in Augusta County, Steve has been around and involved in farming all of his life. He also worked as a recreational Therapist at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center from 1977-2004. Steve walks-the-talk in being able to bridge the connection between therapeutic needs and farming! He joined AgrAbility Virginia, in 2005, as a Service Coordinator (caseworker), primarily serving the Shenandoah Valley.



Don Ohanehi is a teacher at Virginia Tech, a mechanical engineer, and has been with AgrAbility Virginia for about 6 years. Prior to coming to Virginia Tech, he worked for Inland Motor/Kollmorgen Corporation, Radford, Virginia and Magnetic Bearings, Inc., Roanoke, Virginia. In conjunction with other Virginia Tech team members of AgrAbility Virginia, Don develops educational materials to be offered to AgrAbility current and potential clients. Educational materials developed include factsheets on tractor lifts for farmers with disabilities, safety literature for Mennonites for operating animal-drawn equipment, and fall prevention for the elderly. He has primary responsibility for the development of assistive technology devices through student design teams. Don is currently advising another senior student team working on a second-generation human-powered lift product. He assists the Project Director in the development of progress and final reports for AgrAbility Virginia.



RURAL REHAB PARTNERSHIP AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In addition to the AgrAbility Team, AV seeks input from its **Rural Rehab Partnership** consisting of: **Beth O'Connor**, The Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA); **Clay Huie**, Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC); **Bob Krollman**, Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS); **Roland Terrel**, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) at Virginia State University (VSU); **Alvin Blaha**, farmer and former AgrAbility client. The RR Partnership has monthly calls to review clients' situations and to seek input on services for clients..... AV also recently established its first **Advisory Committee**. This Committee will serve as a resource for guiding AV in the implementation of the USDA grant in the most effective, efficient, and inclusive manner. The Advisory Committee will meet with the AV Team twice a year, once face-to-face and once via conference call. The members of the Committee consist of: **Beth O'Connor** (VRHA); **Rick Sizemore** (WWRC); **Bobby Grisso** (VT-VCE); **Bob Krollman** (ATS); **Terri Webb**, flower farmer and former AV client; **Bill Crutchfield**, (VSU); **Renard Turner**, farmer/rancher; **Bob Pitman**, (VT).

FEATURED CLIENTS: RON BURLESON AND GRAYSON KIRBY



Ron, along with his wife, Susie, runs a large greenhouse and potting operation raising thousands of flowers for wholesale. They also raise about 40 cows/calves. Ron had a stroke in February of 2014, the result of a fall, while attending to his cattle. He had significant impairment on his right side making walking, standing, and the use of his right arm very difficult.

Ron spent several months residing at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (DARS), where he received excellent services. Through the assistance of Sonya Gasser (OT), Greta Nelson (PT), Tracy Topolosky (Counselor), Mike Seitz (DARS- AT), Raymond Matthews (DARS), and Dave Law (DARS- Rehab Engineer and Fabricator), Ron was able to get back home and get back to work! Modifications were made in his home and to his pickup truck.

But the most significant modifications were made to a recently purchased M6800-Kubota. Using “off the shelf” parts, Dave Law was able to construct a lift attached to the Kubota, allowing Ron to lift himself to a level where he could transfer into the tractor cab. Inside the cab, Dave made modifications allowing Ron to be able to use the steering wheel, gear shift, brakes, and clutch safely and effectively. Also, the tractor seat was moved back to create more room in the cab and Dave is still working on a lift to get Ron in his box truck so he can be a passenger on flower deliveries.

A beautiful piece of work! Steve Bridge was the AgrAbility Service Coordinator for this case.



Grayson farms with his father in Hanover County; they farm a total of 3,200 acres spread out over several counties. Being strictly a grain operation, they grow 1,000 acres of soybeans, 800 acres of wheat, 1,000 acres of corn, 200 acres of barley, 200 and acres of grain sorghum. Grayson was a passenger in an automobile accident in July 2014. The car flipped and threw Grayson out. He does not remember the details of the accident. Given the extent of his injuries, including extensive brain damage, the doctors gave him a 1-2% chance of survival. Additionally, the doctors said if Grayson were to awaken from his coma he would be brain dead. Yet he defied the odds and survived and is highly functional! (Grayson and his parents were on the Steve Harvey show; Grayson gave a testimony based on his faith that it was prayer and God that made the difference in the outcome of his injuries).

Grayson has no vision in his left eye and numbness and weakness in his left leg below the knee and his foot. He was referred to AgrAbility by Celeste Bowers, therapist at Sheltering Arms Rehabilitation Center, in Richmond. AgrAbility then referred Grayson to the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). The DARS team of Dolores Heisler (Counselor), John Allen (Occupational Therapist), Tom Rybak Rehab Engineer), and Clay Huie (Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center –DARS) made assessments and recommendations that Grayson followed through on in getting clutch pedal extenders. Clay Huie also made sure Grayson met guideline qualifications for driving and had him undergo tests to be sure it was safe for him to drive the grain truck (Kenworth 18 wheeler). Grayson does not need a commercial License to drive, because farm vehicles do not fall under the same guidelines as commercial vehicles.

Grayson is happily back behind the wheel of his 18 wheeler and has been driving distances as far as 175 miles round trip without difficulties since having made the adaptations.

Joe Young was the AgrAbility Service Coordinator for this case.



THE NATIONAL AGRABILITY TRAINING WORKSHOP IN ROCHESTER, NY

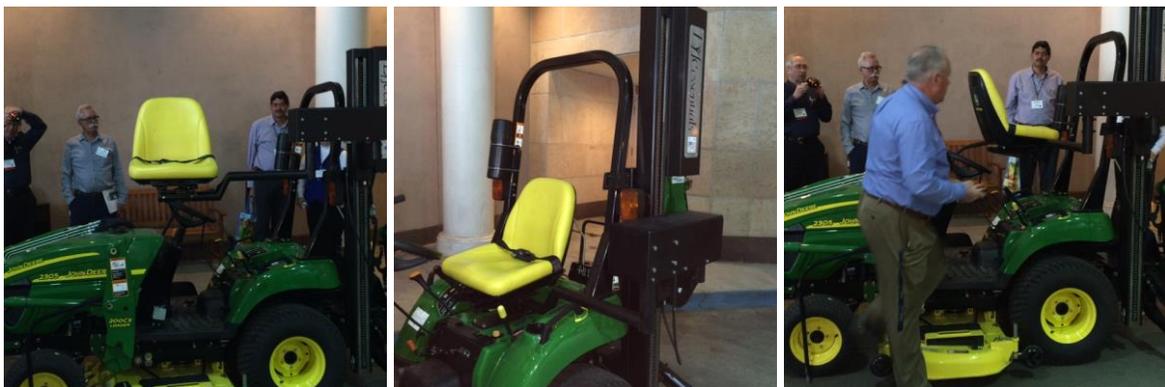
The Annual National AgrAbility Workshop was recently held in Rochester, NY, April 13-16, at the Hyatt Regency. It was co-hosted by The National AgrAbility Project and Goodwill of the Finger Lakes (one of the NAP's non-profit partners). With temperatures reaching into the 60s for the first time this spring, 240 conference attendees came together from all over the US representing 38 states plus attendees who traveled all the way from Brazil, Sweden, and Canada! Of these 240 registrants, 68 were farmers, ranchers, or caregivers! Everyone enjoyed excellent, informative, and often moving presentations, ranging from "Farming From A Wheelchair", to "Farmer Veteran Panel", to "I Want to Grow Hops: Now What?", to "Assistive Technology Show and Tell", to "Maple Sugaring", and many more presentations and discussions pertaining to the myriad of services AgrAbility Projects might be involved in.... Two highlights were the Keynote Speaker, Chris Koch, and the demonstration of a lift for small tractors, by Life Essentials:



Chris Koch, Farmer from Alberta, Canada

Chris was raised in a small farming community in Alberta, Canada. He was born without arms or legs, but he doesn't let that slow him down. Chris currently works with his family on a Saskatchewan farm (12,000 acres!). A remarkable human being to say the least, Chris Koch is a farmer, world traveler, and speaker. Chris is someone you want to see, hear, and meet if you ever get the opportunity! Click on or paste this link: <http://www.ifican.ca/>

Life Essentials <http://www.lifeessentialslifts.com/>, which makes lifts, power chairs and other assistive technology, displayed a lift for a small tractor that uses the tractor seat as the lift seat, thereby *eliminating* one major transfer for someone who has to transfer from a wheel chair! Impressive!



Thanks for checking out this edition of the AgrAbility E-News. Our next edition will be the Summer/Fall 2015 edition.

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