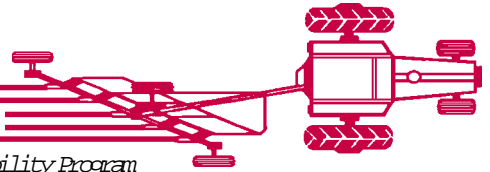


Breaking New Ground

Cultivating independence for farmers and ranchers with disabilities

A publication of the Breaking New Ground Resource Center, Purdue University and the USDA AgrAbility Program



WINTER 1999—Volume 17, Number 1

"Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Judges

Wendell Berry in his essay "What Are People For" raises the troubling question of what inhumanities we will conceive of when we decide that there are not only too many people living in the countryside, but also in the cities. The question is not as absurd as you might think considering what is happening in several regions of the world. With respect to how we perceive persons with disabilities fitting into this scenario, we may have experienced a taste of the answer recently on a popular television program. Via a grainy homemade video, we were able to watch someone with a severe disability terminated in between commercials for laxatives and new cars. The apathetic roar of the viewing audience was numbing. Will our insensitivities reach a point that being sold on the idea that there are too many of "them", whoever "them" might be, will only require presenting the right message and reinforcing the desired perceptions? Is it possible that broad acceptance of one intentional death or termination by design of a person with a disability will lead to brightly painted and sanitized trucks driven by our neighbors and friends picking up the lame, blind, and sick for proper and humane disposal? The question at this point is not how could a civilized people stoop so low? but rather, who has the courage to say **ENOUGH!**

Please checkout the information on the upcoming Assistive Technology in the Heartland Conference in Indianapolis, April 26-28. Three years ago we had over 175 attend a similar event and this year over 20 collaborating organizations are involved. It's going to be a "really big show"!

The leader material for the caregiving resources has been completed. This material should provide you with everything you need to conduct a local caregiver workshop. Ordering information is provided elsewhere in the newsletter and note that this issue's Flowshares addresses the topic of caregiving.

As you begin the new year, the BNG staff wishes you all the very best. Please keep the financial needs associated with publishing and distributing this newsletter in mind. Your support is always appreciated.

Bill Field Barry Delks Ed Kirkpatrick
Co-Editor Co-Editor Co-Editor

Preparation and publication of this newsletter was made possible by: CSREES USDA Project #96-EDFA-1-0033 and the generous gifts from our readers.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Colorado AgrAbility Workshops (Four AgrAbility Workshops for Farmers and Ranchers with Disabilities and Their Families and Professionals)

Date: February 1999

Location: Colorado

A series of workshops for farmers and their caregivers will provide practical hands-on experience on family strength-building skills, information for identifying signs of high stress, anger, and depression, and information about becoming an AgrAbility Peer-Friend to others with a disability.

A second series of workshops for professionals will provide information on making assessments of at-risk stress, anger, and depression levels and making effective referrals of at-risk farmers and ranchers to appropriate professionals.

For a free brochure and registration information by January 28, 1999, call Bob Fetsch at 970-491-5648 and please leave your name, address, and telephone number.

Nebraska AgrAbility Workshop

Date: Wednesday, February 3, 1999; 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Location: College Park, Grand Island, Nebraska

Topics of the workshop will include farm safety, understanding social security and work incentive programs, supporting caregivers, AITP, recreation, and prosthetics. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) will also be presenting at the workshop. For more information, contact Renee Fitzke at Nebraska AgrAbility, 402-462-1922. The workshop is open to everyone.

National Farm Machinery Show

Date: February 10-13, 1999

Location: Louisville, Kentucky

Kentucky AgrAbility Cookout, February 11 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Visit the AgrAbility booth and enjoy Kentucky pork chops with other AgrAbility farmers. For reservations or more information call 800-333-2814.

Assistive Technology in the Heartland Conference and Exposition

Date: April 25-28, 1999

Location: Indianapolis, Indiana

The mission of this conference is to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities and their families through expanded utilization and appropriate application of assistive technology. The conference also plans to enhance the knowledge and skills of professionals, create broader public awareness of assistive technology, and increase the independence of persons with disabilities. For more information, call 800-825-4264.

RESNA '99

Date: June 25-29, 1999

Location: Long Beach Convention Center, Long Beach, California

RESNA is the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America. It is the premier assistive and rehabilitation technology educational conference of the year. In addition, over 80 exhibitors from all areas of assistive and rehabilitation technology will share their knowledge, skills, and products with attendees.

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Collaboration is the Key for Nebraska AgrAbility

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Nebraska AgrAbility is a cooperative effort of the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, Easter Seals Nebraska, Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center-Omaha. Through this collaborative effort, Nebraska AgrAbility works to achieve its six priorities:

- increase the availability of services for agricultural producers affected by disabilities;
- provide information and training to increase the capacity of a network of rural professionals to meet the needs of Nebraska farmers and ranchers with disabilities;
- increase early identification and referral for farmers who may benefit from specialized services through increased outreach activities;
- increase the availability of on-farm assessments and assistance;
- increase support and educational opportunities for disabled farmers through enhancement and expansion of the Nebraska AgrAbility Peer Network;
- and secure additional funding sources to expand services.

Nebraska AgrAbility strives to integrate into the existing rehabilitation and agricultural service delivery system of the state rather than functioning parallel to it. Ongoing collaboration within the cooperating agencies has resulted in an increased emphasis on direct assistance for farmers and ranchers and a new name, the Rural Rehabilitation Partnership. Along with the growing involvement of local Extension educators, new relationships with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) have increased the scope of on-farm assistance provided. Nebraska AgrAbility's goal for farm visits, in addition to providing a technical evaluation, also provides an opportunity for a more comprehensive screening of needs. AgrAbility staff, Becki Koehler, Renee Fitzke, and Paul Gessaman, are increasingly able to call on skilled professionals from the Partner agencies to assist producers who call AgrAbility for assistance.

The goal of early identification and referrals is to get to the families quickly. Nebraska AgrAbility's outreach efforts have had a major impact on the number of referrals

Nebraska AgrAbility staff and extension educators learn about assistance from NRCS.

over the past few months. One item contributing to this increase was the cover story of the *Nebraska Farmer* magazine. Other efforts to increase early identification and referrals include hospital visits and Peer Network supported displays at various fairs.

Nebraska AgrAbility's Peer Network continues to be strong and to grow. Over the past year a bi-monthly newsletter has been developed. The Network will also sponsor a statewide workshop in February.

The newest effort for Nebraska AgrAbility is to offer increased financial counseling and technical assistance, including assistance with Social Security and related work incentive programs. The first Plan to Achieve Self Sufficiency has been submitted to the Social Security Administration on behalf of an AgrAbility customer. Nebraska AgrAbility has received much support from the Partners to continue to develop this aspect of the program.

A collaborative approach to service delivery is not always the easiest, but it has allowed Nebraska AgrAbility to receive increasing support from a number of related agencies. With this increased involvement, the hope is that services will result in outcomes that make a real difference for Nebraska's agricultural producers with disabilities and their families.

Special *Breaking New Ground* Technical Report

Caregivers on the Farm*

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Introduction

More than 49 million Americans have some type of disability, many of whom require some type of assistance or care from a family member, friend or professional. Currently there are 18 to 25 million family caregivers in the United States, which is about 10% of the adult population. These caregivers, who by virtue of their caregiving roles, face challenges not shared by the rest of the population.

Each year, thousands of farm and ranch families encounter the impact of disability on a family member. Nearly 19% of active farm operators are no longer able to perform essential tasks due to a disability. This large number of persons with disabilities is due, in part, to the hazardous nature of agriculture. Additionally, farm and ranch families experience the same types of non-work related injuries and disabling conditions as the rest of the population. Many of these farmers and ranchers with disabilities require some type of care or assistance from a caregiver.

In addition to the ordinary stress involved with caregiving, those who provide assistance to farmers and ranchers with disabilities may face barriers and obstacles not faced by their urban/suburban counterparts. Rural isolation, lack of accessible transportation and separation from extended family are a few of the additional challenges faced by rural caregivers.

History

The term "caregiving" is relatively new, and has recently been defined as the act of providing services and support to those in need.¹ The term

*This work was sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture, CSREES USDA Project #96-EDFA-1-0033.

¹Superscript numbers refer to the corresponding resource at the end of this article.

caregiving is used inconsistently in the literature; there are no universally accepted criteria for designating an activity as caregiving or a person as a caregiver among scholars, policy-makers or advocates.



Almost everyone will be a caregiver sometime during their life.

In previous times, families were the assumed caregivers of family members with disabilities. It has only been relatively recent that large institutions were developed as an alternative to family caregiving. However, there are several reasons why there is a growing number of families providing care to family members with chronic illness or disability in their homes today. In part, this trend is due to changes in the way persons with disabilities are being viewed by society. The cost and availability of quality institutional care are also factors.

Another reason for the need for more attention on the role of family caregiving is due to advances in modern medicine. New medications, surgery and treatments have dramatically increased the quality and length of life for people with chronic illnesses or who have been disabled due to injury or disease. The average life expectancy has soared from 48 years in 1900 to 76

years in 1998. This has created a population with a growing number of older and aging persons.

"There are four kinds of people in this world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregiver, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers."

*-Rosalynn Carter, former first lady and author of **Helping Yourself Help Others***

Furthermore, the last 10 years has resulted in greater emphasis on inclusion rather than segregation for many persons with disabilities. Passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 has made it easier for persons with disabilities to be included in the workplace and classroom. This has allowed individuals with disabilities to obtain an education and remain productive members of their family and society rather than being institutionalized.

These trends have resulted in the need for caregivers and increased resources for those serving in that capacity.

Impact of Disability

The period immediately following a disabling injury or illness is a critical time of transition for the family and farm operation. A disability brings enormous change to the entire family, often with little warning or time for preparation. In a rural setting, the lack of nearby medical or rehabilitation facilities, long travel time to obtain necessary medical supplies, and few supporting agencies or disability groups may cause great frustration. Medical expenses, combined with the loss of productivity may be overwhelming. Initially, much attention will be given to the physical and emotional needs of the person with the disability. The caregiver may feel left out and neglected. This is especially true with respect to disabilities resulting from injury, since most disabling farm injuries involve the male member of the household.

Case Study*

Libby Miller, Decatur, Illinois

Bob and Libby Miller have a grain and hog farm near Decatur, Illinois. They farm with their son, Roger.

Bob, was involved in an accident in July of 1995. While Bob and Roger were putting machinery away, the cultivator they were parking collapsed, catching Bob's

*The case studies in this Plowshares are included to encourage individuals and families who are caring for another family member. They contain practical ideas for those who are involved with the joys and struggles of caregiving.

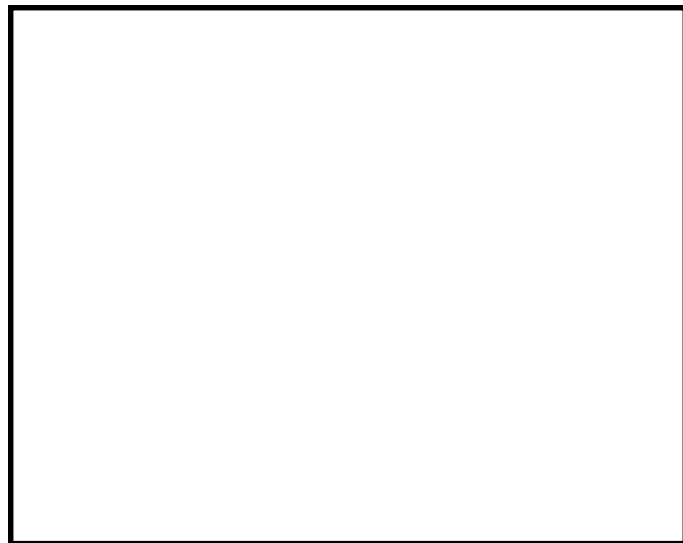
head between a tractor tire and the wing of a cultivator. As a result of his injury, Bob lost sight in both eyes.

Libby's first reaction was one of utter shock. "I look back now to my reaction and I think God had to be with me because I did all the right things," Libby said.

The new role was rather frightening for Libby. Bob was responsible for all of the household repairs and book-keeping. Libby had to adjust to her new role quickly, since tax time was nearing.

Libby said, "nobody ever warned me what the reaction of others would be to my disabled mate. I was really overwhelmed and distressed when I found that people were ignoring him. They would speak to me but they would ignore him. I wanted to yell at them, 'He's not dumb, his brain is great. Just because he can't see doesn't mean that he is not a whole person.'

"I think probably the most helpful thing from day one was having our faith. Through our faith we have a church family that has supported us every moment since Bob's injury. Our family and our friends have surrounded us with their love and their care and they have been invaluable to us."



Bob and Libby enjoy more time together.

The Millers' story demonstrates the sudden impact a disabling injury or illness can have on a family. By being a part of the community, Libby found support and help from others, which is a vital step in becoming a successful caregiver.

Caring for the Caregiver & Asking for Assistance

Many people accept the role of a caregiver gladly, while others view it as a significant burden and intrusion into their lives. Devoting oneself to caring for another individual can either enrich your life or leave you bitter and angry. Linda Berina, R.N., states, "Stress affects the extent to which a disabling condition becomes a handicap."²

The need to recognize negative emotions and signs of burnout early is critical. Recognition of the warning signs early and addressing them may prevent a sense of being overwhelmed.

If any of the following danger signals are noticed, a caregiver should seek help from a friend, pastor, counselor, support network or from one of the resources listed at the end of this Plowshare.³

- No matter what the caregiver does, it doesn't seem to be enough
- The caregiver has no social life due to his/her caregiving duties
- The caregiver shuts out everyone who has offered to help
- Coping methods are destructive, such as overeating, not sleeping, or drug abuse
- Loving and caring have given way to exhaustion and resentment

Caregivers experiencing any of these conditions should be encouraged to seek help immediately. In addition, they should be encouraged to consider one or more of the following possible responses to stressful situations:

Maintain a positive approach

One way to reduce stress is simply to choose a positive approach. Keeping a positive attitude will reduce the buildup of negative feelings and stress. It has been said, "Life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we react to it."

Make time for yourself

The most effective caregivers learn to make time to care for themselves physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially. If a caregiver makes time for herself, she will actually have more energy and patience for caring for her family. Making time for activities that refresh such as spending time with a friend or walking alone in the woods will provide emotional recharging necessary for effective caregiving.

Diet and exercise

Proper diet and exercise are essential to physical and mental well-being. Exercising two to three times per week, eating healthy and nutritious foods, and eliminating junk foods will give a caregiver more energy and strength to face the demands of the caregiving role. For more ideas on developing a better diet, contact the local Cooperative Extension Office or Public Health Department.

Add music in your life

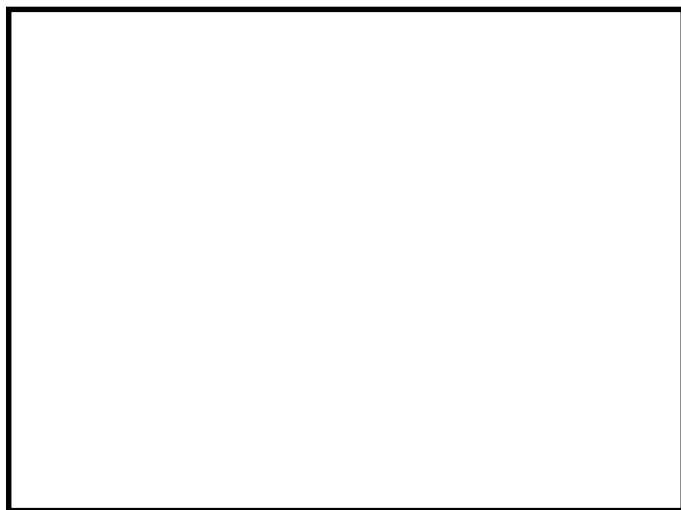
Music is a wonderful source of therapy. It has the potential to brighten the dreariest farm or ranch home. Learning to play an instrument, singing or writing music can draw a family together and release stress.

Asking for assistance can be one of the most challenging tasks faced by a caregiver. When an injury or illness to a family member results in a long-term disability, there are many new tasks to be completed. Activities such as making transfers, loading and unloading wheelchairs and daily farm or ranch chores can be very demanding. Yet it can be difficult for a caregiver to ask others for help.

"Before the accident, my job was to take care of the children and the house, and I was working full-time in town. After the accident, I still had to do that, and a lot of farm chores too."

*~Kimberly Zimmerman
Curtland, Minnesota*

Characteristics that previously helped farm and ranch families succeed may be the very characteristics that make it difficult to seek help from others once a disabling injury or illness has occurred. This independence and self-reliant strength is evident in the words of one farmer with a spinal cord injury, "If you can't pull your own weight, pull what weight you can." There is truth and encouragement in those words. However, even though these traits may have served this farmer well in the past, there is value in reaching out to others.



Kim and Dave Zimmerman complete some of the daily chores together.

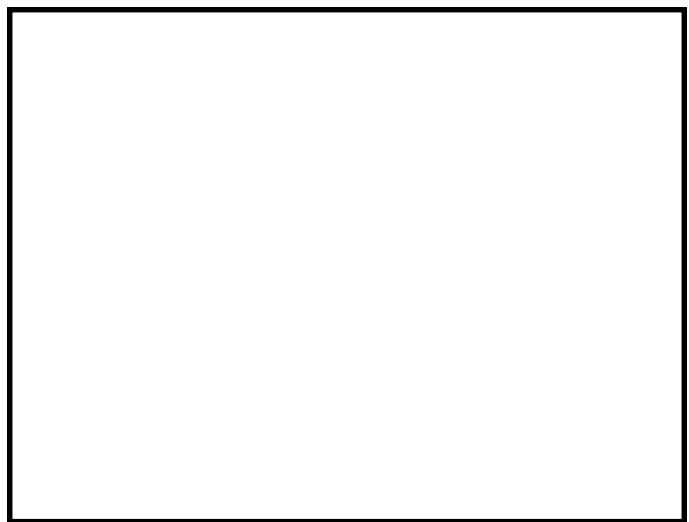
Strengthened by Support

Some caregivers will find help from friends, family, church or other local organizations. Others will find that people considered close friends in the past may not deal well with the disability and may drop out of the caregiver's life. On the other hand, individuals who were formerly mere acquaintances become close friends because of their common experiences. Once a disabling injury or illness

occurs, caregivers and their care receivers should not withdraw from their naturally occurring "support groups" such as church, the bowling league, Farm Bureau or morning coffee hour at the elevator.

Other sources of support include groups that have been established for the purpose of meeting the needs of persons facing specific issues such as disability. These range from groups addressing diseases such as arthritis, cancer or diabetes to amputation support groups. Check with local physicians, hospitals, the Cooperative Extension office or a telephone book for information on contacting these groups. The following are important areas that you may want to consider as you seek out a support group:⁴

- **Confidentiality**
Does the group have a reputation for keeping private matters confidential? Trust is vital to the success of a support group.
- **Shared leadership responsibilities**
Does the group provide for shared leadership? Leadership experience builds self-worth and will bring more creativity to the group.
- **Realistic expectations**
Don't be discouraged if there are only two or three people in attendance. Enjoy learning from those at tending.
- **Responding to the group members' needs**
Determine if the meetings are practical to those participating. It should not be a gripe session just for vocal members.



Family time provides important support for the Zimmermans.

The following case study demonstrates the difficulties faced by caregivers in asking for help and support.

Case Study

Kimberly Zimmerman, Courtland, Minnesota

David and Kimberly Zimmerman farm 550 acres near Courtland, Minnesota. They raise dairy cattle and hogs.

David was injured in a motorcycle accident in June of 1986, resulting in paralysis. It was difficult for Kimberly to ask for help in caring for David and their farm, even from her family. "It was tough to go to family and say can you do this or will you do that," she recalls. "You wonder if you have used people too much."

"At first I had to ask people to back off so I could deal with my own emotions. I was told I was the support and could not break or they all would break. I finally had to admit that I couldn't handle it alone. You have to allow people to offer help. My mom reminded me I was not superwoman."

Tapping in to public health nursing was especially hard for Kimberly. "I felt I should be doing it, being his wife," she said. "But not only did the nurse help with David, but I was able to bounce things off her when I was stressed."

Kimberly would also encourage other caregivers to maintain their sense of self-worth and keep a positive light on things. "It can be a growing experience for all, and things can change for the better."

Communication & Commitment to Marriage

Effective communication is a key to a happy and successful home for any family. With the added stress of depending upon one another and of spending extended periods of time together because of a disabling injury or illness, communication between the caregiver and the care receiver is vital.

Communication takes work, just like a good garden does. Even with the best soil and the finest seeds, without constant weeding the whole garden could be lost to neglect. Similarly, good communication takes constant attention and effort, even within a family.

The following ideas can provide a good foundation for communication to keep families working together:⁵

- Practice listening to every word and then restate what was heard
- Avoid using sarcasm, criticism, avoidance and teasing
- Use "I feel..." rather than "You make me feel..."
- Share feelings and offer a solution to a trouble some problem
- Keep complaints short and end them with an expression of appreciation

A survey conducted with individuals with spinal cord injuries found that those persons who had made an excellent mental adjustment had come from "exceptionally warm and loving backgrounds."⁶ Caregivers may wonder how they can possibly be warm and loving during a time of turmoil. Family counselor John Trent states, "Remaining tender during a trial is one of the most powerful ways to build an intimate relationship." A commitment to marriage

can keep a home loving and enjoying many new seasons together.

Thoughts to keep your marriage strong:⁵

- Difficulties do not mean something is wrong with your marriage
- Your response to difficulties will either drive you apart or bind you together - Choose to "bind" together
- Find your mate's #1 need and strive to meet it
- Don't focus on your mate's weaknesses but rather on his/her strengths
- Never criticize your mate in public, discuss your differences in private
- Never play games to "get even." Instead build trust, respect, and security through your actions and words

An important part of any marital commitment is serving one another. This commitment can be as simple as treating the family with common courtesy and respect or as important as "sticking it out" together no matter how hard the wind blows.

As a part of the rehabilitation process, the caregiver and spouse should plan to attend a Marriage Encounter weekend. These special weekends are held all over the United States and are designed to strengthen good marriages by improving communication skills. Participants will meet with other couples with a strong commitment to their marriage and be led through a series of exercises to encourage regular and meaningful dialogues on issues affecting marriage.

The YMCA, community college, hospital or local church may offer a course on communication or listening skills. Caregivers and their spouses should go to an enjoyable class together and commit to strengthening their marriage.

"I married him for life! The Golden Rule is the law I follow in life. That's what I would have wanted Ron to do if I had been the injured one.

*~Helen Thomas
Tangier, Indiana*

Case Study

Zelda Stevens, Tennessee

Walt and Zelda Stevens have an 80 acre farm on which they raise cattle. They had been farming full time only two years when Walt lost both legs and his left arm in a corn picker entanglement. Zelda says, "While this actual event didn't happen to me, my whole life changed." Returning to farming seemed a near impossibility but they were committed. "It was frustrating and still is sometimes. But it's

my marriage vows and I love him; sometimes I don't want to, but I do." About their communication, Zelda says, "At first I kept everything to myself, but now I say how I feel. It might lead to some fussing between us, but it also opens our talking and helps us grow closer. Walt loves it here. Sometimes if I'm mad I think, 'It's okay if you hate his guts right now because you're going to love him in the morning.'

"We all have the little hurdles. You just hang in there, and it gets better." And there are some very positive outcomes for the caregiver facing the challenges of marriage.

"Walt wasn't a very good hugger before, but now he will try to hug me with that stump and it's special to me. It's a very secure feeling I get. Before the accident, he went his way and I went mine. Now it seems there is more of a marriage commitment. Even though there may be a lot of fussing, there's a lot of love too, and a lot more togetherness. I like that part."



Zelda Stevens believes a commitment to marriage keeps families together.

Accepting Changing Roles

After a disability impacts a home, it often becomes necessary to change roles within the family. Overcoming stereotypes of male and female roles may be vital to relieving burdens on the family and marriage. Family, household and farm chores should be rethought. Questions such as which tasks are essential and which tasks can be eliminated should be discussed as a family.

Many changes should be expected as roles are modified. There could be substantial changes in job responsibilities, such as a change from doing farm chores to food preparation or running errands. With changes also come the need to learn new skills and to set realistic expectations. There will be some uncomfortable moments, more than one burnt meal and many overlooked farm chores. To keep a farm and household running as smoothly as possible, make the role changes with a sense of humor and determination.

The care receiver should be encouraged to be involved with as many meaningful tasks as possible to help with the changing roles. This promotes a positive feeling of self-worth and reduces the caregiver's burden. Begin with jobs that can be accomplished successfully. Avoid unattainable tasks that could lead to frustration or unnecessary failures.

Changing roles for caregivers working off the farm

An increasing number of farm women work off the farm in order to supplement farm income and often to gain access to affordable health care insurance. When a disability occurs, this source of income and the health plan may become even more important to the family. However, there will also be changes that will need to be made and expectations to fulfill from both the family and employer. The following are some tips for the caregiver who is trying to maintain a job, keep a home in order, supervise the completion of farm chores and handle the tasks of a caregiver.

- Establish priorities for each area of your life (home, farm, work, church, etc.)
- Consider some form of flexible work hours or the possibility of doing work at home
- Explore techniques that improve your efficiency, but do not expect to accomplish everything you did before!

Case Study

Carol Hulsenbeck, Kendallville, Indiana

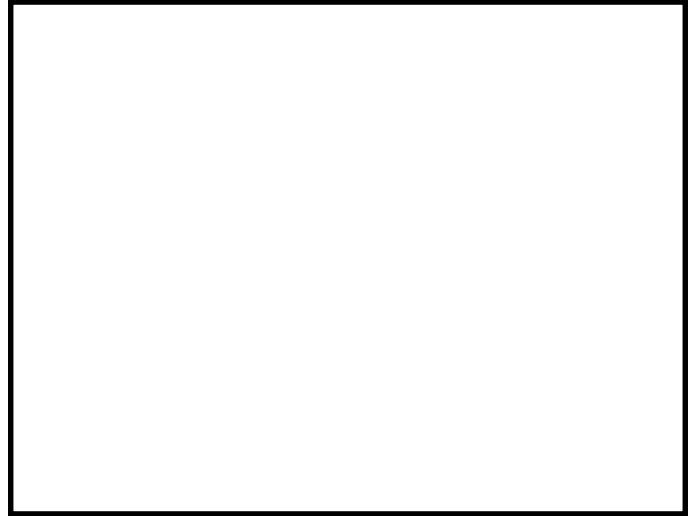
The Hulsenbecks raise 500 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and hay. They also have sheep and cattle. On January 25, 1996, Carol's husband, Martin, was run over by a gravity bed wagon full of corn. Martin's injuries included a crushed left shoulder, a broken forearm, five broken ribs, a crushed pelvis, nerve damage to the right leg, and contusion of the kidneys. He was in intensive care for six weeks and in a regular hospital room for four months.

Carol ran the farm by phone from the hospital intensive care lounge, calling in feed orders, purchasing nitrogen for wheat and marketing corn. At night, she and her son would discuss the plans for chores, field work and the sale of livestock with the volunteer farm hands. Once Martin was able to return home, there were more changes that needed to be made. The children not only had to help with farm chores, but also with the daily tasks around the home while Carol was taking Martin to therapy and caring for him at home.

Carol's recommendation to caregivers would be to, "accept help from others graciously. They want to help. It is, after all, part of God's plan that we take care of one another."

She would also encourage caregivers to keep their sense of humor. She recalls coming into the house announcing, "I'm finished with the chores and I'm hungry."

Her husband replied, "I've set the table and dinner is in the oven!" They had a good laugh about their change of roles.



Carol Hulsenbeck helps with the chores.

Teamwork

Teamwork can make the days easier and the work and chores more enjoyable. Some of the best times come when working as a team. It has been said it is easy to get the players for a team, but the tough part is getting them to play together. That can be true of families as well!

Helping a family work together is a key to helping a caregiver reduce stress. A few ideas for helping families work together as a team more effectively are:

- Hold regular family meetings to discuss chores, answer questions and solve problems
- Honestly respond to questions that your children may have about the farm, the family or the disability
- Plan work according to each person's interest and have family members help one another
- Plan for regular fun time as a family. Maybe you all love playing Crazy Eights or basketball. Find that common fun activity that fosters unity in your family.

Laughter

Caregivers and their families should allow themselves the pleasure of laughter. Read uplifting books and spend time with positive people. Laughter is not only contagious, it is good for your health. Start a hobby that brings a smile to your face. Maybe it's having a fish tank, planting flowers, painting or learning woodworking. Choose a hobby that brings joy. Take time to think of three simple things that you can do that will make you and your family laugh. Commit to doing at least one of these every day.

The first sounds that babies make when they are born are cries of fear and discomfort – not laughs or giggles. Laughter needs to be cultivated and tended just like a flower bed. Encourage your children to laugh on a regular basis even if it takes a little tickling.

Board games, hide-and-seek, pillow fights and funny faces will usually crack the stiffest face and generate those deep belly laughs that have a healing influence.

Sources of humor are as close as the local library, video store or grocery. Pick up a book, video or audio cassette and get a good belly laugh this week!⁷



Teamwork and laughter are important elements for successful caregivers.

Healing Through Service

Encouragement can be a way to serve others and forget about oneself. Who hasn't felt better from receiving one simple compliment or encouraging word? Anyone can decide to become an encourager to others. A caregiver won't have to look far for someone who needs encouragement.

Serving others

The story is told of "The Keeper of the Spring," a quiet forest dweller who lived high in the mountains above the village. The old man had been hired to clean the streams up in the mountains that fed the beautiful cool spring flowing into the village. Year after year he faithfully and silently removed all the debris and silt that would otherwise contaminate the mountain stream. The crystal clear waters made the village popular for vacationers who enjoyed seeing the beautiful stream, swans and the naturally irrigated farmland.

Years passed and at a town meeting the accountant decided to fire this old man who was never seen doing his job. The town council decided he was no longer needed. In only a few short weeks after the man was relieved of his duties, the sparkling stream became discolored and full of debris. The town council quickly called an emergency meeting to hire back the "keeper of the spring." The mountain stream was restored and all the village people were happy once again.⁸

What the "keeper of the spring" meant to his village,

you mean to your town or community. Even if your acts of service go unseen, your contribution helps improve your town. Just like the village that could not live without this old man doing such a small task, neither can your community be the same without you using your talents, gifts and resources.

You may not consider yourself a servant or having something to give. However, service can be as simple as taking the time to listen to another person. A sincere compassion for others or taking the time to show a special kindness or gentleness to one in need is a great way to serve. Also, taking the time to say an encouraging word can change an entire person's life.

Practical ways to serve

- Talk with newly injured patients at a rehabilitation facility or hospital
- Share with others what people can accomplish with a physical challenge
- Volunteer to give common sense suggestions for improving access to your church, courthouse, or Extension office
- Talk to people about adapting farm operations after an injury or illness

Case Study

Penny Piper, Davenport, Washington

Bob and Penny Piper raise 2,000 acres of wheat, using both hillside combines and level land combines. The Pipers also have a farm toy store which is open two days per week. Bob has a T1 spinal cord injury with Syringomyelia. His involvement in the farming operation includes changing parts, moving machinery and management.

Penny wrote the following encouraging thoughts to her husband.

"I feel bad that this has happened to us. I'm so glad that you still want to be a part of what is happening on our farm. I still want you to be part of it; you are the best parts-gopher and provide the best moral support possible. Your son and I appreciate that! Even though there are many things you are no longer able to do physically on our farm, your years of experience and know-how as well as your emotional support are a real asset to us.

"We'll make the best of whatever happens. We'll plan ahead when we can; we'll take one day (or hour) at a time when we have to. Both of us have good days and bad days. I'll do my best to be understanding and hope you will too. I still love you. Keep smiling – it makes us all feel good."

Conclusion

The road travelled, regardless of plans and dreams, is highly unpredictable and full of surprises. There have been no promises that the seasons of life will be free of cloudy days, droughts or storms. The unpredictable and

often uncomfortable events of life reflect one of the most predictable characteristics of life. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that everyday hundreds of farm and ranch families face the beginning of a new day knowing that a family member has experienced an injury or an illness that is unlikely to go away. Disease, injury, or maybe the loss of hope has resulted in a permanent disability that will forever change lives.

Time is not going to stand still, life is going to go on. Caregivers may be asked to give up some of themselves and their time to assume new responsibilities. It may mean putting personal dreams on the back burner, while undertaking additional tasks such as unfamiliar farm chores, machinery repairs, marketing crops, paying bills, preparing meals, and transporting children.

Caregivers may ask themselves, "Will I be able to muster the determination and courage to weather this storm and the ones to come? Will I have the patience to make the very best of the existing circumstances that I cannot control? Will I have the humility to seek a helping hand when it becomes necessary? and, Will I have the faith to believe that maybe the best is yet to come?"

As a family continues this journey toward a new season of life, the advice of Sir Winston Churchill to the citizens of Great Britain during one of their darkest periods should be considered. In one of his most famous, and shortest, speeches he encouraged them to: "Never give up, never, never, never give up."

Programs for Caregivers

National Family Caregivers Association

9621 East Bexhill Drive
Kensington, MD 20895-3104
1-800-896-3650

National Caregivers Foundation

401 Wythe Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
1-800-930-1357

National Alliance for Caregivers

7201 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20814
1-301-718-8444

Partners Promoting Interfaith Caregiving

368 Broadway Street 105
Kingston, NY 12401-0227
1-914-331-0016

Rosalynn Carter Institute

600 Simmons Street
Americus, GA 31709-4693
1-912-928-1234

Resources

Books and Publications

To Everything There is a Season – Resource, Video, Brochure and Leader's Guide, Breaking New Ground Resource Center, 1997.

Helping Yourself Help Others: A Book for Caregivers, Rosalynn Carter, Times Books, Americus, GA, 1994.

The Resourceful Caregiver. Helping Family Caregivers Help Themselves, National Family Caregivers Association, Kensington, MD, 1996.

When You're the Caregiver and When You're Ill or Incapacitated, J. Miller, Willowgreen Publishing, Fort Wayne, IN 1995.

Videotapes

The Grit and Grace of Being a Caregiver – Maintaining Balance as You Care for Others, and You Shall Overcome – Promise and Prayers for Uncertain Times, Willowgreen Publishing, PO Box 25180, Fort Wayne, IN 46802

Music

Dino Kartsonakis, *Peace Series* – classical, hymns and nature sounds for a therapeutic effect. Dino Productions, 800-775-3466.

Internet

Caregiver Resource Homepage:
<http://www.caregiver911.com>

National Family Caregiver Association:
<http://www.nfcares.org>

Caregiver Network:
<http://www.caregiver.com>

References

- 1 Caring and Competent Caregivers, R. Moroney, P. Dokecki, J. Gates, K. Haynes, J. Newbrough, and J. Nottingham, 1998.
- 2 Paraplegia News, January, 1992.
- 3 Self-Help Network, September 1995.
- 4 Neighbor to Neighbor – A Do-It-Yourself Guide for Organizing Farm Family Support Groups, University of Wisconsin, Roger Williams, 1987.
- 5 Homebuilders, Family Ministry, P.O. Box 23840, Little Rock, AR 72221, 1994.
- 6 Kemp and Vash, 1971.
- 7 The Caregivers Survival Series, Dr. J. Sherman, Pathway Books, Golden Valley, MN, 1994.
- 8 Improving Your Serve, C. Swindoll, 1981.

AgrAbility Impacting the International Community

AgrAbility Represented at the Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture

From June 28-July 2, 1998, nearly 1200 farm, ranch, and farmworker women and others involved in supporting the work of agricultural producers from 50 countries gathered in Washington, DC for the Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture (SICWA). AgrAbility Project staff were involved with the SICWA from the planning stage through the closing session. Carol Maus, National AgrAbility Project Director for the National Easter Seal Society (ES) participated in planning sessions sponsored by the President's Interagency Council on Women, which was headed by Under Secretary of Agriculture, Jill Long Thompson.

Tracy Keninger, Iowa ES Farm Family Rehabilitation Program Manager and AgrAbility Project Coordinator; Margie Frankenbach, dairy farmer and peer support leader for the Missouri AgrAbility Project; and Helen Thomas, gourd farmer and peer support leader for Indiana AgrAbility Project, made presentations on farming with a disability. Ms. Maus served as moderator for that concurrent session.

Valmet tractor with Pilot Lift from LifeEssentials.

Valmet Tractor on Loan from Finland

Last year a Valtra Valmet tractor was loaned to the Breaking New Ground Outreach Program to use at public awareness events. This is a tractor unlike most U.S. tractors for several reasons. First it has an electronically actuated clutch as standard equipment. Each gearshift lever has a button on it that controls the clutch pedal. When the button is pressed the clutch immediately engages allowing the operator to shift gears. Upon the release of the button, the clutch disengages at a rate controlled by tractor ground speed and engine RPM's. This feature could help farmers who have difficulty operating the foot controlled clutch.

Another option is the rotational seat. The seat will swivel 180 degrees, allowing the operator to face the back of the tractor. An auxiliary steering wheel, clutch, brake, and throttle are mounted in the back of the cab allowing the operation of the tractor when the operator is facing to the rear.

A third difference is the addition of a Pilot Lift from LifeEssentials, Inc. of West Lafayette, Indiana. The ball-screw type lift is operated by three electric motors. One motor spins the lift screw while the other two pivot the lift arms. The ability of the arm to articulate at two points provides excellent maneuverability as the user approaches the tractor's operators seat. Development of a remote controlled unit is currently under way. Contact Breaking New Ground for additional information on the Valmet tractor and the Pilot Lift.

Carol Maus (left) and Tracy Keninger present at the International Conference.

Australia AgrAbility

Dr. Lyn Fragar, Director of the Australia Agricultural Health Unit, established the AgrAbility Australia Resource Center Friday, July 17, 1998, with TAFE Rural Skills Centre.

Bob Chaffey, a Tamworth farmer who lost both arms in a farm accident, has been actively supporting the beginning of Australia AgrAbility. He and his wife Vicki both feel that much can be done to provide assistance to farming with disabilities.

Barry Delks, Director of the BNG Resource Center, assisted with the evaluation of a three-day training program for rehabilitation workers and the kick-off of Australia

International Requests

The Breaking New Ground Resource Center continues to serve international requests. Information requests or orders for resources have been received from Kuwait, Japan, Finland, Canada, Wales, Sweden, Australia, and Ukraine. More than 500 individuals receive the BNG newsletter outside the U.S.

Kate Boughton, Barry Delks, Bob and Vicki Chaffey, Lyn Fragar and Jan Mills at Orange Agricultural College.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM BREAKING NEW GROUND



To Everything There is a Season...A Guide for Caregivers of Farmers and Ranchers with Disabilities

To Everything There is a Season...A Guide for Caregivers of Farmers and Ranchers with Disabilities is a self-contained resource package targeting rural caregivers. This resource can be used both by new and experienced caregivers as well as rehabilitation professionals to help caregivers in preparing for the stresses associated with caring for an individual with a disability or illness.

The resource package features an encouraging 45-minute videotape with advice from caregivers from across the country, experts in the field of caregiving, and an assistive technology specialist. Additionally, a written resource and brochure, filled with color photos, are included, that provide advice on many aspects of caregiving.

A Leader's Guide and overhead transparency masters have recently been completed to provide training materials for the educator or rehabilitation professional.

NEW *NEW Leader's Guide, Overheads, and Resource Package: \$85.00*

1999 Barn Builders

Barn Builders is a peer support network of farmers and ranchers with disabilities and caregivers. This resource is designed to help "connect" individuals who have recently been



injured with other farmers or ranchers with similar disabilities or experiences. This resource includes 102 farmers and 35 caregivers representing 23 states and Canada. All the individuals listed have agreed to assist other farmers or ranchers by: talking with them; corresponding by mail and/or making farm or hospital visits.

NEW *Cost: \$15.00*

Farming with an Upper Extremity Amputation

Farming with an Upper Extremity Amputation is a video tape that features ideas and encouragement from farmers with arm amputations who have continued to successfully farm after their injury. The video also contains useful advice and techniques from family members and health professionals familiar with prosthetics and the severe conditions associated with farm work. This production provides ideas for farm machinery and tool modifications which can assist a farmer who has had an arm amputation. The video also deals with family support and medical issues. The intent of the video tape is to inform and encourage new amputees and to assist rehabilitation professionals with limited farm knowledge.

Cost: \$75.00

Bridging Horizons

Bridging Horizons is a publication to provide FFA advisors with information to assist in their efforts to include all youth in FFA, including those who have disabilities. It contains sections on: cultivating independence and ways to improve accessibility in FFA facilities and programs; and case histories of members with disabilities who have successfully participated in FFA programs.

Cost: \$5.00

Agricultural Tools, Equipment, Machinery & Buildings for Farmers & Ranchers with Physical Disabilities, Volume 2

This 400-page manual contains numerous ideas that disabled farmers and ranchers throughout the United States and Canada have developed and are using to remain active. Each idea contains a description of the concept, method of operation and brief overview of how the item was constructed. A contact person is also listed for further information. A supplement completed later is included as well.

Cost: \$55.00

Order Form

To order, complete this form and mail with payment (U.S.) to: Breaking New Ground Resource Center, Purdue University, 1146 ABE Bldg, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1146

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address (no P.O. Box #'s please) _____

Resources ordered _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

(765) 494-5088 (Voice/TT) * 1-800-825-4264 (Voice/TT) * (765) 496-1356 (FAX)

DIGGING DEEPER

Resources to help you break new ground



The 3rd Edition! Agricultural Tools, Equipment, Machinery, & Buildings for Farmers and Ranchers with Physical Disabilities

Volume II of Agricultural Tools, Equipment, Machinery, & Buildings for Farmers and Ranchers with Physical Disabilities has been used by thousands of farmers, rehabilitation professionals, and people with disabilities. It was printed in 1992 and now it is time to develop a new edition.

To make the 3rd Edition the perfect rural assistive technology manual, we need your help! If you have made equipment modifications that have helped you overcome challenges on your farm, please let us know!

How can you help? Send in a picture or description of your idea or solution, or just give a call to: Ned Stoller, Breaking New Ground Resource Center, 800-825-4264.

Bin Level Indicator Has Many Features

Hailed as the new generation of level indicators, the Lev Alert brand bin indicator may be of special interest for those who cannot climb or who have a mobility impairment. The indicator is easy to install from outside the bin and is high in visibility and adaptable. It can be placed anywhere along a vertical bin wall at levels desired by the owner; on most corrugated or flat bin walls up to 3/8's-inch thick; and from outside the bin through the 1/18-inch diameter hole.

As bin material reaches LevAlert it turns the color from black to a bright yellow.

The mechanics are called simple. As the bin material reaches the indicator, it pushes against a rubber activator, turning the color indicator from black to a

bright yellow outside the bin. When the material recedes, the indicator automatically darkens again. An optional electrical sensor can be attached to operate electrical horns, lights, etc. The indicator can sense almost any granular bulk solids ranging from powders to pellets.

For more information about the LevAlert indicator, contact LITJ Enterprises, Inc., HCR-3 Box 6A, Roseau, MN 56751 or call 1-800-962-8896 or 218-424-7499.

New Cushion Now Available for Sports, Wheelchair Market

The Sportseat, a lightweight, thin profile cushion for the active and sport market, is the latest addition to Flotfit Medical L.L.C.'s wheelchair seating and positioning line of products. The cushion weighs just over two pounds and is only two inches in profile.

The Sportseat is modular so the individual can customize and support leg position and change the cushion depth. In addition to the wheelchair, the fluid pad can be used comfortably in other equipment such as mono-skis, hand cycles or in the automobile.

The cushion is distributed through rehab technology suppliers, but those desiring more information about the item can contact Mark J. Schmitt, Flofit Medical L.L.C. at 1-800-356-2668.

New Hammer Has Unique Design

For a hand amputee or someone with the use of only one hand, Ted Hammers Inc. reports it has the answer in its uniquely designed new hammer. The tool has a triangular shaped head, a magnetized recess for starting nails, and a flat top claw with "no rock" extra leverage.

According to the firm, the new design provides less fatigue for the user because of its balance and leverage. Five unique models are available, ranging from 1 1/8" to 1 1/2". A one-inch head is also available for fine trim detailing and "hard to get at areas." The unique triangular head can save thumb injury and the straight edge makes ding repair or corner access easier.

To acquire more information about the hammer, contact Ted Hammers Inc., 6152 Mission Gorge Road, Ste G, San Diego, CA 92120-9768. To order, call 800-645-2434.

Problem Solved!

If you have a solution you would like to tell us about, please send in a description of the item or technique and a photograph. You may also call Breaking New Ground at 1-800-825-4264 and talk with Ned Stoller if you have a solution to share or have questions about this column.

Problem: Negotiating rough terrain and using a wheelchair to pull small loads.

Solution: The Iron Horse Wheelchair with the e-fix power conversion kit.

Idea From: David Roos
6842 N. Botton Rd.
Havana, IL 62644

David Roos is a grain farmer from central Illinois who uses an Iron Horse Wheelchair with the e-fix power conversion option. The Iron Horse wheelchair is an all-terrain, heavy duty chair built by Iron Horse Productions, Inc. of Port Huron, Michigan. It has patented front and rear suspension systems designed to reduce the shock of traveling over uneven surfaces on wheels. The rear wheels use a coil spring mechanism to provide up to two inches of shock absorption for a 200-pound user. The front casters provide a 3/4" travel absorption for the same 200-pound person.

The frame is made of one-inch 18 gauge stainless steel and folds for storage or locks into a fixed position for use. David Roos has made several modifications to his Iron Horse. He has added a solid foot rest in front with a mounting port for a lap-level table. He has also created a set of dual 8" x 2" wheels for the front casters, allowing smoother travel and less penetration into soft ground. A drawbar has been added for pulling small loads. David is able to pull loads with his Iron Horse because his chair is fitted with the e-fix power conversion kit from Frank Mobility Systems, Inc.

The e-fix kit provides a compact battery, two brushless electronic motors, and a programmable joystick steering device.

David Roos uses his Iron Horse wheelchair to travel over rough terrain such as this cornfield or pulling small loads.

Any manual wheelchair can be converted to a power chair with this system and the chair can still be folded after the conversion. The battery is mounted under the seat and can be removed by simply releasing a velcro strap. The chair can travel 10 miles on one battery charge.

The electric motors are mounted directly in the hub of the wheels and a quick release system allows simple removal of the wheels from the chair. The motors can be easily turned on or off to switch the chair between manual and power operation. The programmable joystick can be mounted in a variety of locations on the chair to provide convenient control of the power.

For more information on the Iron Horse Wheelchair or the e-fix Power Conversion Kit, contact:

Iron Horse Productions, Inc
2624 Corner St.
Port Huron, MI 48060
(800) 426-0354

Frank Mobility Systems, Inc
1003 International Dr.
Oakdale, PA 15071-9226
(724) 695-7822

Breaking New Ground Resource Center
Purdue University
1146 Agricultural & Biological Engineering Building
West Lafayette, IN 47907-1146

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