



A newsletter dedicated to friends of the Indiana AgrAbility Project/Breaking New Ground Outreach Program

## A Heart for Horticulture

Indiana grower was down, but with AgrAbility's help, he wasn't out

Russell Beiersdorfer has a life-long connection with horticulture. His extended family owns a large orchard in southeast Indiana that specializes in apples and apple cider but also grows a variety of other fruits. Russell worked in the family business for many years, and he also has a degree in horticulture from Purdue and is a past president of the Indiana Horticulture Society.

However, in October of 2009, everything came to an abrupt halt as Russell found himself on his kitchen floor, the result of a completely blocked left anterior descending coronary artery (sometimes known as "the widowmaker"). As Russell describes it, he "willed himself up" from the

floor to alert his wife of the situation. She drove him to a local hospital, which eventually transferred him to The Christ Hospital in Cincinnati.

A pacemaker was implanted as part of Russell's recovery, which, among other things, means that he cannot hold a CDL, and this was one factor that made employment at the family orchard challenging. He ultimately decided to stop working there in March 2010 to begin his own enterprise along with his wife, Liz, who is also a Purdue Extension county educator and director. They call their business Quarter Amish Farm (so named because of Russell's do-it-yourself tendencies).

Among the challenging consequences of Russell's heart attack are reduced endurance and low tolerance for heat. Consequently, when he met Indiana AgrAbility's Steve Swain at the Indiana Horticulture Congress, they agreed that a site assessment by Steve would be beneficial. Ultimately, Steve recommended a UTV with an enclosed cab



Russell Beiersdorfer in front of his hoop house

and air conditioning, and Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation provided it. The UTV allows Russell to traverse the various plots on his farm without exhaustion, and it keeps him functional in the heat of summer.

The Beiersdorfers' farm focuses on U-pick blackberries, but their vision includes "providing opportunities for people of all ages to experience and learn about responsible agriculture." As

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### Education and training for agricultural producers and the professionals who work with them

## Two important conferences coming



Farmers, service providers, veterans, and others involved in agriculture or rehabilitation should mark their calendars for two conferences coming soon.

The AgrAbility National Training Workshop is heading for Lincoln, Nebraska, on March 25-28, 2019, at the Embassy Suites hotel. This annual conference features numerous sessions beneficial to farmers with disabilities and those working with them. Tours are planned for the first and last days. Participants comment that the networking opportunities with others are often as valuable as the sessions themselves.

Farmers with disabilities may be eligible for stipends to cover registration and some travel costs. Visit [www.agrability.org/ntw](http://www.agrability.org/ntw) for more information about the conference and about travel stipends.



The Farmer Veteran Coalition, a collaborating organization with the National AgrAbility Project, is holding the 2018 Farmer Veteran Stakeholders Conference on November 15-17 at the InterContinental hotel in Kansas City, Missouri. Featured events include panel discussions with successful farmer veterans and government partners, along with breakout sessions and updates on the impact of agriculture and horticulture on veterans' health. Visit [www.farm-vetco.org/kansascity](http://www.farm-vetco.org/kansascity) for more information and to register.



Russell's UTV has been key in helping him keep producing



## Out & About with AgrAbility

### EDUCATION & AWARENESS PAST & FUTURE



Indiana AgrAbility Project Manager Chuck Baldwin and OT Intern Dr. Danyele Clingan both participated in the Mental Health First Aid training in Henry County on August 29. Chuck was an attendee, and Danyele was an instructor. Learn more about Mental Health First Aid on the next page.

Some upcoming events for Indiana AgrAbility include:

- Indiana Farm Equipment and Technology Expo, State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis, December 11-13
- Fort Wayne Farm Show, Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, January 15-17
- National Farm Machinery Show, Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville, February 13-16
- Midwest Women in Agriculture Conference, Swan Lake Resort, Plymouth, Indiana, February 20 -21

## Indiana AgrAbility Advisory Team contributes to program success

It takes a team effort to tackle AgrAbility's mission of enhancing quality of life for farmers with disabilities. Some of those team members are paid staff, such as Purdue employees, subcontractors like Hoosier Uplands, and individual consultants. However, there are others who contribute their time and vital expertise as volunteers, among whom are the members of the Indiana AgrAbility Advisory Team. This group is composed of professionals, consultants, and clients from a wide range of agricultural and disability/rehabilitation backgrounds.

The Advisory Team meets semi-annually with Indiana AgrAbility staff members and consultants. The team receives updates on the project's work plan objectives, and are invited to provide feedback about current activities and future initiatives.

The current Advisory Team members and their organizational affiliations are: Gina Anderson, Purdue Extension – Floyd County; Roy Ballard, Purdue Extension – Hancock County; Greg Bolander, Indiana Farm Bureau; Dean Brusnighan, Purdue IT Teaching and Learning Technologies; Mark Carter, Purdue Extension – Delaware County and a former AgrAbility client; Lisa Chaudion, Indiana FFA Foundation; Isabella Chism, Indiana Farm Bureau; Barry Delks, Purdue Animal Scienc-

### Beiersdorfer (continued from p. 1)

part of their mission, they raise registered Alpine dairy goats and alpacas, primarily for 4-H projects,

Russell continues to be active in a wide variety of community activities, including local FFA projects, Farm Bureau, his county fair board, and the Extension Master Gardener program, where he teaches classes on fruits and vegetables.



Indiana AgrAbility Advisory Team meets at Life Essentials headquarters last spring

es; Steve Etheridge, Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation (retired); Eric Hackworth, farmer veteran; Mark Hosier, AgrAbility client; Susan Lawrence, Indiana Farm Bureau; Cody Linville, Jay County Schools; Roberta Milliken; Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation; Kimber Nicoletti, Purdue MESA (Multicultural Efforts to end Sexual Assault); Brian Norton, IN-DATA; Susan Pletcher, spouse of former AgrAbility client; Roberta Schweitzer, Body-Mind-Spirit Wellness Center; Suzann Shackleton, social worker and independent consultant; Kathy Smith and Hubert Von Holten, Life Essentials; and Wade Winger, Easterseals Crossroads.

Indiana AgrAbility appreciates the valuable insights provided by the Advisory Team and their participation in such activities as AgrAbility displays at the State Fair and other events.

Russell is very grateful for AgrAbility's help, saying, "I've worked and paid for everything that I've ever owned and not in my wildest dreams did I think that an organization would help me out. In fact I'm the one trying to help individuals in their time of need...Thank you, thank you to AgrAbility. I've used the UTV many times this summer."

## Linda Tarr promotes the AgrAbility mission far & wide

While she focuses on the south, you might find her anywhere

Linda Tarr of Hoosier Uplands – a subcontractor on the Indiana AgrAbility Project – is an active part of the AgrAbility team, especially in southern Indiana. You might find her at just about any type of event related to agriculture or rehabilitation: county fairs, Extension meetings, health fairs, or Farm Bureau events, just to name a few.



Mitchell's inclusive community garden



Linda Tarr talks with a participant at the Indiana Rural Health Conference

This summer, in addition to her other activities, Linda represented Indiana AgrAbility at the Indiana Rural Health Association Annual Conference in French Lick. She has also been active in helping to establish an inclusive, accessible community garden in Mitchell, IN.

## AgrAbility helps lead Purdue Extension Mental Health First Aid training efforts

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an eight-hour course that teaches participants how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. Those typically taking the course are not mental health professionals – they're laypeople, teachers, Extension educators – anyone interested in helping identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

As part of Purdue Extension's opioid response efforts, the organization is offering a series of MHFA workshops around the state. Dr. Danyelle Clingan, AgrAbility's occupational therapist intern during 2018, became a certified MHFA facilitator and led some of the workshops.

Purdue continues to sponsor MHFA workshops this fall. For more information on participating, visit [www.extension.purdue.edu/opioids](http://www.extension.purdue.edu/opioids).



Dr. Danyele Clingan (far right) with Mental Health First Aid class participants

# TOOLBOX Spotlight

### TOOLS TO MAKE LIFE EASIER



### The PenFriend Voice Labeling System

consists of a digital pen and labels containing barcodes that can be "read" by the pen, which has built-in memory and a microphone/speaker system. This allows those with visual impairments to affix a self-adhesive label to any object and then scan it with the pen and make an audio recording of what that particular label represents. Touch the pen to any recorded label, and the message will be played back. There's no limit to the length of a message.

For more information on this and many more helpful technologies, visit [THE TOOLBOX Assistive Technology Database at www.agrability.org/toolbox](http://www.agrability.org/toolbox)