

*A quarterly letter to friends of the Breaking New Ground Outreach Program*

## Bob's Veggies – a “growing” business in many ways

If you call Robert “Bob” Edinger at this time of year, you’re likely to get his answering machine. That’s because his business, Bob’s Veggies, is more than enough to keep him busy. Assistance from BNG and Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) has helped to keep the business growing.

The BNG staff first met Bob in the spring of 2006 when VR requested a worksite assessment for him. Bob had moved from his home state of Minnesota, was interested in starting a produce business, and had graduated from Purdue Extension’s Master Gardener Program. However, due to a motorcycle crash in 1979, Bob’s left arm had been amputated above the elbow, and he had also experienced repeated problems with his right shoulder and left leg.

BNG rural rehabilitation specialist Steve Swain visited Bob at his worksite to help determine the types of assistive technologies that would enable him to meet his career goals. Among the devices Steve recommended was a heavy-duty utility vehicle with a dump bed and a hoist to help Bob lift and transport buckets

and totes filled with supplies, equipment, and produce. Steve also suggested hand tools, a seeder, and a planter that could be easily used with one hand. Since Bob prefers to raise many crops on mounded beds for easier weeding and harvesting, a hilling/furrowing attachment for his rototiller was also recommended.

With these and other devices supplied through VR funding, Bob has been able to successfully raise and market his farm-fresh produce. His goal is to furnish more than 15 types of fruits and vegetables, including strawberries, sweet corn, onions, green beans, tomatoes, peas, and several types of peppers.

Currently, Bob raises his crops on two plots that are each approximately 40’x160’. He has also acquired materials to construct a hoop greenhouse so that he can start his plants earlier in the spring in order to get a jump on the market and extend his growing

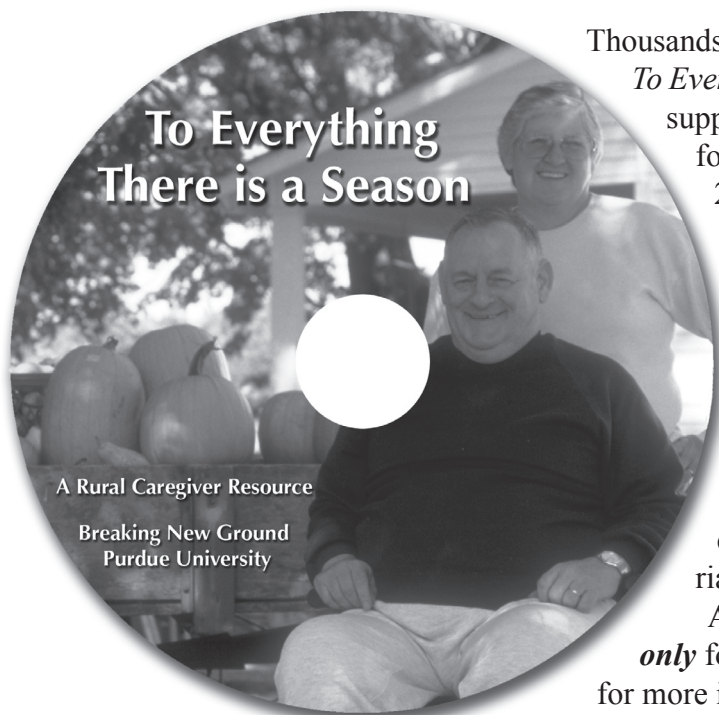


Bob Edinger

season. Though he is not currently certified as an organic producer, Bob grows his produce using organic practices.

His customers at the Tipton farmer’s market have been pleased with the quality of Bob’s produce and appreciate the fact that it is locally grown. However, Bob is interested in more than just the farm and market – he also wants to pass on to others the benefits of his experiences. So far, Bob has assisted BNG at public awareness events and participated in peer support training. BNG looks forward to seeing Bob – and Bob’s Veggies – continue to grow.

## Quantity discount now available for caregiver DVD



Thousands of caregivers and professionals have benefited from BNG’s *To Everything There is a Season* rural caregiver video. Now, while supplies last, BNG is offering the DVD version of this resource for the low price of \$2 per copy plus shipping for orders of 25 copies or more. Given the normal DVD price of \$30, this is a huge discount.

This offer is an excellent opportunity for professionals or members of civic groups to distribute the DVD to caregivers in their communities. Churches may want to keep a supply on hand to give to caregivers in their congregations.

While the video has a rural flavor, the basic principals communicated are applicable to all caregivers. Themes include communication, handling stress, commitment to marriage, caregiver survival tips, and the importance of humor.

Again, this offer is only available while supplies last and **only** for orders of 25 copies or more. Call BNG at 800-825-4264 for more information or to place an order.

BNG Project Leader: Bill Field

Program Manager: Paul Jones

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## Modular ramps offer adaptable, portable solutions

Ramping a house is almost always a major undertaking, but the task becomes even more challenging when the property is a rental. Most landlords require that any accessibility modifications, such as ramps, be removed when the tenant leaves. In addition, Indiana's state vocational rehabilitation agency (and presumably those in other states) won't pay for permanently attached ramps when clients rent their residences.

BNG has conducted hundreds of assessments for housing modifications, and issues like those mentioned have led the staff to begin recommending portable, modular ramps in certain circumstances. One example is the ramp pictured above. It was originally constructed for a rented mobile home (see Figure 1), but it has since been moved to two other residences rented by the same client (see Figure 2 photo at third location).

Portable ramps typically do not require support posts to be imbedded in the ground. Their modular design (1) means that sections can



Figure 1: Modular ramp at 1<sup>st</sup> location



Figure 2: Modular ramp at 3<sup>rd</sup> location

be prefabricated (indoors, if necessary), (2) makes it feasible to move the ramps to new locations, and (3) allows ramps to be reconfigured into different patterns, if necessary. For example, if a new residence has a higher door, an additional section can be added to a modular ramp instead of constructing an entirely new ramp. If the ramp were originally configured as a straight ramp but the new residence requires a switchback ramp, a modular ramp can be adapted with a level platform and other needed modifications.

BNG rural rehabilitation specialist Steve Swain has recommended



Figure 3: Ramp coordinated by Steve Swain

a number of modular ramps and has personal experience in helping construct one – pictured in Figure 3 – for a member of his church congregation. According to Steve, he constructed the modular frames and pre-cut the decking off site. Later, he and five other church members tore out the old ramp and assembled the new modular, removable ramp in approximately 8 hours. The ramp, including its two 5-foot level platforms, was 38 feet long. Steve indicated that the materials cost of the pictured ramp was approximately \$870.

The Minnesota Ramp Project is a pioneer in developing modular ramps and offers free online ramp designs at [www.wheelchairramp.org](http://www.wheelchairramp.org). Commercially manufactured portable ramps, often made from aluminum or other metals, are also available. However, the cost of such units may be prohibitive for many consumers.

## How many people with disabilities live, work on farms?

BNG is often asked about the total number of people in the U.S. agricultural population that have disabilities. However, the question is more complicated than it may first seem. Because there are a variety of surveys that measure the farm population, it is difficult to determine even the total number of people who live or work on farms. Similarly, there are many different ways of defining and measuring disability.

Until now, estimates about the disability population in agriculture

have ranged from around 250,000 to about 500,000. However, a study by BNG that recently received conditional acceptance in the *Journal of Agromedicine* indicates that the number of people with disabilities in the agricultural population may be between 0.99 million and 2.26 million.

BNG plans to share more information about this study once it is published. Currently, no publication date has been set, but check back to the *News Note* for more information.