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AgrAbility heading westward for 2025 National Training Workshop

Mark your calendars for the AgrAbility National Training Workshop set for March 24-27 in Las Cruces, New Mexico! The conference facilities will be some of the NTW's most unique arrangements. While participants will stay at the **Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces** and have a few activities there, the main conference sessions will be held at the nearby **New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum**. The conference will provide transportation to and from the museum.

The New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum is an interactive venue with more than 24,000 square feet of exhibit space. In addition to indoor exhibits, the museum has livestock, gardens, and live demonstrations. One of its newest displays, opening in January 2025, will showcase AgrAbility.

A limited number of travel stipends are available to farmers with disabilities and their caregivers. **The deadline for application is January 10**, and



all stipend decisions will be communicated no later than January 24.

For more information about the National Training Workshop, visit www.agrability.org/ntw. To apply for a travel stipend, click the Stipends tab. Registration is set to open before the end of December.



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

Quitting isn't in the plan

Lloyd Hayden perseveres in farming despite what some consider daunting challenges

At 78 years old and having survived the traumatic amputation of both legs, many might think it's time for Lloyd Hayden to hang up the tractor keys. Lloyd disagrees. The farmer, Army veteran, and former iron worker from Thorntown sees no point in quitting, even with the added challenges of his disabilities.

It was October 23, 2018, and Lloyd was cutting shattercane (a nuisance type of sorghum) to keep its seeds from being scattered by the combine that was harvesting corn near him. Somehow, the combine driver didn't notice Lloyd, and he became entangled in the corn head. To save his life, emergency personnel – including his son-in-law, the local fire chief – had no choice but to amputate both legs just below the knee to extract him from the machine.

Soon after Lloyd left the hospital, his family contacted Steve Swain, Indiana AgrAbility rural rehabilitation specialist. Steve met with Lloyd, his wife, and his son in November 2018 to introduce them to some of the available assistive technology devices and guide them through Indiana Vocational



Rehabilitation's service options and its application process.

A few months later, Vocational Rehabilitation approved Lloyd for services, enabling Swain to conduct a formal farm assessment. Based on his recommendations, VR eventually provided Lloyd with assistive technology that included a heavy-duty tracked wheelchair, hand controls for his pickup truck, powered tarps and grain gate openers for his grain semis, grain monitoring devices

for his grain bins, and a utility vehicle that has hand controls, an enclosed cab, heating, and air conditioning.

So far, Lloyd has chosen not to use a lift to raise him into his equipment and rarely uses the prosthetic legs that were provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, he concedes that the prostheses come in handy when he needs to depress the clutch or brake on a tractor or combine.

(Continued on p. 3)

Out & About with AgrAbility

EDUCATION & AWARENESS PAST & FUTURE



AgrAbility hosted a “Boots to Business Reboot” workshop at Purdue on October 11 for farmer veterans to teach them how to develop business plans and access resources from USDA, other agencies, and nonprofits. Boots to Business is available for free in every state for veterans and their spouses.

Some upcoming events for Indiana AgrAbility include:

- Purdue Horticulture Conference, Danville, IN, January 14-15
- Fort Wayne Farm Show, Fort Wayne, IN, January 14-16
- Veterans IN Farming Winter Farm Conference, Bloomington, IN, January 24-25
- Northern Indiana Grazing Conference, Shipshewana, IN, January 31-February 1
- National Farm Machinery Show, Louisville, KY, February 12-15
- Indiana Small Farm Conference, Danville, IN, March 4-5
- AgrAbility National Training Workshop, Los Cruces, NM, March 24-27

Ricker honored with inaugural Farm Bureau Veteran Farmer Award of Excellence

Joe Ricker, AgrAbility Veteran Outreach Coordinator, was recently honored with the first-ever **Veteran Farmer Award of Excellence** presented by the American Farm Bureau Federation with support from Farm Credit. The award recognizes not only Joe’s work with Indiana AgrAbility and National AgrAbility, but also his efforts beyond those programs. Joe started **At Ease Orchard** in Wilkinson, Indiana, a nonprofit “dedicated to empowering veterans and their families through the transformative power of farming.” It offers a wide variety of programs on topics like beginning farming and beekeeping plus soon-to-be-launched farm coaching and peer support programs. He is the founder and president of **Veterans IN Farming**.



Joe Ricker

Ricker is scheduled to receive his award at the 2025 American Farm Bureau Convention in San Antonio, Texas, in January. As part of his recognition, Joe traveled to Washington, D.C., during Veterans Day week to participate in activities with Farm Credit, USDA, and several members of Congress.

Originally from the Chicago area, Joe served in the U.S. Army for 30 years, rising to the rank of colonel. His service included tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as a post in the Pentagon.

Veterans IN Farming conference coming

The mission of Veterans IN Farming (VIF) is to provide veterans and their dependent family members with the training and support they need to succeed in homesteading, farming, ranching, and agriculture. To that end, VIF is sponsoring its second Winter Farm Conference on January 24-25 at the Monroe Convention Center in Bloomington.

The agenda features sessions on diverse topics such as poultry processing, USDA programs, hydroponics, beekeeping, and scaling-up your operation. Indiana AgrAbility is scheduled to provide an exhibit and a session on adaptive farming resources. In addition, the U.S. Small Business Administration will provide an all-day “Boots to Business” class for veterans transitioning from active duty to entrepreneurial civilian careers.

The regular registration rate is \$120, but scholarships are available to qualifying veterans in Indiana and its surrounding states to reduce the cost to \$20. For more information, including the complete agenda, registration information, and hotel accommodations, visit vetsinfarming.wildapricot.org/conference.



AgrAbility loses a champion

Linda Tarr, longtime colleague and AgrAbility supporter, passed away at home on November 9. She worked for Hoosier Uplands Economic Development Corporation, an organization that partnered as a subcontractor on the Indiana AgrAbility Project grant for many years. Hoosier Uplands later became the lead organization for USDA’s Indiana AgVets Program, which collaborates closely with AgrAbility, and Linda was the driving force behind that grant project.

Those who came into contact with Linda knew that she was a dedicated and passionate ambassador for AgrAbility and AgVets. One of her favorite projects was organizing the farmer luncheon at the annual AgrAbility National Training Workshop. Linda came from a farm background and always had great respect and appreciation for AgrAbility clients and their families. She spent untold hours gathering giveaways and other tokens of appreciation for the NTW farmer luncheon. In her honor, the NTW planning committee has decided to rename the event “The Linda Tarr Farmer Luncheon.”



Linda was also largely responsible for launching and growing the Indiana AgVets Certification and Internship Program. Initially set to enroll 60 veterans in its first four years, the program has nearly doubled that goal, with approximately 120 veterans enrolled to date—thanks in large part to Linda’s relentless promotion and outreach. She was excited that Indiana AgVets had recently been re-funded by USDA and was looking forward to impacting the lives of more veterans through that program.

Linda’s commitment and impact will be remembered by all who had the privilege of working with her.

AT Expo in the works

Indiana AgrAbility, in cooperation with nonprofit partner Easterseals Crossroads, conducted a successful AgrAbility Agricultural Assistive Technology Expo in April 2023. Look for another AT Expo coming this spring that will feature educational sessions, tours, and hands-on opportunities to try-out a variety of assistive technology devices for agriculture. Check back at agrability.info/at-expo soon for details.

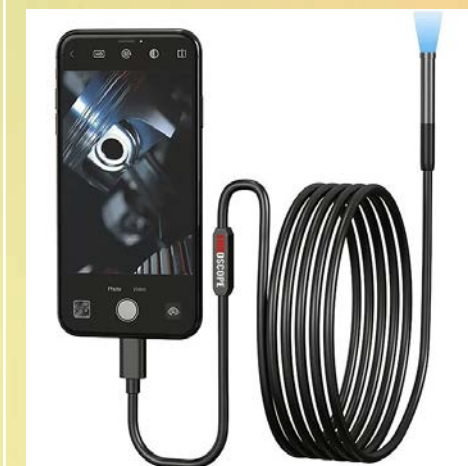
Hayden (continued from p. 1)

By October 2019, Lloyd was back out harvesting. It took weeks of rehab, support from his family, and help from AgrAbility and Indiana VR, but mostly it took Lloyd’s determination.

Swain said, “Lloyd is very independent and driven to continue to work. As a veteran, he is committed to getting the job done, no matter what it takes.”

TOOLBOX Spotlight

TOOLS TO MAKE LIFE EASIER



Smartphone Endoscopic/Borescopic Camera

A Smartphone Endoscopic/Borescopic Camera can be a valuable yet relatively inexpensive tool around the farmstead (workshop, garage, home). One can inspect small or otherwise hard-to-access areas that need repair or maintenance, e.g., engines, equipment undercarriages, electrical wiring, HVAC, sewer drainpipe. In addition to the smartphone app, some kits consist of a simple cable with a camera and light at one end and the smartphone connector at the other; others have more complex camera controllers.

For more information on this and more helpful tools, visit **THE TOOLBOX** Assistive Technology Database www.agrability.org/toolbox