

Oklahoma AgrAbility Project funded for an additional four years

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project is funded for an additional four-year grant. This new award covers the time period of April 1, 2010 through March 31, 2014.

Oklahoma AgrAbility, established in 2002, is one of 22 state AgrAbility Projects funded by the USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which also supports the National AgrAbility Project. The national Project was created in the 1990 Farm Bill to assist people with disabilities employed in agriculture. Linking the Cooperative Extension Service at a land-grant university with a private nonprofit disability service organization, provides the means to promote independence in agricultural production and rural living. The national Project, based at Purdue University's Breaking New Ground Resource Center, serves as a resource for state Projects by providing training, technical assistance and information about available resources to help people with disabilities employed in agriculture.

What is Oklahoma AgrAbility?

The Oklahoma Project is a unique partnership composed of land-grant, Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES); the nonprofit disability service organization, Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation (OkAT), with services provided through Oklahoma ABLE Tech; and the Langston University School of Physical Therapy. Oklahoma AgrAbility also maintains working relationships with nonprofit organizations as well as state agencies including the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). This agency provides funding for needed assistive technologies for farmers and ranchers meeting DRS eligibility criteria.

OCES represents a federal, state and county partnership that has worked since 1914 to serve the diverse needs of the state's citizens. OCES county educators serve as "the front door" to the university, linking all 77 counties with research-based information in the areas of agriculture, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development and economic development. OCES works to develop human resources, improve the profitability and sustainability of agriculture, protect and sustain the environment, revitalize rural Oklahoma and enhance the quality of life for all Oklahomans.

Since 2002, the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project has reached and exceeded local, state and national goals under the leadership

of OSU Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. The Project management recently moved to the OSU College of Human Environmental Sciences, Department of Human Development and Family Science (HDFS). This move to HDFS will continue to strengthen the Project's mission and goals in partnership with OCES Family and Consumer Science (FCS) and 4-H Youth Development field staff. FCS/4-H Youth Development educators, located in Oklahoma's county Extension offices, will provide practical education and outreach working to promote independence and quality of life for identified farmers, ranchers and their families.

Jan Johnston, OCES State Specialist in Gerontology and Assistant Professor in HDFS, is the new Principal Investigator. Johnston, working with the Oklahoma AgrAbility program coordinator and a statewide presence of FCS/4-H educators, will address the educational, referral and outreach needs among an increasingly aging Oklahoma population who qualify for AgrAbility. She serves as the Project's Co-Director.

Linda Jaco continues to serve as Co-Director and Director of Oklahoma ABLE Tech representing OkAT, the Project's nonprofit disability service organization. Jaco, along with Sandra Stevenson, Project Manager, and Stacy Bauter, Project Assistant, work to provide direct assistance through on-farm assessments, tailoring recommendations for assistive technologies to improve farm production and quality of life for the farmer, rancher and family. In fulfilling the Project's mandate, Johnston and Jaco work together to meet the Extension and disability goals of the new four-year work plan.

Millee Jorge, and Lynn Jeffries, represent the Langston University School of Physical Therapy assisting in overall program evaluation as well as providing valuable post-graduate education to rehabilitation professionals. As organizers of the successful Rehabilitating Oklahoma Farmer Conference, now in its sixth year, Jorge and Jeffries work to prepare a healthcare workforce to be attuned to the specific needs and solutions for the agricultural worker, further ensuring the sustainability of AgrAbility.

New and continuing AgrAbility partners in the upcoming work plan include: Department of Rehabilitation Services; Department of Career Technology and Education representing



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