

# Oklahoma AgrAbility

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Email: [ability@okstate.edu](mailto:ability@okstate.edu)  
Website: [www.agrability.okstate.edu](http://www.agrability.okstate.edu)

1514 W. Hall of Fame  
Stillwater, OK 74078  
Toll Free: 888-885-5588 (voice/tty)

## Focus on A Farmer: William Brown

William Brown owns a remote 80-acre property bordering a national forest in southeastern Oklahoma where he runs a longhorn cow-calf operation and breeds and sells horses and mules. Additionally, he clears cedar trees from the rough and rocky terrain, seeds pastures with bermuda, rye, a mixture of both for grazing, and rotationally grazes the pastures. He is also a carpenter in his spare time.

If that was not enough of a challenge, Brown has been paralyzed below his rib cage for 17 years. He still manages his property, using a wheel chair, with the determination and purpose of any cattleman. In an effort to identify available resources and assistive technology to assist his son with barriers he is experiencing while working, William Brown, Sr. contacted the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project. After an on-site farm assessment, Oklahoma AgrAbility made several recommendations to reduce barriers to employment. These included solutions to increase mobility, have easier access to his carpentry equipment, and more convenience and safety in operating his farm equipment.



William utilizes a wheelchair lift to gain access to his carpentry station in the loft of his barn.

Photos provided

Brown listed his overall mobility or accessibility around the property, including the shop, barn and fields, as one of his major priorities. Other primary objectives were to improve his ability to effectively and safely use his machinery and tools, as well as his ability to perform general maintenance activities.

Through a collaborative effort between Oklahoma AgrAbility and Mr. Brown, the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services was identified as an appropriate funding source for the needed assistive technologies and accommodations that included a pilot lift for his tractor, an industrial work table, an 8-foot suit case ramp, an enclosed cargo trailer, hand controls, and a powered outdoor, all-terrain wheelchair.



William has increased independence & mobility on his property using a powered outdoor, all-terrain wheelchair.

With these accommodations in place, Brown is better equipped to continue his farm operation as well as his carpentry work with his table saw, drill press and jig saw to create children's wooden riding rocking horses, motorcycles and dinosaurs. Brown said AgrAbility was very helpful in identifying barriers and finding solutions, and he couldn't be more satisfied with the Project's assistance.

- Sean Hubbard and Sandra Stevenson

### About Oklahoma AgrAbility

Oklahoma AgrAbility educates and connects agricultural families who are living with a disability with resources to secure assistive technologies for continued independence and success in their operation and daily life activities.



# Spotlight on Current Issues

## Major Tax Law Changes for Farmers in 2012



### Social Security Tax Cut Extended Through 2012

Congress passed the extension of the lower social security tax rate for 2012 wages and self-employment income. The 2010 Tax Relief Act reduced the employee's social security tax rate from 6.2% to 4.2 % for wages paid during 2011 which will now also apply to wages paid during 2012. This also reduces the self employment tax rate for both 2011 and 2012 from 12.4% to 10.4% for all self-employed individuals. Originally this reduction was to have expired effective March 1, 2012.

### Internal Revenue Code Section 179 Expensing Election for 2012

For the 2012 tax year, the amount of a capital purchase that qualifies for the section 179 expensing election is \$139,000 with a maximum of a \$530,000 investment in capital assets. In other words if a farmer buys a new tractor costing \$90,000, the full amount of the purchase can be written off in 2012 versus depreciating it over its normal 5 year life.

### 50% Bonus Depreciation for 2012

50% Additional First-Year (or Bonus) Depreciation is allowed for qualifying property placed in service from January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012. Certain rules must be met such as the property must have a depreciable life of 20 years or less. The property must also have been purchased and placed in service before January 1, 2013 and the original or first use must occur with the taxpayer claiming the deduction (new property).

- J C. Hobbs, OSU Extension Specialist, Agriculture Economics

## "HEAR on the Farm" Study

The University of Michigan is seeking participants in a study to test the effectiveness of several programs designed to encourage farmers to protect their hearing. If you have email, go to the website listed below and enter the access code *saveears*. Farmers may earn up to \$40 for participating and will be contributing to the future development of better safety programs for farmers.

[www.hearonthefarm.org](http://www.hearonthefarm.org)

## Spotlight on Assistive Technology:

*A mobility device, such as an outdoor wheelchair, can offer greater access to various work areas on the farm or ranch to those who utilize wheelchairs and/or scooters for mobility. A rugged terrain can cause barriers to farmers and ranchers as they try to complete essential tasks and navigate throughout their day. All terrain, outdoor mobility devices are designed to travel through dirt, gravel, sand, and snow. Mid, four, rear, and track-wheel models offer a variety of travel ranges, speed, and seating options.*

- Sandra Stevenson



## Partner Corner: James Kuhn

James Kuhn has been on the Oklahoma AgrAbility Advisory Council since the Project was developed 10 years ago. He is retired after farming for over 36 years. During that time, he focused his operation on beef cattle, wheat, and alfalfa.



Photo by: Ag Com Services

Kuhn now maintains a garden with the goal of providing fresh vegetables to the food pantry at his church and is currently the president of the Payne County Farmers Union Chapter. He has served on state-level Farmers Union committees and represented the organization in legislative visits.

Mr. Kuhn grew up farming with his family in northern Oklahoma and was active in FFA. He eventually received a degree in Ag Education from OSU and served in the Navy for 21 years. He brings the unique knowledge and experience of being a farmer with a disabling condition to the AgrAbility Advisory Council. "The wonderful part about AgrAbility is that it provides a way of life to those who otherwise could not continue it in farming." states Kuhn.

- Stacy Bauter



## FFA Contest Spotlight:

The Oklahoma AgrAbility Project is proud to announce the winners of 2011 AgrAbility FFA Contest. The contest invited FFA chapters from across the state to help an agriculturalist in their home town overcome a barrier in their farming caused by a disability. The contest is designed to provide a community-oriented agricultural experience and to allow chapter members the opportunity to make a positive difference in their communities by helping local farmers, ranchers and their families overcome physical barriers.



The challenge for the contest is to identify and assist with making low-cost modifications to the farm or ranch of a person with a disability. Winners were awarded \$1,000 for first place, \$800 for second place and \$600 for third place; they were recognized at the 2012 AgrAbility Day at the Capitol. This year's winners are:



**First Place: Amber-Pocasset FFA Chapter** - created an elevated planting system designed to eliminate stooping over to garden. Mrs. Boyd, for whom the project was created, said, "I won't have to worry about falling and not being able to get back up with these planters. I truly appreciate the ag chapter for building these and remembering the older citizens of the community." Special thanks to the Amber Pocasset FFA Booster club, the Lucile-Blue Bonnet OHCE and the Amber-Pocasset FFA chapter for donating the materials to complete the project.

**Second Place: Okarche FFA Chapter** - created a unique rolling design to aide in loading a 'popper,' a transportation device for show pigs. Their design allowed the popper, weighing up to 300 lbs, to be placed on a rolling device to easily slide into the back of a truck. **Third Place: Bethel FFA Chapter** - created a specialized walker to benefit a rancher with Parkinson's disease. The walker was constructed with large wheels and reinforced piping to withstand rugged terrain. The winners were chosen for their original designs, the impact the project had on the individual and the quality of their reports. We hope to continue the project in 2012 partnering with Oklahoma FFA chapters in teaching not only the value of community service, but also raising awareness of unique challenges farmers with disabilities may face.

- Kate Miller, Oklahoma ABLE Tech

## Resource Spotlight:

### Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association - A Rancher's Resource

The Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association was founded on, and continues to focus on, upholding these principles: promoting the welfare of the cattle industry, promoting educational and scientific programs, preventing cattle theft, and serving the mutual and common aims of Oklahoma's Cattlemen.

Oklahoma is home to over five million head of beef cattle and 25 million acres of pasture and grazing land. The beef industry contributes over \$5 billion to Oklahoma's economy and creates 75 thousand non-ranching jobs in our state. Because we are membership-driven and membership-funded, each member has a voice in shaping the policy of the OCA. We currently have over 150 policy statements that have been presented and approved that cover topics such as protecting private property rights, working to eliminate theft, arson and vandalism, ensuring cattle health and well-being, reforming trespass laws, stopping unnecessary environmental regulations and fighting for fair and equitable tax policy at all levels of government.



As a member of the OCA, producers receive legislative representation at national, state and local levels, beef promotion, district and state leadership opportunities, policy development, up to a \$10,000 theft reward program, beef education and leadership workshops, and a subscription to the Oklahoma Cowman magazine. The OCA also maintains the official brand registry for the state of Oklahoma.

Since 1952, the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association has been advocating, communicating and educating on behalf of Oklahoma's Ranching Families. Today, the OCA represents more than 5,500 Oklahoma ranching families. For more information, visit [www.okcattlemen.org](http://www.okcattlemen.org) or call 405.235.4391.

- Tiffani Pruitt, OCA Marketing





## On the Horizon: 2012 AgrAbility Events

- March 26 AgrAbility Day at the Capitol, OKC
- March 30 Southwest District OHCE Meeting, Altus
- April 10 AgrAbility Advisory Council Meeting, Stillwater
- April 12-13 OEAFCs Meeting, OKC
- April 17 Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol
- May 1-2 State FFA Convention
- June 1-2 OKGEC Conference
- June 22-23 OK Pecan Growers Assn. Conference, Norman

### Save the Date: "Linking Gerontology & Geriatrics: Addressing Ethics, Disasters & Well-Being in Rural Communities"

OKGEC Conference - June 1-2 Wes Watkins Center, Stillwater  
For more info: [www.humansciences.okstate.edu/okgec](http://www.humansciences.okstate.edu/okgec)

## AgrAbility Staff

### Oklahoma State University

#### Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Jan Johnston, Principal Investigator & Co-Director

Julie York, Program Coordinator

Paige Eckert, Graduate Assistant

#### Oklahoma ABLE Tech

Linda Jaco, Co-Director

Sandra Stevenson, Case Manager

Stacy Bauter, Program Assistant

Tammie Honeyman, Program Assistant

### Langston University

#### School of Physical Therapy

Aliya Chaudry, Co-Director



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Oklahoma State University  
Cooperative Extension Service  
Oklahoma AgrAbility  
1514 W. Hall of Fame  
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-0488

# Oklahoma AgrAbility

## Shaping futures through Oklahoma tradition

### *The Oklahoma AgrAbility Project*

The Oklahoma AgrAbility Project, created in 2002, supports the rehabilitation & assistive technology needs of Oklahoma farmers, ranchers & their families, who have a disability or debilitating injury that limits their ability to perform essential farm tasks, by providing education, networking, & direct assistance services.

Oklahoma is one of 23 nationwide AgrAbility State Projects authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill & funded through a grant from the USDA, NIFA.

### *Oklahoma AgrAbility Partnerships*

Oklahoma AgrAbility maintains working relationships with nonprofit organizations as well as state agencies, including the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services which provide funding for needed assistive technologies for farmers & ranchers meeting their eligibility criteria. Oklahoma AgrAbility & DRS became partners in 2003 to assist agricultural producers experiencing work-related obstacles & barriers. The agreement expanded into a memorandum of understanding in 2005, & developed into a contract to conduct on-farm site assessments in 2009.

Memorandums of Understanding were also established with Oklahoma Department of Career & Technology Education & Oklahoma ABLE Tech, the state's Assistive Technology Act Program, in 2010.

### *Oklahoma AgrAbility Services*

The Oklahoma AgrAbility Project is a unique collaboration of Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service; Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation (OkAT) with services provided through Oklahoma ABLE Tech, & Langston University School of Physical Therapy. Services include on-farm site assessments, demonstration & lending of assistive tools, technical assistance, service provider referral, outreach activities, & training of rehabilitation professionals.

### *AgrAbility Advisory Council*

Council members, who include farmers & ranchers with disabling conditions, provide strategic advice & bring a unique perspective to the decision-making process. Organizations represented include: Arthritis Foundation; Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; Farmers Union; Langston University Extension; Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service; Oklahoma Department of Agriculture-Oklahoma Agritourism; Oklahoma Department of Career & Technology Education; Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services; Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs; Oklahoma Farm Bureau; Oklahoma Rural Health Policy & Research Center, Office of Rural Health; Oklahoma State University Center of Rural Health; Rural Health Projects/NwAHEC; The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation; & The USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service.



## *Oklahoma Needs AgrAbility*

Agriculture ranks among the most hazardous industries & is one of the few industries in which the families (who often share the work & live on the premises) are also at risk for injuries, illness, & death. (CDC 2011)

Every day, 243 agricultural workers across the nation have injuries that lead to lost work time. (CDC 2011)

1 in 5 farmers have a disability that restricts daily living or hinders completion of essential work-related tasks. (Field, Breaking New Ground, Purdue University 2007)

Oklahoma has 86,500 farms occupying 35,200,000 acres with an average farm size of 407 acres. (National Ag Statistics Service 2010)

Oklahoma farmers produce more than \$5.80 billion worth of raw products annually. (Census 2007)

58 – Average age of farmers in Oklahoma (National Ag Statistics Service 2007)

## *Oklahoma AgrAbility Personnel*

The Case Manager (1.0 FTE) conducts on-farm site assessments, provides case management services & serves as a resource for health care, rehab professionals & service providers.

The Program Assistant (0.5 FTE) provides information/referral services & assists with special projects.

The Project Coordinator (1.0 FTE) creates reports, literature, educational activities & web resources.

In-kind support is given by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma ABLE Tech/OkAT, & Langston University School of Physical Therapy.

## *AgrAbility Impacts Oklahoma*

Farming in Oklahoma continues to grow in diversity. AgrAbility provides statewide services to all groups including women, minority, lower socio-economic classes, & diverse ethnicities.

768 information & assistance requests have been received from Oklahomans in 75 counties; 58% from the farmer/rancher & 27% from family members & professionals.

317 Oklahoma families have received direct services through an on-farm site assessment in 60 counties.

\$787,796 has been funded for assistive technologies & accommodations through the Department of Rehabilitation Services. An additional \$153,578 has been funded for other assistive technology related services. 31 co-shared cases have progressed to successful closure.

51 farmers/ranchers have received \$76,903 through the Oklahoma Farmers & Ranchers with Disabilities Grant or Guaranteed Loan Program provided by the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation (OkAT).

14,644 Veterans, rehab counselors, Extension personnel, therapists, faculty, students & other professionals have been impacted through 296 state & national presentations & trainings.

## *AgrAbility Expansion Plans*

- Increase funding for Ag related accommodations & assistive technologies
- Increase resources for farmers/ranchers who experience a disabling condition or injury
- Increase capacity of existing public & private programs that assist farmers/ranchers with disabilities



## **Oklahoma AgrAbility Project**

Oklahoma State University / Campus Recreation & Wellness  
1514 West Hall of Fame  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Phone: 888.885.5588 V/TYY

Fax: 405.744.2487

Email: [ability@okstate.edu](mailto:ability@okstate.edu)

Website: <http://agrability.okstate.edu>