

Oklahoma AgrAbility

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Focus on A Farmer: Bob and Dorothy Harper

Recognized by the City of Yukon as the “Best Place To Go in Yukon,” Old Route 66 Vegetable Farm was recently enhanced through services made available through the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project.

Robert and Dorothy Harper are the owners/operators of the four-acre agri-business where they are involved in water preservation initiatives, soil conservation, recycling and organic gardening. The property houses more than 100 free range chickens, rabbits and turkeys, in addition to offering melons, okra, squash, tomatoes, corn, pumpkins, asparagus, onions, green beans, lettuces and other fruits and vegetables.

The general public can come to the farm six days a week Monday – Saturday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. to choose and pick their produce, as well as purchase fresh farm eggs, goat cheeses and seasonal specialties.

While the maintenance and operation of the farm is a team effort, both Robert and Dorothy have their own responsibilities. However, completing certain tasks on the farm were more difficult than they needed to be as both farmers, who experience disabling conditions, were in need of accommodations and rehabilitation technologies to reduce barriers and obstacles.

With a diagnosis of arthritis, six fractures resulting from a 2006 car accident and both hips replaced, it was difficult for Dorothy to quickly maneuver to several places around the farm.

Robert also has arthritis, but also was diagnosed with cardiovascular pulmonary disease, bradycardia and partial hearing impairment. Realizing there may be resources available to assist them, the Harpers contacted Oklahoma AgrAbility for assistance. As a result of the on-farm site assessment, recommendations for accommodations and rehabilitation technologies were discussed, and ag-related resources were provided to further support the desire to sustain and diversify their farm operation.



Improving mobility and access was noted as a top priority for both Robert and Dorothy. After a collaborative effort between the Harpers and AgrAbility to identify funding, a mobility device was purchased and implemented in everyday use at the farm. The assistive technology vehicle features a tilt/dump bed, bench seating with a protective cover from burns, front wheel suspension and rear differentials, trailer and towing hitch capacity. Accessibility around the farm has greatly improved.

(Story continued on page 2)

A road sign promotes the vegetable farm to visitors who want to participate in this Oklahoma Agritourism adventure.



An ATV and other accommodations on the property increased accessibility and independence.

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.



People of AgrAbility

OkAT: Serving Oklahomans with Disabilities

The Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation (OkAT) is a non-profit organization assisting Oklahomans with disabilities of all ages and their family members by increasing understanding and access to assistive technology. Nine volunteer Board members, a majority of whom have a disability, support the organization.

As the disability-related funding partner to the Oklahoma AgrAbility Project, OkAT's services are provided by ABLE Tech. The OkAT Foundation operates a low interest bank loan program in partnership with BancFirst, allowing Oklahomans with disabilities the opportunity to finance the purchase of assistive technology or equipment. Individuals working from home, including those who work in an agricultural operation, may be eligible to purchase specialized equipment to meet their needs.

OkAT works with the Fire Protection Publication of OSU and ABLE Tech to distribute specialized smoke alarms to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing residing in Oklahoma City or Tulsa metro areas.

The "Assistive Technology Client Services Program for Farmers with Disabilities" provides a small grant to qualified individuals in need of assistive technology.

OkAT accepts donations, of which 100% goes toward the purchase of specialized equipment for the Client Services Fund. To donate, please make the check payable to OkAT and mail to: 905 S. Main, Stillwater, OK 74074. A receipt will be provided for your tax deductible contribution.

- Milissa Gofourth and Linda Jaco

Partner Corner: Lori Coats

We are excited to welcome Lori Coats to the AgrAbility Advisory Council this year.



Lori has worked for the Oklahoma Agritourism Program, a division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, for 3½ years and owned an agricultural-based business for 12 years.

"I really care about agriculture and small business owners. I saw Agritourism as an opportunity for me to help in those areas," said Coats.

She feels AgrAbility is a valuable service for those who need assistance reclaiming their freedom from barriers they face as they continue operating an agricultural-based business. Lori brings both agricultural and marketing experience to the Project, and will be a voice from the field for the AgrAbility Project.

- Stacy Bauter

Continued from Page 1:

"This was a real blessing," Robert said. "It is a Godsend."

Funding for the mobility device was made available through the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation (OkAT) grant that assists Oklahoma farmers and ranchers with disabling conditions meet their agricultural goals.

Additional collaboration efforts occurred with the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, which provided air gloves that reduce vibration, and Oklahoma Agritourism. - Sean Hubbard and Sandra Stevenson



Most farm eye injuries occur in the course of regular farm work and during common activities where dust particles, flying objects and chemical spray are expected elements in the work environment. The level of protection you may need to prevent injury will depend on the farm task being completed but can begin with simple safety glasses, or goggles that shield both the front and side of the eyes, or a complete face shield.

Congratulations to Sandra Stevenson, AgrAbility Case Manager. She recently became nationally certified as an Assistive Technology Professional (ATP). We're very proud of her accomplishing this highly regarded status.



Funding Spotlight: Client Service Grant

Farming traditionally involves physically demanding work, ranking it high among the most dangerous of occupations. Handling livestock, climbing grain bins, operating heavy equipment and moving bulky supplies and materials are just a few of the tasks in a farmer's day. Automated technology solutions can ease the strain of these labor-intensive activities, and for Oklahoma farmers or ranchers with a disability, Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation (OkAT) offers a unique funding source.



The AgrAbility Client Services Program provides assistive technology to Oklahoma's farmers or ranchers with a disability having limited finances or no access to other public funding sources. OkAT, the non-profit organization offering this program, may provide individual grants up to \$750.00 to Oklahoma farming families impacted by disability issues to purchase an assistive or adaptive device. These devices allow individuals to live with increased independence and to work or participate in valued leisure activities with confidence. Assistive technology devices Client Services can cover include, but are not limited to: electronics, monitoring systems, hydraulics, computerization, motorized lifts, outdoor mobility aids, modifications to farm buildings, farm tools, modification to farm houses or machinery, worksite adaptations, and automated gates. Funds are paid directly to the vendor by OkAT for the needed assistive devices.

Farmers and ranchers who reside in Oklahoma or who live or work on an Oklahoma farm are eligible to apply. The participant must have, or be regarded as having, a disability, demonstrate both a practical and financial need for the assistive device, and be willing to work with an AgrAbility case manager to seek all available community funding resources. There is no charge to the farmer for services provided by AgrAbility. The AgrAbility Client Services funds are limited and are provided on a first-come basis. For more information regarding the AgrAbility Client Services Program, contact Oklahoma AgrAbility at 888-885-5588.

-Milissa Gofourth

Resource Spotlight: Agritourism: Oklahoma's Growing Adventure

As Americans become more interested in where and how their food is produced, they are given the opportunity to become personally involved, even if just for a day. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and several other countries have created Agritourism programs, and Oklahoma Agritourism is one of the top three programs making rural and economic developmental impact in the United States.

Agritourism is defined on www.agritourismworld.com as any land-based farm or business open to the public. Oklahoma attractions encourage visitors to "dive headfirst into agriculture by trying their hand at feeding cattle, riding a fence line atop a horse, working the land by visiting a u-pick farm, or staying at a working Oklahoma ranch," said Lori Coats, Western Oklahoma Agritourism Coordinator.

Agritourism supports Ag producers as they diversify their operation to provide a secondary income. It can be as simple as providing a place to take a little boy fishing for the first time. Young school children experience Agritourism when they visit pumpkin patches in the fall or when a family picks their own grapes at vineyards in the spring. The type of Agritourism operation is as diversified as a farmer, rancher or agriculturalist can imagine.

Oklahoma Agritourism promotes more than 500 events and destinations on their website www.agritourism.travelok.com which easily fills a weekend getaway or week-long vacation.

The Oklahoma Agritourism Program is a joint program of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry, and the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department. To request brochures on Hunting, Land Bounty, Western Experience, Wineries and Vineyards and Teachable Moments, call 1-800-652-6552.





On the Horizon: AgrAbility Events

October 11	AgrAbility Council Meeting, Stillwater
October 14-15	Fall AgrAbility Conference, Stillwater
October 26	Tools for Life Senior Conference, Norman
October 28	4-County OHCE meeting, Clinton
November 1	Heart of Oklahoma Women in Ag Conference, Shawnee
November 7-10	AgrAbility National Training Workshop, Indiana
November 11-12	OK Farm Bureau Trade Show, OKC
November 15	Women in Ag Conference, Ardmore
December 8-11	Tulsa Farm Show

Save the Date ~ Join us for:

AgrAbility Day at the Capitol ~ March 26, 2012

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