

# Oklahoma AgrAbility

Toll Free: 888-885-5588 (voice/tty)  
 Email: [ability@okstate.edu](mailto:ability@okstate.edu)

1514 W. Hall of Fame  
 Stillwater, OK 74078

Website: [www.agrability.okstate.edu](http://www.agrability.okstate.edu)

## Focus on A Farmer:

### Doug Noble

“There’s no stopping me now!” can be heard along the roads in northwestern Oklahoma from Doug Noble as he works on his farm, travels to the feed store, navigates through his community, or wins the bid at the auction. Mr. Noble has a well-known presence in his part of the state.

Diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2002, Doug has diminished muscle tone, strength, endurance, and balance as well as diabetes, asthma, neck and back pain. He was in need of assistive technologies and accommodations to increase mobility and reduce barriers that created obstacles for him to actively participate in work and daily living. Doug contacted AgrAbility who assisted in obtaining needed services from the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), and the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation (OkAT).



*Mobility and access barriers were greatly reduced with assistive technologies and accommodations.*

With a primary employment goal of farming, and a strong desire to expand his cow-calf operation, Doug and his wife, Sherrie, worked together to identify their priorities. They also worked closely with AgrAbility and DRS assistive technology specialists to determine the most appropriate accommodations for them. Modifications to the bathroom were at the top of the list, and it didn’t take much convincing for Sherrie to give up closet space for the roll-in wheelchair accessible shower that now gives Doug greater independence in daily living and self-care.



A specialized seat in his vehicle that turns out and lowers toward the ground assists Doug when transferring to and from his wheelchair and truck.

Once in the truck and out on the farm, Doug transfers to his all-terrain, 4-wheel drive, outdoor wheelchair which provides access to various work sites around the farm such as fixing fences or checking cattle. Additional accommodations and assistive technologies include custom built tubular gates, a gate wheel, a cargo trailer, and platform to transport his indoor and outdoor wheelchairs.

While providing follow-up and case-closure services, Doug expressed his gratitude for the efforts contributed on his behalf and stated,

“It’s all good. You all did a fine job!”

- Sandra Stevenson

*Modifications to the bathroom include: a roll-in wheelchair accessible shower, shower chair, and hand-held shower head.*

#### 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

## FFA Contest:

*A partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education's Ag Education program*

The Oklahoma AgrAbility Project is excited to offer a state-wide contest to FFA Chapters. The contest is designed to provide a community-oriented agricultural experience which will allow chapter members the opportunity to make a positive impact by helping farmers or ranchers and their families overcome physical barriers in their environments.

Participating chapters will compete for cash prizes and receive state-wide media coverage. The challenge for the contest is to identify needs and assist with making low-cost modifications to the farm or ranch of a person with a disability in their community. Modifications are designed to enhance independence and success for persons with a disability, such as: building adaptive equipment or other alterations that will allow an individual to perform a once-difficult or impossible task with greater ease.



For more information regarding contest details or for an application, please visit the AgrAbility website at:

[www.agrability.okstate.edu](http://www.agrability.okstate.edu)

- Linda Jaco

*25 OCES professionals across the state are trained to promote AgrAbility, and conduct programs on Rural Caregiving, Arthritis, and Gardening with Disabilities. The AgrAbility Project has been represented at various events across the state, including Progressive Farm Safety Days in Garfield, Major, Pawnee & Payne Counties, community service organization meetings and most recently, the Lane Ag Center Field Days. At right: Jan Maples, Okfuskee Co. FCS Extension Educator, tests a gardening assistive technology tool.*



## DRS and Oklahoma Extension Serve All 77 Counties

*Do you want to increase the quality of your life?*

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) are both locally-based agencies who are able to work in cooperation with each other to meet the needs of a community. Their staff usually live and work in or near the area they serve, which gives them a personal reason to help others better their lives.

DRS and OCES staff dedicate themselves to educating others and offering a vast amount of resources for those in need in order to make a stronger community.

- Julie York



## Partner Corner: Melinda Fruendt

Melinda Fruendt has been on the Oklahoma AgrAbility Advisory Council for 4 ½ years. She currently works for the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as Project Coordinator, and is married to a farmer/rancher. Working with this agency has offered Fruendt the opportunity to network with others who share her strong belief in assisting individuals with disabilities.

“Oklahoma AgrAbility has worked extremely hard to provide the best services to farmers and ranchers with disabilities in Oklahoma,” states Fruendt. She grew up on the family farm in Northeast Oklahoma and holds a college degree in Agricultural Education. Through these experiences, Fruendt brings her knowledge of agriculture, leadership skills and disability resource information to the AgrAbility Advisory Council. She has enjoyed seeing the impact AgrAbility has made, but is also proud of the time the Rehabilitation Services Administration came to Oklahoma during their monitoring visit a few years ago and highlighted the Oklahoma AgrAbility program as one of the “best in the nation.”

- Stacy Bauter



## ***Funding Spotlight: Self-Employment Assistance for Farmers and Ranchers with Disabilities***

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) expands opportunities for employment, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency by helping Oklahomans with disabilities get or keep a job. For individuals with disabilities who want to work for themselves, telecommute using computers or operate their own businesses such as a farm or ranch, DRS may be able to assist them. DRS defines self-employment as owning, managing, and operating your business to make a profit. Self-employment ranges from sole proprietorships to multi-employee companies.

Career Planning Centers provide vocational evaluations to assist the individual in developing a “self-employment goal” based on their interests and abilities. A person who has been farming or ranching for many years may not need a professional evaluation to create an employment goal, but DRS may still provide modifications, assistive devices or certain equipment to maintain the self-employment operation. When a person is determined eligible for services, the DRS counselor helps develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) which outlines the services needed for the person to get or keep a job based on the disability and specific barriers.

AgrAbility and DRS work together to identify modifications and assistive technology that may reduce problems experienced in the day-to-day ag operation. Farmers/ranchers may need to develop a business plan as part of their self-employment plan to explain business objectives, products sold, product prices, identify customers, expected expenses, and assistance needed to establish or continue the business. DRS has very specific rules as to what they cannot fund, including: purchasing real estate or vehicles, refinancing existing debt, or a business organized as a hobby. Financial need is established by DRS, and some individuals may be required to share the cost of rehabilitative services or devices. Contact the AgrAbility Case Manager for more information on the DRS Self-Employment assistance by calling 888-885-5588.

- Milissa Gofourth

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## **Resource Spotlight: Multiple Sclerosis Center at OMRF**

The Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation (OMRF) just opened the Multiple Sclerosis Center of Excellence located in Oklahoma City.

The goal of this program is to provide comprehensive medical care for all individuals with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). The Center is comprised of an inter-disciplinary and social-services team of specialists in the areas of neurology, neuro-ophthalmology, neuro-cognition, rehabilitation, nursing, physical therapy, and social service. The team focuses on implementing intervention plans that promote wellness and improve the quality of life of each individual client.

Besides direct client care, the Center also focuses on providing education to community members and health professionals, and the advancement of scientific knowledge related to autoimmune and demyelinating diseases through clinical and basic research. In addition to providing direct care, clients also have the option to participate in the MS Center Registry and Repository. This research tool allows individuals with MS to provide clinical information and samples to help the physician-scientists better understand MS with a goal of improving the clinical outcomes of individuals in Oklahoma with MS both today and in the future.

Specific to rehabilitation, the Center has a dedicated physical therapist focused on the rehabilitation needs of individuals with MS. If a client is linked to the MS Center and comes from an agricultural community, the Center and AgrAbility staff could work together to support the assistive technology needs of the individual to help them continue to work on the farm or ranch. The Center, focused on coordinated care, research, and education provides Oklahomans with state of the art services.

More information can be obtained at [www.omrf.org/mscenter](http://www.omrf.org/mscenter) or by calling 405-271-6242.

- Lynn Jeffries





## On the Horizon: AgrAbility Events

- July 10-12 Oklahoma Home and Community Education Meeting, OKC
- July 12 AgrAbility Advisory Council, Stillwater
- July 19-21 OSU Big 3 Field Days, Stillwater
- July 28-30 Oklahoma Cattlemen's 59th Annual Convention, Midwest City
- August 11 Community Nutrition Education Program State Meeting, OKC

### Announcing

## "Arthritis in Agriculture" Seminar

Wednesday, August 31, 2011

hosted by Oklahoma and Kansas AgrAbility Projects & Arthritis Foundations  
9:00am-4:00pm § OSU's Seretean Wellness Center § More info: 888-885-5588

## AgrAbility Staff

### Oklahoma State University

*Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service*

Jan Johnston, Principal Investigator & Co-Director

Julie York, Program Coordinator

*Oklahoma ABLE Tech*

Linda Jaco, Co-Director

Milissa Gofourth, Program Manager

Sandra Stevenson, Case Manager

Stacy Bauter, Program Assistant

### Langston University

*School of Physical Therapy*

Lynn Jeffries, Co-Director

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