



Growing Goodwill

COLORADO AgrAbility News Cultivating Accessible Agriculture

Winter Workshops 2023-24 Completed

The Colorado AgrAbility Project had a successful 2023-24 Winter Workshop series. The project hosted three workshops (Rocky Ford, Kremmling, and Fort Morgan) that were themed around “Healthy Aging in Agriculture”. The workshops included an introduction to AgrAbility and its associated resources that are available to farmers, ranchers, ag workers, and their families. Conversations were led by AgrAbility Behavioral Health Specialists surrounding emotional well-being and how to get the most miles of their “mental engine” with stress management and wellness techniques. Additionally, Rural Rehabilitation Specialists presented strategies and tools to enhance safety and independence on the farm and ranch.



Our Deepest Gratitude and Congratulations to Candiss Leathers

For over a decade, Candiss Leathers (Candy) has served AgrAbility! Her time, energy, passion, and rigor has changed the lives of hundreds of clients and truly magnified the impact of the Colorado AgrAbility Project beyond measure. Candy will be retiring from the project this summer. Please join us in thanking Candy for her selfless devotion to others and uplifting our agricultural and rural Colorado families!



Congratulations to Ashley & Family as they Welcome a New Baby Girl!

Ashley Buchanan, our Rural Rehabilitation Specialist, and her husband Blake, welcomed a baby girl this January. Annabeth Jean Buchanan was born on January 15th, 2024 and is now on her way to being a rambunctious 4-month-old! Ashley has officially returned from maternity leave and is resettling back into serving AgrAbility clients across Colorado.



AgrAbility Highlights

Client Feature

AgrAbility had the privilege of supporting Lexi, a passionate 4-H'er who raises and shows Boer Goat. Lexi was born with muscular dystrophy and needed a new power chair to maintain independence on the farm. Check out this [short video about Lexi on our Facebook page](#).



New Documentary Released

The Colorado AgrAbility Project and two of our Behavioral Health Specialists, Chad Reznicek and Kirsten Wulfsberg, were featured in the Colorado Farm Bureau's recently released documentary, LEGACY. This film offers a glimpse into the beautiful and sometimes painful stories of agriculture. It is truly an amazing production that we think everyone will appreciate! [Watch LEGACY here](#).



A Farewell Letter from Candy...

Dear Friends of AgrAbility,

After more than a decade of working in partnership with the staff and community of supporters of the Colorado AgrAbility Program,(CAP) I am retiring as the Program Manager for the Project. I feel hugely fortunate about the privilege of helping move the organization into places of increased innovation and inclusion. My vision for the future of CAP is built on the foundation of our current success, which is a result of twenty-five+ years of skilled work and collaboration from resolute staff members, CSU extension, Goodwill of Colorado, Clients, NIFA/USDA, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Vendors, and so many others who may be reading this today.

If you have spent any time with the CAP team, you know that this is a special program where our engagement with one another is grounded in the vision of a more equitable world and a belief that all people, regardless of limitations and or physical barriers or life circumstances, have value and worth. Together we are working to create environments where safe, inclusive, and accessible work sites are possible for everyone who needs them and where those in our rural and agricultural communities have the support, they need to enter, continue, or improve their safety in the work they love. Community heals trauma, injury, illness and caring and concerned professionals and community members solve barriers and limitations placed on our agricultural community. We can take pride in being able to provide both things to the individuals we serve each year.

As we continue actualizing our vision of creating a kinder, more equitable, inclusive, and supportive Colorado, I hope more will join us in this life-changing work. In my absence if you have questions or concerns, please contact James Sanchez.

James Sanchez, Director of Education and Training Operations
jsanchez@goodwillcolorado.org
720-738-1644

Happy AG!
Candiss Leathers

National AgrAbility Training Workshop

We were excited to have much of our Colorado AgrAbility Project Team (Rebecca, Bob, Chad, Jim, Kirsten, Julie, Natalie, James, and Myra) in Atlanta for the National AgrAbility Training Workshop! A few highlights:



Co-director Robert “Bob” Fetsch, presented on his research regarding the Quality of Life outcomes among AgrAbility clients. As of 2024, among 17 participating state AgrAbility projects, 69% (N = 205/299) of clients reported improving all parts of their life—physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and financial, between when they began and completed their work with AgrAbility.

Additionally Co-director, Rebecca Hill, presented on her upcoming research surrounding the economic impact of AgrAbility across the nation. Finally, our Behavioral Health Specialists, Chad Reznicek, Jim Kuemmerle, Kirsten Wulfsberg, and Julie Elliot, presented on the promotion of not only physical, but psychological well-being among AgrAbility clients and rural community members. For instance, in February, Kirsten hosted a presentation in Gunnison County on managing stress associated with calving season.

Alpha Gama Rho “Rhodeo!”

On April 10th, our Colorado State University Fraternity and Sorority partners, Alpha Gamma Rho and Sigma Alpha, hosted the annual Alpha Gamma Rhodeo in support of AgrAbility. The event was a fun success that included a mechanical bull, delicious food, and even a newly born calf!



Candy honored at Knowledge Exchange

As a fitting way to cap off her time with the Colorado AgrAbility Project, Candy was honored at the 22nd Annual Colorado State University Department of Occupational Therapy (OT) Knowledge Exchange. She has been a long-time partner and friend of the OT Department and has hosted several interns over the years. Read below an interview with Breelynn, an OT AgrAbility intern from this past spring:



Breelynn, a driven Occupational Therapy Graduate Student from Wray Colorado, brings a rich agricultural background to her internship with the Colorado AgrAbility Project. She was the fourth generation on her family's farm, that also has a cattle operation. From a young age, she was immersed in the farming lifestyle, participating in 4H and FFA activities that built her love and appreciation for the industry.

Her journey of pursuing Occupational Therapy was influenced by her younger brother who has Autism. Witnessing the positive impact of incorporating agricultural practices into therapy for her brother, Breelynn recognized the amazing potential of this approach. She aspires to integrate

agriculture-based therapy techniques, like growing crops or working with livestock, into her future occupational therapy practice, using these activities to help individuals manage anxiety, develop emotional coping skills, and more effectively navigate their daily lives. During her undergrad at CSU, Breelynn was a member of Sigma Alpha, a CSU sorority committed to supporting AgrAbility, which influenced her to pursue an internship with AgrAbility during graduate school. Throughout her experience, Breelynn has found fulfillment in conducting farm visits, witnessing firsthand the impact on clients' lives. She particularly admires the dedication and rapport-building skills of her supervisor, Candy, in fostering trust and appreciation among clients.



One of the most rewarding aspects of Breelynn's internship has been the opportunity to learn about simple yet impactful modifications that enhance accessibility and safety for farmers and ranchers. Through her experiences, she has come to appreciate the value of even minor adjustments, such as anti-vibration gloves, in mitigating barriers associated with conditions like arthritis.

Looking ahead, Breelynn believes that her internship with AgrAbility has equipped her with valuable skills, knowledge, and experiences that will shape her future career as an Occupational Therapist

Beyond technical know-how, she emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships with clients as the foundation for effective therapy—a lesson echoed by her experience with AgrAbility. Breelynn hopes to continue to merge her passion for agriculture and occupational therapy to make a positive difference in the lives of others.



ENGAGEMENT
AND EXTENSION
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY