From the Chair, Board of Directors, NC Agromedicine Institute
Ron Mitchelson, PhD

Good day partners,

A few weeks back our NC Agromedicine Institute hosted a meeting with Congressman (NC First District) G. K. Butterfield. Robin Tutor-Marcom and her team did a fantastic job of communicating the Institute’s mission, the health and safety needs of our farmers, fishers, and foresters, and the growing impact of our Institute’s efforts. The Congressman walked away with a deep appreciation for the Institute and full of energy to support our efforts. Within 24 hours, we had gained a key letter of support from the Congressman for one of the many grant proposals that Robin and our leadership team have submitted in the past few months. Success at securing external funding in support of the Institute’s research, education, and outreach programs is essential. When our story is well told, as it was during our meeting with the Congressman, support is almost always immediate.

While our extended capacity to serve the health and safety needs of the primary sector of our economy is contingent on new grants and contracts, I am glad to report that our central capacity also is expanding in several ways. First, we welcome LaMar Grafft as our Institute’s new Associate Director (see the full story inside). We are so very fortunate to have gained his experience and talents into our leadership team. Second, we have seen our Institute’s recurring state budget increase significantly despite overall cuts to our partner institutions. Third, our Institute has also seen growth in non-recurring funds associated with advancement/donor activities and students bringing NC’s AgrAbility presented project display and educational materials as well as five research posters.

NC AgrAbility’s Triple Crown

The NC AgrAbility Partnership answered this spring’s “call to the post” at two events in Lexington, KY and one event in Baltimore, MD. Much like thoroughbred racing’s Triple Crown, this series of articles chronicles NC AgrAbility’s winning season.

NC AgrAbility Delegation One of Largest at National Training Workshop

By Guest Contributor Pamela Martin

Cherished for its unbridled spirit, the Kentucky Bluegrass Region was a befitting host for the 2014 AgrAbility National Training Workshop in Lexington, KY during March 31-April 3. Synonymous with its winning season, Kentucky is the home of legendary racehorses that are gifted with talent and have learned how to beat the odds. This same grit and determination champions the hearts of AgrAbility farmers and the national and state projects that continue to support them through the home stretch.

For the past 23 years, the National AgrAbility Project (NAP) has made great strides in bringing together dedicated farmers, ranchers, university and non-profit partners, and suppliers of assistive technology, to share their experiences and vital know-how. Attendees at this year’s workshop were enlightened by over 40 technical presentations and proactive sessions that presented the newest technology and information to farmers and ranchers seeking more independence. Each session encouraged individuals to share their expertise and working levels, as well as their hopes for future community awareness.

The 227 conference attendees, including 58 farmers, came from all over the US representing 32 states and 3 other countries: Brazil, Sweden, and Ireland! NC AgrAbility was represented by one of the largest state delegations, with eight farmers and spouses attending with NAP travel scholarships and with partner representatives and students bringing NC’s attendance to a total of 13. NC AgrAbility presented project display and educational materials as well as five research posters.
NC AgrAbility’s Triple Crown (continued from page 1)

Strengthening client services is a challenge graciously accepted by leaders like Janet LaBreck. Commissioner for the Rehabilitation Service Administration at the U.S. Department of Education, Ms. LaBreck gave a wonderful keynote address. Accompanied by her service dog, Osborne, Commissioner LaBreck expressed her understanding of what it means to overcome life’s obstacles. Although she lost her sight as a young child, LaBreck’s vision for identifying the appropriate need for disability resources has always been exceptional. With a strong desire to provide more economic opportunities, and her relentless advocacy, Commissioner LaBreck’s words endeared her to the audience and provided much needed encouragement for creating opportunities.

Opportunity was at the forefront of conversation during the Farmers Only Luncheon held on April 2nd. Event coordinators respectfully arranged the social gathering that was pulled off without a hitch. Everyone was encouraged to interact and discuss his or her own personal story. Setting aside time to meet with peers was especially important for recharging. Guests were surprised with door prizes, t-shirts and a lot of witty one-liners. Farmer’s from all over the nation discussed the upcoming spring buzz, and of course, the mean season’s most exciting agricultural topic—surviving the worst winter weather in recent memory!

But AgrAbility folks know what it means to weather unexpected hardships, just like former Lance Corporal Josh Bliell, who is currently the community spokesperson for the Indianapolis Colts. Guests had the opportunity to chat with Josh, who wowed the crowd with his courageous story. Josh was serving in the United States Marine Corps, when a roadside bomb blasted the Humvee that he and two other service members were patrolling in. Chronicled in his book, One Step at a Time: A Young Marine’s Story of Courage, Hope and a New Life in the NFL, Bliell talked about his two-years of rehabilitation after waking up from a coma in 2006. Having lost both of his legs, Josh faced a long journey. Like many of the AgrAbility client farmers that have learned to connect and rebuild their lives, Josh’s poignant story hit close to home, and ended with a riveting standing ovation for his courage and service.

The power and incentive to serve others is a true gift, and I can think of no greater gift to the service of NAP than Michele Proctor, the North Carolina AgrAbility Coordinator.

When I reached out to Michele back in 2012, I had no idea that I would receive such a great level of caring and professionalism. I was new at looking in the mirror and recognizing myself as disabled. Thankfully, Michele gently walked me through my issues of pride while working hard to solve the watering needs on our farm. Her approach was gentle, yet behind that soft voice was an incredible problem solver and technical mind that could see the finish line. So it was no surprise to me that she received the Breaking New Ground Achievement Award at this year’s banquet.

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NC AgrAbility CE: Cultivating Accessible Agriculture

Dr. Mary Hildebrand, of ECU’s College of Allied Health Sciences, led a continuing education session entitled “Cultivating Accessible Agriculture with NC AgrAbility” on May 30 at the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis. Dr. Hildebrand, along with Robin Tutor-Marcom and Michele Proctor, led a group of 13 attendees in an extensive discussion about topics related to AgrAbility: aging farmers, risks on the farm, and adaptive farming techniques.

Attendees included physical therapists, occupational therapists, assistive technology specialists, medical students, and others from all over NC, including UNC-Chapel Hill, Winston Salem State University, Lenoir-Rhyne University, and non-profit and private practices. Among the attendees were representatives from NC AgrAbility’s new partner the North Carolina Assistive Technology Project.

“This workshop is a very exciting milestone for NC AgrAbility,” said NC AgrAbility Coordinator Michele Proctor. “We’ve spent the last three years tailoring a curriculum for occupational and physical therapists and other health providers, so that they may better serve NC farmers with disabilities.”

The workshop started with a classroom session at the Kannapolis research campus and was capped off by an afternoon mock farm assessment at Porter Family Farms, hosted by farmers Vickie and Tommy Porter. Vickie Porter shared her personal experience as a farmer and wife and her family’s experience with injuries, disabilities, and aging on the farm. Attendees indicated that Vickie’s personal story helped them put all of the classroom learning into perspective.

Michele concludes: “We look forward to continued development of this program and to hosting additional trainings of this kind in the years to come. I’m especially thankful to Dr. Mary Hildebrand and her team of researchers for all their hard work in making this training possible.”
Let’s Roll: Upper Mountain Research Station Debuts “New” Demo Tractor

Tractor roll-over demonstrations are a highlight of educational programs hosted by the Upper Mountain Research Station (UMRS), located in Ashe County. The station has a long history of partnering with NC Cooperative Extension and others in surrounding communities to teach farm safety. With funds from Agromedicine, station staff were able to replace the original demo tractor with a “new” 1960’s Massey Ferguson 135. Machinists in the station shop fitted the tractor with a protective cage to enable the tractor to sustain repeated roll-overs without damage. A removable ROPS (roll-over protective system) was installed to demonstrate the life-saving features of a ROPS and seat-belt, and the devastating impact without a ROPS. The first demo of the “new” tractor was held at the High Country Cattle Conference on April 12.

Carolyn Shepherd, County Extension Director with the NC Cooperative Extension Ashe County Center noted: “I think this will be a great teaching tool for years to come. I appreciate everyone’s efforts to make this happen.” Charles Young, retired Extension agent, is active in presenting the educational overview during tractor roll-over demonstrations at the UMRS and at selected events throughout the state.

ASHCA Funds Farmworker Arthritis Prevention Workshop

The National Arthritis Foundation-Mid-Atlantic Region of Charlotte, NC, in partnership with NC AgrAbility, was awarded a one-year grant from the Agricultural Safety and Health Council for America (ASHCA) for “Arthritis Prevention and Self-management Program for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in North Carolina.” The $7,000 award was one of 10 national awards funded by ASHCA in its new initiative. The purpose of the ASHCA Safety Grants Program (ashca.org) is to encourage and provide financial support for agricultural safety and health interventions at the local or regional level in order to facilitate timely application of evidence-based safety/health strategies to protect agricultural workers. The NC project will provide a train-the-trainer series on arthritis and musculoskeletal injury awareness for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, based on the Missouri AgrAbility curriculum. Karen Funkenbusch from Missouri AgrAbility will be leading the first two-day workshop October 7-8. Two other train-the-trainer sessions will be conducted in western and eastern regions of the state in spring 2015. For more information contact Michelle Poctor at coordinator@ncagrability.com or Nick Turkas at nturkas@arthritis.org
Faculty Focus: LaMar Grafft, Associate Director, NCAI

I grew up on a 640 acre crop and livestock farm in eastern Iowa. After receiving an MS degree from Iowa State University, I farmed for ten years. While working on the farm, I felt it was important to give back to the local community so I took EMT training and worked as a volunteer for the ambulance service. When we moved to Cedar Rapids, I started working part time for the ambulance service, a position I maintained for 25 years.

I worked for seven years as a Livestock Specialist for the Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Service. My primary responsibilities included conducting workshops and training sessions, and advising farmers on all aspects of livestock production in a twelve county area in eastern Iowa.

For the last twenty years, I worked at the University of Iowa for Iowa’s Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, a consortium similar to the NC Agromedicine Institute. My responsibilities there included teaching graduate level occupational safety and agricultural safety courses and presenting to dozens of groups each year regarding all aspects of safety in the workplace. I was part of the team that developed, researched, and coordinated the Certified Safe Farm audit tool, and taught others how to implement the program. As part of that effort, I conducted safety audits on dozens of farms, including a 26,000 acre Iowa farm, and the Navajo Nation’s 63,000 acre farm in New Mexico. I wrote a monthly farm safety column for several years for Iowa Farmer Today, developed and implemented a stress management program for farm families, coordinated farm safety days for farm youth, and coordinated statewide FarMedic training for EMTs and fire fighters. I have served on numerous state, regional, national, and international committees and boards, and have presented at dozens of conferences.

Over the years, I have had the good fortune to work with the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety, Amana Farms, the University of Illinois and the Grain Handling Safety Coalition, Purdue University, the National Farm Medicine Center at Marshfield Clinic in Wisconsin, the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and Successful Farming magazine.

In my position as Associate Director here in NC, my responsibilities are somewhat similar to those in Iowa. I will still develop, implement, and present local programs, and present at national and international conferences. However, I have been given the additional responsibility of helping to determine priorities of research, intervention and prevention, and outreach and education. This is not a responsibility that I take lightly. Decisions I make in how to address the safety and health needs of farmers, foresters and fishers can potentially make significant changes in their lives.

Having farmed until I was 35 and worked as an Extension agent, a paramedic, and a farm safety specialist, I think I am prepared to meet this new challenge. I am surrounded with excellent colleagues who take the responsibility as seriously as I do. And together, we should be able to make great strides in safety and health issues.
My fellow AgrAbility client farmer, Cliff Hassell, also echoed these sentiments. Cliff appreciates the need for NAP and what it means to have support from people like Michele. Cliff’s journey to Lexington proved meaningful and eye opening to the Camden, North Carolina farmer. Farming grains and eight acres of vegetables, Hassell was impressed with the Assistive Technology Show and Tell track facilitated by Steve Swain. Normally restricted to a wheelchair, Cliff was introduced to power wheelchairs that enable individuals to stand up.

“Stand up lifts would work great for me on my tractors,” Hassell said. “Trying to get a little bit of help makes things easier in life. I took so much in. You get so much information.”

Sharing inspirational stories, developing creative partnerships, and providing support are the races that bring home the Triple Crown for AgrAbility. The 2014 NAP Committee ran the distance for this year’s workshop, providing a plethora of powerful education while staying on track… undefeated.

**NC AgrAbility’s Triple Crown: Two More Legs**

It was on to Baltimore, Maryland for ECU Occupational Therapy faculty member Dr. Mary Hildebrand and her MSOT students Cassie Joyner, Susan Prince, Madeline McCauley, Elisabeth Sitton, Sarah Timmons, and PhD student Matthew Gallagher, where they joined thousands of colleagues from the US at the 2014 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Annual Conference & Expo on April 3-6. They presented the NC AgrAbility display, show and tell tool kit, and educational materials, as well as two continuing-education-credit sessions at the conference. Their presentations entitled “The OT Role in Helping Farmers with Disabilities: A New State Affiliate of the National AgrAbility Project” and “The Special Needs of Aging Farmers: Occupational Therapy Interventions” were well attended.

Back in Lexington, KY, following the National AgrAbility Training Workshop, Helen Peel and Brent Jones, students from project partner NC State University Department of Bio & Ag Engineering, represented the AgrAbility community at the 2014 National Conference for Undergraduate Research with their NC AgrAbility student design research poster titled “Accessible Gardening Vehicle for Operators with Limited Mobility.” Accompanied by Project Coordinator Michele Proctor, Brent and Helen represented AgrAbility to more than 4,000 attendees. They later presented the poster again at the 2014 NC State University Undergraduate Research Symposium on April 14 in Raleigh, NC.
Agricultural Medicine: Another Successful Course!

Despite snow in January, the 2014 Agricultural Medicine course launched the first in-person session, followed by online learning sessions in February and March. During the final in-person session in March, course participants visited Wes Mozingo’s Farm in Farmville to learn about his operation, such as this precision agriculture combine, and about assessing farm hazards using the Certified Safe Farm on-farm safety review from Extension Agent Tim Britton. Seventeen course participants from 3 states represented many disciplines, including physicians, nurses, health sciences librarians, and others.

The Institute Bids a Fond Farewell to Barbara Gallagher, RN, our first AgriSafe-NC Nurse Coordinator. Best wishes in your new home state of Texas!

Agromedicine is Global: News from Our Friends in Argentina

On 27 August will be held “The Agricultural Health and Safety Day” at the site of the Cooperative AFASCL (Argentine Federated Farmers) of Colonia Medici, Santa Fe Province, Argentina. This activity is part of the Agromedicine Program of AFASCL, and organized by the Department of Education and Training, Hygiene and Safety Department of AFA, Cooperative Women Group “Rooting” and the Cooperative Center Totoras AFASCL. Using the experience and knowledge of agromedicine, this activity for the first time to the agricultural core zone of Argentina. Four seasons of training will be pursued: 1) Current status of the health and safety of Argentine rural stakeholders, 2) Safe handling of the tractor, 3) characteristics and proper use of personal protective equipment and 4) First aid in agricultural production. This undertaking is accomplished through a partnership of private enterprises, AFA SCL cooperatives and volunteer firefighters Totoras. Recipients are students of 5 rural schools, producers, workers and residents of the region. Together a religious celebration will take place in the church of Cologne Medici for Farmers Day and in memory of all farmers and rural workers who have died doing their jobs.

We send a big hello from Argentina and thank you very much for the dissemination of our work. Dr. Marcos Grigioni, Program Coordinator, Health and Safety for Agricultural Family, AFASCL (Argentine Federated Farmers); mgrigioni-agromedicina@hotmail.com.
SUPPORT THE INSTITUTE

The NCAI invites you to help further its mission through your contributions to the following funds:

**NC Agromedicine Institute Fund** (for current and ongoing activities): Make check payable to “Medical & Health Sciences Foundation” with memo designation “NC Agromedicine Institute.” Mail to NCAI, c/o Director, 1157 VOA Site C Road, Greenville, NC 27834. Make a secure online donation at https://piratealumni.ecu.edu/ccon/new_gift.do?action=newGift Go to ‘Click here to choose the designation(s) for your gift’ (under Gift Information in middle of page). On the next page, click Agromedicine Institute and then NC Agromedicine Institute Fund.

**North Carolina State University Agromedicine Endowment** (for long-term sustainability of Institute) OR **North Carolina State University Agromedicine Enhancement Fund** (for current and ongoing activities): Make check payable to “NCSU Agromedicine Endowment” OR “NCSU Agromedicine Enhancement Fund.” Mail to NC Agricultural Foundation, c/o Chris Wessel, Campus Box 7645, Raleigh, NC 27695-7645.
CALENDAR

October 7-8. Mid-Atlantic ASHCA Farmworker Arthritis Workshop, Charlotte, NC. nturkas@arthritiss.org
October 19-20. 7th International Symposium: Safety and Health in Agricultural and Rural Populations. Saskatoon, SK, Canada. www.cchsa.ccssma.usask.ca
March 25, 2015 NCAI Agricultural Safety and Health Symposium. NC Research Campus, Kannapolis, NC.
MONTHLY AgriSafe Network Webinars. www.agrisafe.org/training/
For more, visit the NCAI calendar at www.ncagromedicine.org

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