

## *“When a farmer is backed into a corner, he comes out swinging.”*

*Working with AgrAbility PA and PA’s Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Bob is able to work on his dairy farm despite health setbacks.*

### **About the Farm:**

- Located in Bedford County
- 85 dairy cows with young stock
- 500+ acres
- Corn, alfalfa, hay, wheat, and oats

### **About Bob:**

Bob Stanton and his family own and operate Manor Meadows. He grew up on a family farm. He bought the current farm in 1995 and revitalized it. He and his son are the primary full-time workers on the farm. The farm is their livelihood and their future.

In 2016, Bob’s health took a turn. It started with pain in his gluteal region and steadily progressed. He began losing his memory and the ability to move. He underwent surgery but the surgery was not successful. Upon further consultation with doctors, he was sent to UPMC in Pittsburgh for advanced medical treatment. He was unconscious for 7 days and has no memory of the 20 days that

followed. He was diagnosed with a bacterial infection in his muscles -- an extremely rare condition. He underwent another surgery – his family was told he may not survive. He did survive and underwent 10 more surgeries and spent a total of 31 days in the hospital. He was given a grim outlook that suggested he may not walk again and that he would be hospitalized for many months to recover.

Bob knew he had to get back to work on the farm and he wanted to prove the doctors wrong. He started walking as much as he could every day and exceeded the doctor’s expectations. He returned home and miraculously began working on the farm.

His recovery went well, but he was not left without scars and functional limitations. During the surgeries, most of the muscle and tissue were removed from the left side of his leg. Some of the limitations Bob encounters are related to missing muscle and tissue — tight skin, limited balance, and chronic pain. He often gets “shocks” that come from the nerves trying to heal – experiencing extreme pain at night and increased fatigue.



An example of an Agri-Speed Hitch being used with a tractor and wagon, similar to how Bob uses it.

*Photo: Bergman Mfg*

### **How AgrAbility PA & OVR helped Bob:**

“When a farmer is backed into a corner, he comes out swinging,” said Bob, when asked how he has managed to continue farming. Bob learned about AgrAbility PA from another farmer who worked with AgrAbility PA. He whole-heartedly credits AgrAbility PA, PA’s Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), and Dwight Heller, an occupational therapist that works with farmers, for the services and support he has received. Through this team’s overall assessment, consultation, and evaluation, a list of formal recommendations were prepared and shared with Bob in order to prevent secondary injuries and improve his health and success on the farm.

**Assistive Technology (AT)** is any item, piece of equipment, or system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional

*Bob Stanton continued inside*

# From the Director: New Leadership for AgrAbility PA

**Suzanna Windon and Linda Fetzer, both with Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, have been appointed to leadership roles with AgrAbility PA.**

Windon, assistant professor of youth and adult leadership in the Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education, will serve as the project director and principal investigator who manages the overall development and execution of AgrAbility PA. She gained experience with AgrAbility while assisting with quality-of-life assessments for farmers with disabilities during her graduate work at the Ohio State University, which also has an AgrAbility state project.

Windon's research interests include youth and adult leadership and community leadership, including volunteer management. Windon earned a bachelor's degree from Poltava University of Consumer Cooperatives, a doctoral degree from Crimean State Agrarian University, and master's and doctoral degrees from the Ohio State University.



Suzanna Windon

Fetzer, extension associate with the Penn State Agricultural Safety and Health Program, is the project manager and co-principal investigator who will manage the tracking, assessment, and support for the overall project initiatives. She has worked in agricultural safety and health for more than 20 years with Penn State Extension.

Her current responsibilities include educational and programming support for various ag safety and health projects, including Worker Protection Standard, eXtension/AgSafety Community of Practice, and the Safety in Agriculture for Youth Clearinghouse. Fetzer earned a bachelor's degree from Messiah College and a master's degree from Penn State.

"Suzanna and Linda will bring great breadth and depth to the project, and their collective experiences and backgrounds researching and serving the ag safety and health community is a huge plus for the important services AgrAbility PA provides to farmers," said Dr. Connie Baggett, who retired after more than 25 years with the project.

**Learn more about the AgrAbility PA team: [agrabilitypa.org/staff](http://agrabilitypa.org/staff)**



Linda Fetzer

## Services & Support

**for farmers with disabilities or long-term health conditions**

- ▶ On-site farm assessments to help identify barriers to successful completion of everyday tasks
- ▶ Identification of safe and appropriate assistive technology or modifications to equipment
- ▶ Peer and caregiver support and resources
- ▶ Access to educational training opportunities
- ▶ Referrals and information about state/local resources and service providers

Contact AgrAbility PA for information: [agrability@psu.edu](mailto:agrability@psu.edu) | (814) 867-5288

**Bob Stanton** *continued from cover*

capabilities for someone with a disability or long-term health condition. Working with AgrAbility PA and OVR, Bob was able to receive modifications and equipment to assist his work on the farm.

Several modifications were made to the dairy parlor to reduce muscle fatigue and improve efficiency for Bob, including automated entry and exit gates and a crowd gate. Modifications were made to tractors, which include replacing worn seats and suspensions with air seats and air suspension. Ergonomic steps and handrails were added to enable safer tractor access while reducing the chances of secondary injury.

Bob also received Agri-Speed Hitches to conserve energy and reduce pain triggers. He produces large amounts of hay, crops, and feed. While harvesting, Bob often has to climb in and out of

the tractor to hitch and unhitch wagons. That type of repetitive motion can trigger pain and increase fatigue. In addition, each time Bob transfers in and out of the tractor, there is an increased risk of falling due to his physical limitations.

With the Agri-Speed Hitches installed, Bob is able to hitch and unhitch wagons without climbing in and out of the tractor – enabling him to independently harvest crops. ***Learn more about the Agri-Speed Hitch on the next page.***

**Despite setbacks, Bob continues to find his passion and purpose in farming.** He recently referred to his health issue as a *"blessing in disguise – because it taught me to be grateful for what I still have and how I am still able to farm."*



# Assistive Technology on the Farm: Cab Camera & Agri-Speed Hitch...A dynamic duo for farmers!

There are quite a few names that come to mind when you think about dynamic duos: Batman & Robin, Bert & Ernie, or the infamous Bonnie & Clyde.

On the farm, there are countless examples of things that work better as a pair. Here's our suggestion: a cab camera and an Agri-Speed Hitch!

Individually, each are pieces of assistive technology that can assist a farmer with visibility when using equipment and reduce overall fatigue from climbing on and off equipment. But when coupled together, this duo can greatly aid a farmer operating equipment and improve overall safety and productivity.

Let's take a further look!

## Cab Cameras

Back and neck pain, spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, and many other health conditions can affect a farmer's ability to check their surroundings and properly monitor implements pulled behind a piece of equipment. Adding a cab camera allows a farmer to easily view what is around the equipment.

Cab cameras, or back-up cameras, come in many configurations with a range of functions. Basic cab cameras include a monitor that mounts in the cab and a camera that mounts on the outside of the equipment at the needed location and angle. Some options include hardwired or wireless cameras, multiple cameras, magnetic cameras, and more. Some models will allow multiple viewpoints to appear on the monitor.

## Agri-Speed Hitch

This piece of assistive technology allows a farmer to hitch and unhitch wagons without climbing on and off equipment. The Agri-Speed Hitch was created by Barry Bergman, who is a farmer and runs Bergman Mfg., a family-owned company in Iowa. The hitch can be used on tractors, choppers, trucks, and more.

The Agri-Speed Hitch uses two parts:

1.) First part slides over the end of the wagon pole and

attaches with a hitch pin.

2.) Second part bolts to the draw bar of the tractor or piece of equipment with two bolts.

The hitch uses the holes in a draw bar. To hook up to a wagon, the operator backs up to the wagon aligning the large "V" on the tractor hitch to the end on the wagon. As the equipment backs up, the hitch raises the pole and hooks the wagon. The wagon is pulled with a part of the hitch that does not move – adding safety and strength. The operator pulls a cord to release the pin from inside the equipment.



Watch the  
hitch work!



**Teaming up:** Taking the cab camera and Agri-Speed Hitch and pairing them together will enhance visibility and increase safety when operating equipment around the farm. Point the camera at the hitch or rear space of the equipment, and the operator will have the best chance to know what is behind him or her. Add an Agri-Speed Hitch to aid in attaching implements.

This duo is sure to be a win-win!

**Looking for Financing?** Consider a Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) mini-loan: 0% interest rate and no fees up to \$2,000. Low-interest loans are available, too.

**Learn more:** [patf.us](http://patf.us)

To learn more about assistive technology for farmers, contact AgrAbility PA: [agrabilitypa@psu.edu](mailto:agrabilitypa@psu.edu) or (814) 867-5288.

## Where to Find Cab Cameras

Check with local equipment dealers or contact AgrAbility PA for assistance. Here are two examples:

### CabCAM™ Camera System

7" Color LCD Screen  
[thecabcam.com](http://thecabcam.com)

### Swift Hitch SH02D

Waterproof, Digital, Portable, Wireless System  
[swifthitch.com](http://swifthitch.com)



## Contact Us

814.867.5288

[AgrAbility@psu.edu](mailto:AgrAbility@psu.edu)

[AgrAbilityPA.org](http://AgrAbilityPA.org)



## CULTIVATING ACCESSIBLE AGRICULTURE

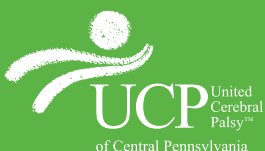
*one farm family at a time*

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*AgrAbility for Pennsylvanians is a state-wide partnership between Penn State Extension and UCP Central PA.*



## AgrAbility PA: Veterans in Agriculture

**AgrAbility for Pennsylvanians provides a critical service to the state's agricultural community.** AgrAbility PA assists farmers and agricultural workers with a disability or long-term health condition by providing services and support needed to work in production agriculture – **including to the men and women who have served in the military.**

**Some 41% of Veterans live in rural America – and there are several similarities between military life and agricultural life.** Many different jobs are available in agriculture for Veterans that may be dealing with physical, mental, or emotional challenges, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

**AgrAbility PA works collaboratively with organizations, agencies, and non-profits that serve Veterans in agriculture:**

*Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC)*

*Homegrown by Heroes*

*National AgrAbility Project: Veterans*

*Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)*

*NCAT: Armed to Farm - Ag Training for Vets*

*PA Dept. of Agriculture*

*PA Veteran Farming Project / Troops to Tractors*

*REAch Wounded Veterans' Program*

*Rodale Institute: Veteran Farmer Training*

*U.S. Dept. of Agriculture: New Farmers*

*Veterans Administration (VA)*

*Veteran Urban Farming Project*

*Warfighter Gardens*

*Work Vessels For Vets (WVfV)*

**More resources online: [agrabilitypa.org/veterans](http://agrabilitypa.org/veterans)**