

## ***Bringing Hope to other farmers who think “they can’t continue farming with a disability or health condition”***

**Farmer highlight: Darlene Livingston**

**Darlene and her family are the proud owners and operators of Mahoning Creek Farm, located in Indiana County, PA.** They specialize in raising pigs, sheep and cattle for meat, and their main aim is to sell directly to consumers. When asked about her thoughts on AgrAbility, Darlene expressed that the program has helped her to focus and connect with opportunities to acquire assistive technology that supports her in their work.

A family farm since 1918, Darlene is the fourth generation of the McConaughy family to continue the farming.

Darlene has vivid memories of the meat business, which involved butchering, grinding, weighing, and packaging hamburger at the tender age of 5. She remembers many people visiting the meat market, and recent reminders from those who purchased from the farm have encouraged her to reestablish the meat trade. Mahoning Creek Farm, the “pig farm” along Route 210, has raised pigs for 75 years. Darlene’s family, including Clyde Sr., Hattie, Clyde Jr., and Lois, had been raising hogs for years before she was even born.

The Livingston family’s home is adorned with numerous reminders of their success in the show ring with their pigs at the Pennsylvania Farm Show and other State fairs. Darlene feels privileged to have exhibited pigs at the Farm Show alongside three generations of her family. Her Grandpa’s tales of traveling to the Farm show by rail with cattle still resonate with her. She and her parents and siblings were awarded the 1st “Farm Show Family of the year,” award.

Darlene and her husband, Bob brought their small, registered Angus herd when they moved to their farm in Indiana County. Bob manages the cattle and is the mastermind behind cow families or genetics base. For almost 20 years, he had been working with the South Branch Farms Angus herd, selecting trouble-free, efficient cattle that produce high quality beef. On the other hand, Darlene has always been the sheep person in the



family. A few years ago, they purchased their first Dorset ewes from Stavers in Palmyra, PA. (added from: mahoningcreekfarm.com)

Darlene heard about AgrAbility PA while working at Farm Link and reached out to AgrAbility PA due to her arthritis and functional limitations from a dislocated hip she had since birth. Her arthritis was affecting her ability to complete everyday tasks on the farm and when taking her business to market. AgrAbility PA staff performed a Farm Assessment for Darlene at her residence and business that she and her family own and operate. The goal of

the Farm Assessment was to evaluate Darlene’s farm tasks in relation to her physical abilities and make recommendations for accommodations or modifications that would maintain or increase her capacity to work on the farm. From the farm assessment, AgrAbility PA set four specific goals, and recommendations were made to reach those goals. This included: (1) Implementing an ATV as a mobility device around the farm and pasture. (2) Modify pasture access gates to eliminate complex, repetitive movements. (3) Improving market trailer access by adding steps for safety and accessibility. (4) Providing assistive technology for maintaining pasture fences by implementing a fence row trimmer attachment.

Darlene was referred to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) because her limitations affecting her employment. After determining eligibility through the OVR process, funding was provided for recommended items. Since working with Darlene in 2016, she has had additional health conditions, and she has continued to network with AgrAbility PA related to other health conditions. (Abbie Spackman, AgrAbility Project assistant with Penn State).

AgrAbility contacts Darlene for follow-up on how she has benefitted from improvements through the suggested farm assessment goals. (Sept 2023)

*Darlene Livingston continued inside*

# Safety on the Farm

by Linda Fetzer, AgrAbility Project Manager and Penn State Ag Safety and Health

**In some ways, the Winter months are less hectic once the harvest is over, but the day-to-day responsibilities continue for those in agriculture.** The weather conditions in Winter can be hazardous, but there are some things you can do to prepare for them.

## CLOTHING LAYERS ARE KEY

Protect yourself from cold-related illnesses such as trench foot, chilblains, and frostbite. Layered clothing allows you to shed a layer when you are doing a task that warms you up, but you can also add a layer if you get cold. Most heat loss is through your head, so grab a warm hat that covers your head and ears. A jacket or sweatshirt with a hood adds an additional level of protection for your head and face. Protect your extremities by wearing thick gloves on your hands and warm, dry socks, toe guards, and cold weather boots on your feet.

## SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Ice and snow create a slippery work environment. Have sand, salt, or stone ready to cover those slippery walkways and surfaces. Cleats or ice grips on your boots can provide you with extra traction. Slips, trips, and falls are common, so take it slow when walking in the driveway, barn or when getting on or off equipment.

## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Farmers sometimes watch the nutrition and care of their livestock more than their own. Dehydration can happen in any season, so it is essential to hydrate even in the winter. Care for yourself by taking breaks, eating healthy food, keeping hydrated and getting adequate sleep. Be your best so you can take care of your farm operation. If you will be in a remote area, let someone know where you will be and your approximate return time. In addition to water and snacks, keep the following with you: a first aid kit, headlamp, multi-purpose tool, and a radio or cell phone.

## WAYS TO SAVE TIME AND EFFORT

During the winter, checking on animals in the barn can be a real chore between bundling up in the winter gear and maneuvering across snow-covered walkways. Installing a camera system in the barn will allow you to monitor what is happening with animals in the barn without leaving the comfort of your home. Another time-saving device is a deicer for your animals' waterer. This reduces strain on you and always provides your livestock with the proper hydration.

**Have a safe and healthy winter!**

*Darlene Livingston continued from cover*

AgrAbility offers Hope to farmers with a disability or long-term condition, and Darlene was quick to talk about that when we spoke with her. She explained how she had three hip surgeries because of the dislocated hip she suffered with. She found pain when



maneuvering in tasks performed around the home and farm. Feeding the ewe's and lambs was an example she gave. She remarked how she always had a sensitivity to lambing and would sense when something was wrong. She was starting to feel she couldn't perform the tasks she had initially been able to complete in the past when working with them. She knew she needed help and reached out to AgrAbility for ideas. She remarked that since OVR helped her with funding assistive technology as suggested by AgrAbility she could continue working on the farm and at the market. When asked how implementing an ATV as a mobility device on the farm was working out for her. She remarked how helpful her ATV has been when feeding the lambs and ewe's. She drives it around the farm and enjoys the back height of the ATV bed when cleaning up dead brush with her fence row trimmer attachment. This helps alleviate strain from her hips and back as she has minimal bending. She also uses her ATV in the Winter, attaching a plow to the front of it so that she can safely move snow to drive around the farm. Darlene has a Hobby of gardening. Although it was not suggested as a goal during the 2016 farm assessment, she had raised beds built around her home to make working in the gardens easier. She continues to enjoy gardening as a hobby. Therefore, Darlene is passionate about passing the word on to others about AgrAbility PA and OVR. She believes it is critical to share her Hope with other farmers who think "they can't continue farming with a disability or health condition."

# FUNDING AGRICULTURAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY



This farmer purchased a side-entry skid loader by applying for and receiving a low-interest loan through the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF). This piece of equipment allows for greater accessibility and safety.



This farmer acquired a pull-behind Eco Weeder by applying for occupational support services with the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). This piece of equipment allows the farmer to work ergonomically with less pain.

**One of the main barriers to implementing assistive technology on the farm can be the cost to pay for it.**

**To be successful in obtaining financial assistance:**

- 1) Set clear goals
- 2) Explore various funding resources
- 3) Keep records and documentation
- 4) Be persistent and act as your own self-advocate
- 5) Follow-up and ask questions.

**Steps towards funding Agricultural AT include:**

1. **Determine** the type of AT for a person's individual needs.
2. **Test** or try out the AT before purchasing (if possible).
3. **Locate** a vendor and obtain the cost or estimate of the AT.
4. **Determine** if there is any alternative AT to consider due to cost or availability without sacrificing function or features.
5. **Assess** how much contribution (out of pocket) can be made towards the purchase.
6. **Identify** funding resources. More than one funding source may be used for an AT purchase(s).
7. **Apply** for funding, follow the process, and keep records and documentation.

## Funding Resources

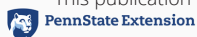
- State Funding
- Federal Funding
- Private Funding
- Financial Institutions
- Grant Programs

**AgrAbility PA does not provide funding for assistive technology.**

The staff is available to help a farmer identify solutions, offer support, and assist with finding funding resources.

**For the full funding guide please visit our website or contact us with questions about funding your assistive technology.**

AgrAbility for Pennsylvanians is a statewide partnership between Penn State Extension and UCP Central PA. This publication is available in alternate media on request. Photos used: Courtesy of AgrAbility PA.



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## CULTIVATING ACCESSIBLE AGRICULTURE

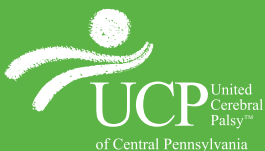
*one farm family at a time*

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



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Keystone Farm Show

January 9 – 11, 2024

York Fairgrounds  
334 Carlisle Avenue  
York, PA 17404

*Largest commercial farm equipment & service provider trade show in Pennsylvania.*

### 108th Pennsylvania Farm Show

January 6 – 13, 2024

Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center  
2300 N. Cameron Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110

### AgrAbility National Training Workshop (NTW)

March 25 – 28, 2024

Grand Hyatt- Buckhead  
3300 Peachtree Road NE  
Atlanta, GA 30305

*Training workshops addressing issues of Disability in Agriculture.*



**LEARN MORE:**  
[AgrAbilityPA.org](http://AgrAbilityPA.org)