

Andrew Snook | Third-Generation Dairy Farmer

About the Farm: Located in Paxtonville, Snyder County | 55 dairy cows with young stock and 120 head of cattle

The Back Story: Andrew was born on the farm – it’s always been a part of his life. His father milked cows for 25 years until Andrew bought the herd in May 2013.

But, in September 2015, Andrew spent six weeks in the hospital and another eight weeks at a nursing home recovering from a shattered leg and broken eye socket and nose suffered in a 40-ft. fall from a silo. In the months that followed, Andrew got an infection in his leg and underwent two more surgeries. As a result, Andrew continues to battle pain, discomfort, and mobility issues on a daily basis. He uses a cane to help him get around the barn and his sense of balance when standing for periods of time is impaired.



Connecting with AgrAbility PA: While healing, Andrew looked into equipment and modifications that would help him with milking and accessibility. Paula Fisher, a family friend, had worked with AgrAbility PA before and recommended that he reach out. Andrew connected with Project Assistant Abbie Spackman in Spring 2016 and she visited Andrew to conduct a farm evaluation and assessment.

In the weeks that followed, PA’s Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) sent a farm coordinator to meet with Andrew, Abbie, and an occupational therapist who has worked with dozens of farmers. As a team, several recommendations were made to assist with Andrew’s work around the farm.

The consultation, evaluation, and development of formal recommendations are a free service to farmers in the state.

Modifications & Equipment: Working with AgrAbility PA and OVR, Andrew was able to receive several modifications to help in the day-to-day work of milking:

- **Rail System & Automatic Takeoffs:** This system acts as a carrier for the milking units in a tie stall barn and allows for the use of automatic takeoffs. With this system, Andrew does not have to carry or lift the milking units. Rather, they run on an overhead track from the milk house to the stalls where the cows are milked. The units can be easily attached to the milk pipeline and to the cow while the weight is still held by the rail.

Dairy Farmer continued inside

How Can YOU Support Dairy Farmers?

Pennsylvania’s dairy farm families are truly **something to treasure**. They bring an abundant supply of wholesome, high-quality dairy products to the table. In addition, they are the **backbone of Pennsylvania’s rural communities**, providing valuable economic revenue.

Support local dairy farmers by making sure you are choosing local and real dairy products. Whether it is at a farmer’s market, grocery store, or superstore, Pennsylvania dairy products can be found anywhere. You just need to know what to look for:

- **Look for the PA-Preferred label** on the dairy products you buy. The milk in those products originated on a Pennsylvania dairy farm.
- **Look for the Plant Code #42** – a five-digit number found either on the label or at the top of the carton. **If it was bottled in Pennsylvania, the code starts with “42.”**



Resource: Center for Dairy Excellence – centerfordairyexcellence.org

From the Director



Merriam-Webster Dictionary offers several definitions for the word *connect*. Don't worry; if you no longer have a physical dictionary book, Google also works just fine.

After reading through several of them, these definitions seem most definitive to me:

- *to become joined*
- *to have or establish a rapport*
- *to establish a communications connection*

You see these definitions make me think of the important work we do through AgrAbility PA -- joining farmers and agricultural workers with a disability or long-term health condition with services and resources that will allow them to continue working in production agricultural. We establish a rapport not only with farmers and their families but also with service providers and strategic state partners, like OVR, who can come together to provide assistive technology, equipment modifications, and modified work practices.

At times, it seems like the last one – **establish a communications connection** – should be the easiest to do. According to the Pew Research Center, more than 95 percent of adult Americans own a cell phone. Social media has never been more popular – more than 80 percent of the U.S. population has a social networking profile, as noted by online-researcher Statista.

But despite being more connected than ever through digital communication, I remain in awe of the power of in-person, face-to-face communication. Let me share a quick story...

Last August 2018 during Penn State University's Ag Progress Days event, a woman named Jo stopped by AgrAbility PA's exhibit space. If you are familiar with Ag Progress Days, you know

that it is a large-scale event with hundreds of exhibitors covering more than 80 acres of displays and demonstrations. But Jo wanted to specifically connect with AgrAbility PA face-to-face, so she sought us out.

Jo wanted to talk with us about her husband, Ben, who had recently passed away in an automobile accident. Jo was riding in the car with Ben that day, and survived. Ben connected with AgrAbility PA and PA's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation a few years ago when his symptoms from his diagnosed Multiple Sclerosis (MS) were impacting his work on their horse farm. He was able to acquire an Action Trackchair™ and a motorized lift for his truck. Both pieces of equipment enabled Ben to continue helping around the farm.

Jo came to Ag Progress Days that day with a desire to connect with us, to let us know how much she appreciated the support, as it made Ben's last few years on the farm more manageable and pleasant. **He was having fun again**, she said. She held back a tear as she thanked us, and we talked together and shared some stories and memories of Ben. Our staff was touched by Jo's visit and happy she stopped by to see us. Jo offered to be a resource for the project moving forward in whatever way possible. We promised to keep in touch.

Yes, Jo could have sent us an email or liked a post on Facebook, and she may very well do that too. And we encourage this! But let's all take a page from Jo's playbook this year. Let's make more face-to-face connections in 2019. Instead of a New Year's resolution, let's challenge each other this year to join together and make stronger, lasting connections – in-person. I truly believe that the more we do this, the better off we will all be.

Looking forward to seeing you!

- Dr. Connie Baggett

Project Director, AgrAbility PA

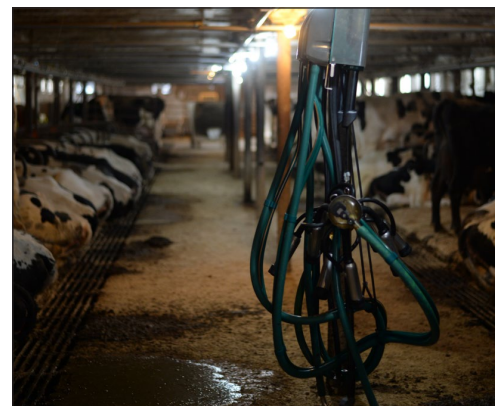
Associate Professor of Agricultural and Extension Education

Penn State University

Dairy Farmer continued from cover

- **Gutter Grates:** Installing gutter grates may seem like a simple idea, but for farmers like Andrew with mobility concerns, gutter grates can make a huge difference. Gutter grates cover the gutters that run behind the cows in a tie stall barn. The gutters can be difficult to step across and are a safety concern.
- **Bobcat UTV:** Andrew describes the vehicle as, "It's like my legs now. I can get all around the farm in a safe way. It's wonderful. I don't know how I'd get along with out it."

Andrew continues farming to this day – despite the tough economic conditions dairy farmers are facing. He is grateful for the support and services, and how it has enabled him to continue his dream of dairy farming – and help to prevent further injury.



Modifications to Andrew's milking routine now includes the use of an overhead rail system and automatic takeoffs, as well as gutter grates.

Do-It-Yourself (DIY): Modified Workspace

It can be difficult to find time to catch up on equipment repairs and work around the shop or barn. But, creating a workspace that fits you well can help with pain management, injury prevention, energy conservation, and improve efficiency! Consider making some inexpensive do-it-yourself modifications to your workspace.

Here are a few suggestions to get started:

1. Ergonomic Work Table

Creating a workspace that is the correct height improves posture, reduces strain, and can help with pain management. Having the ability to work from a seated or standing position is also beneficial. A raised, custom sized workspace, can be created with scrap lumber. This project can range from no cost to \$50.

2. Workspace Lighting

Workspace lighting is important for everyone's safety and can greatly assist individuals who have low vision. A variety of lighting options are available for a range of costs. In this example, battery-powered LED strip lights are used. These lights are available at various places (hardware stores, Amazon, etc.) for \$12 a set.



3. Anti-Slip Workspace

It is important to do our best to prevent slips and falls. Keep workspaces free of clutter, trip hazards, and slippery surfaces. Installing anti-slip mats or tape can further reduce slip hazards. A roll of anti-slip tape can be purchased online or in hardware stores for around \$20.

4. Tool Grip Modifications

Purchasing new ergonomic tools is great but replacing existing tools is not always practical. Suggestions on modifying your existing tools include:

- ▶ Using *pipe insulation and tape* to enlarge tool handles which improves grip and comfort. A 6-foot section of pipe insulation costs less than \$2 and can be found at most hardware stores.
- ▶ *Gripeeze gloves* can assist in gripping tools. These gloves can be purchased for around \$35 at disabilityworktools.com.

For more detailed modifications or information specific to a disability or workspace, contact the AgrAbility PA staff at (814) 867-5288 or agrability@psu.edu.



Stay Great: 8 Tips for Safety this Season

Farming doesn't stop in the winter – but it is important that we are prepared and take extra precaution.

Here are some tips for staying safe while working in colder conditions:

- ▶ **Walking on Snow and Ice:** It is difficult to walk on snow and ice in the winter and serious injury can occur from slipping and sliding. Make sure that you are wearing comfortable boots with good rubber tread. Ice grippers for the bottom of your shoes may also be helpful in reducing falls.
- ▶ **Take Your Time:** When walking on snow and ice, take your time and slow down! Taking smaller steps may help you to react more quickly to a potential fall.
- ▶ **What to Wear:** It's simple – dress in layers. Make sure that you have adequate clothing and accessories for the frigid temperatures and precipitation.
- ▶ **Stay Connected:** Make sure that people know where you are working and have a way to reach you. Carry a cell phone or two-way radio so that other family members or co-workers can reach you in the event of an emergency.
- ▶ **Don't Slip:** Use caution when entering a building as the floor may be slippery from water or snow. Install a non-skid rug to reduce the risk of falling.
- ▶ **Get a Grip:** If your boots do not provide adequate traction, a pair of ice-grippers may provide you with extra stability in the winter months. Same thing with gloves – make sure you have a pair with grips to protect your hands.
- ▶ **Look Before You Step:** Whether going into the barn or stepping onto a tractor, it does not take long for ice to accumulate on a surface. Look before taking that first step!
- ▶ **Have Fun:** Take some time when things on the farm are not as busy and give yourself a break. Do something that sparks joy like hunting, reading, traveling, or simply enjoy some quiet downtime around the house.

Contact Us

814.867.5288

AgrAbility@psu.edu

AgrAbilityPA.org



CULTIVATING ACCESSIBLE AGRICULTURE

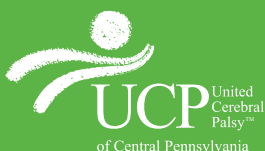
one farm family at a time

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



AgrAbilityPA

CONTEST

This contest is an opportunity for Pennsylvania FFA Chapters to make a positive impact in their community. Choose between **three different types of projects** that connect to farmers who are working in agriculture despite a disability or long-term health condition.

ELIGIBILITY

Open to all FFA Chapters in Pennsylvania

- ▶ Each group may submit only one entry, but a chapter may have multiple groups or projects
- ▶ Entry must be the original work of the group
- ▶ **Project must occur between Sept. 1, 2018 & May 31, 2019**

PROJECTS

1. Design an assistive technology table top demo or model
2. Develop an AgrAbility PA video or multimedia project
3. Complete a community service project

SUBMISSION

Submit projects online: agrabilitypa.org/contest

Submissions may also be mailed to:

Kendra Martin, AgrAbility PA

55 Utley Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011

Deadline: May 31, 2019

AWARDS

Awards given at the Pennsylvania FFA State Activities Week & Convention at Penn State University in June 2019

Monetary prizes:

- ▶ Assistive Technology Demo or Model: \$400
- ▶ Video/Multimedia Project: \$400
- ▶ Community Service Project: \$400
- ▶ Overall winner: \$800 (if applicable)

QUESTIONS?

Kendra Martin | kendra.martin@ucpcentralpa.org | (717) 836-0664

Visit AgrAbilityPA.org/contest