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CONTACT: TRACY KENINGER  
(515)289-1933X251  
MARY YEARNS  
(515)294-8520

## **INJURED, ILL FARMERS KNOW HARVEST DANGERS, CONTINUE TO WORK THANKS TO IOWA AGRABILITY**

DES MOINES – The autumn harvest season is always a time of danger for Iowa’s farmers who must cope with long hours, exhausting work, large machines and challenging weather, but it is also a time renewed by a possibilities for more than 1,100 of their brethren who have been affected by a permanently disabling injury or illness.

“No one understands just how dangerous the farming profession can be as much as people who have experienced a serious injury or illness while working at the job we love so much. There is no substitute for taking the extra time and care to avoid injuries whenever possible,” said Darwin Hoffmeister, an Ackley farmer whose hands was severely injured in a farm machinery accident. “Sometimes, no matter how careful you are – or think you are – accidents can and do happen.”

Hoffmeister continues to farm today, thanks to Iowa AgrAbility. Iowa AgrAbility is a joint effort.

“Iowa AgrAbility has proven that a disability doesn’t necessarily end a cherished way of life,” Hoffmeister said. “Iowa AgrAbility has had an incredibly positive impact on the lives of so many farmers in our state, but I know there are still many, many more Iowans who can and should benefit from this program. I hope that everyone will help us spread the story about Iowa AgrAbility to the people who need to know about it.”

Tony Wernimont received invaluable assistance from Iowa AgrAbility after one of his hands was severed in a farm accident. Today, Wernimont is a Easter Seals Rural Solutions staff member who uses his personal experience and professional experience to help other farms.

“We recommend solutions that allow families to continue their farming lifestyle. Those changes might include anything from simple adaptations made to everyday tools to

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suggestions for setting up a home to increase mobility and convenience,” Wernimont said. “We can also locate volunteers through it Ingenuity Network to design assistive devices for home and farm. Easter Seals Iowa can loan assistive and medical equipment to families who cannot afford or do not have access to it. And, we can also help families find resources for purchasing assistive technology to make life easier and safer.”

Hoffmeister said support is another helpful service that the Iowa AgrAbility program offers through it Peer Support Technology Network.

“Volunteers with similar disabilities provide emotional and psychological support to other recently disabled. Those volunteers also offer one-on-one support to help families adapt to the assistive technology,” Hoffmeister said.

With this support and assistance through Iowa AgrAbility, farmers who experience disabling injuries and/or illnesses, can continue to farm and be gainful in their communities.

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