



# AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

November 2003

Vol. 5, No. 8

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## STROKE AWARENESS

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### CARM'S COMMENTS: Carmen Schacht

The subject for the month is "strokes." Strokes have always puzzled me because they seem to affect people of every age. Some people who suffer from strokes recover well, while others seem to have a certain area that is hard to heal. For instance, one of the most frustrating tasks a stroke victim may need to deal with is that of regaining their speech. Sometimes it is hard to know what the cause is and why a certain person has a stroke.

We had a very good friend who had a massive stroke at the age of 38. He was in the prime of his life with a family of two children and a job with the city. He pulled through it, but still has several issues he has to deal with on a daily basis. My dad had a stroke at age 57 and after going to the

hospital had another stroke in about a week, which took his life.

I would like to give those who have had to deal with strokes a pat on the back. It takes a strong person to work hard and deal with a disability caused by stroke. Always try as hard as you can and keep your chin up. (CS)

### DENNIS'S DETERMINATION: Tara Nielsen

Dennis and Melinda Rodgers were one step ahead of the game in making remodeling suggestions after much of their family's home was destroyed by fire. As a precaution for the future, they made several changes that would enable a person with a disability to maneuver freely inside their home. These included a large walk-in shower, no-step entrance, and a four-season porch. The Rodgers were unaware of how important those design concepts would become.

On April 15, 2003 Dennis suffered a massive stroke. In his case there were no clear warning signs, but his doctor believes that it was brought on by the high stress of farming and a blood protein deficiency. In the hospital, he participated in a research study for recovering stroke victims and progressed wonderfully. Although his doctor was unsure about his ability to

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continue farming, Dennis was hopeful and determined.

The Rodgers discovered the AgrAbility Program and Tony Wernimont (Rural Solutions) explained to them that Dennis would need lifts on his machinery to fulfill his goal of being able to combine at harvest. Due to the accessible design ideas they had already incorporated into their home, Dennis and Melinda only needed to put railings on the steps outside their entrance. Today Dennis still wears a brace on his leg and has some problems with his right hand, but he has accomplished his goal of getting back to farming! (TN)

### STROKE AWARENESS

Strokes are the third leading cause of death in the United States which is why it is important to be aware of the things we can do to prevent a stroke. The following stroke prevention guidelines were obtained from the National Stroke Association web site.

**Know your blood pressure.** High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke.

**Find out if you have atrial fibrillation.** Your doctor can diagnose atrial fibrillation, an irregular heart beat that changes heart function and allows blood to collect in the chambers of your heart, by carefully checking your pulse.

**If you smoke, stop!** Smoking doubles the risk for stroke.

**If you drink, do so in moderation.** Drinking up to two drinks per day can reduce stroke risk, more than two drinks could increase your risk. Consult your doctor, alcohol can interact with some medications.

**Find out if you have high cholesterol.** High cholesterol can increase stroke risk.

**If you are diabetic.** . Having diabetes increases your risk for a stroke, follow doctor's recommendations carefully to control your diabetes.

**Exercise.** Make time each day to take care of yourself by exercising.

**Enjoy a lower sodium (salt), lower fat diet** By cutting down on sodium and fat in your diet you may be able to lower your blood pressure and most importantly, lower your risk for stroke.

**Circulation problems.** Ask your doctor if you have circulation problems, which increase your risk for stroke.

**Symptoms.** If you have any stroke symptoms, such as the following, seek immediate medical attention.

- \*Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg – especially on one side of the body
- \*Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- \*Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- \*Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- \*Sudden severe headache with no known cause

### ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

American Heart Association  
National Center  
7272 Greenville Avenue  
Dallas, TX 75231  
Phone: 214-373-6300  
800-552-6321 (Stroke Connection)  
<http://www.americanheart.org>  
AHA affiliates often sponsor stroke programs, clubs, or support groups.

National Stroke Association  
96 Inverness Drive East, Suite I  
Englewood, CO 89112-5112

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Phone: 303-649-9299 or 800-STROKES  
(787-6537)  
[www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org)

For information on care giving, call 1-888-4-STROKE (478-7653) and ask for the Stroke Family Support Network. (TN)

### GET A HEAD START ON YOUR HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING

Below are some neat, low cost ideas that can be found online at

<http://www.frugalthomemaker.com/93giftideas.htm>. Remember that foods and other homemade items make great gifts. Another cost saver is to make your own wrapping paper or alternative presentation such as gift wrap or gift bag from a paper grocery bag with raffia and pine cones attached.

Anything Apple (pie, crisp, etc.): Sending you a bushel of love this holiday season. Or You are the apple of my eye, Teacher.

Anything Banana: If we could choose our friends, and we searched the whole world through, we'd go bananas trying to find a better bunch than you.

Candle: May your days be happy, your heart be light, your Christmas be merry, and your New Year Bright! Or You light up my life! May your Christmas be Merry and Bright.

Cinnamon Rolls: Here's a sweet treat rolled up with warm holiday wishes.

Loaf of bread: For being there when you were Kneaded, for Rising to the occasion, large or small. For never Loafing on the job, for helping others to Heel with TLC. No matter how you "Slice it" you do a terrific job loving others. Happy Holidays.

Plant: The kindness you show makes our friendship grow and grow! Hope you have a happy holiday!

### NICE TO MEET YOU!: Erin Haafke

Please allow me to introduce myself to you as the new AgrAbility Program Specialist. Until recently, I didn't know that such a program existed, so you will quickly see that I am learning all that I can to keep up with your expertise as consumers. With that said, I am excited to begin a new chapter of my life with the AgrAbility program and you!

As Mary Yearns mentioned in the October Chit Chat, I recently graduated from ISU where I studied the development of individuals and families throughout the life span, with an emphasis in the aging population. Over the past several years I have learned about people by working for the Alzheimer's Association and the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs, doing gerontology research, and assisting with activities at a nursing home.

My background in agriculture is more of what you might call "hand's on" as I was raised on my family's farm in northwest Iowa. I remember combining with my dad (me sitting on his knee), "walking beans" with my grandparents, and detasseling even after all the boys my age had given up because they were afraid of hard work. Over the years I can recall having an assortment of animal friends and enemies, the most memorable being a pet lamb named Rambo that, as a preschooler, I bottle fed. In short, I am no stranger to farming or farm life!

I am also no stranger to ISU Extension; after all it runs in the family. My mom has worked for extension for many years so I have learned about extension programs through "osmosis" and years of 4-H participation.

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Despite my admiration for farm life, I currently live as a city slicker in Ankeny with my newest animal friend, my kitten Gizmo. When I'm not working, pretending to be a farmer, or becoming my mom, I enjoy spending time with my large family,

playing cards, scrap booking, crafts, watching movies, and cooking!

I truly do look forward to meeting and learning more about each of you. Please feel free to contact me with your thoughts, questions, and ideas!

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IOWA AGRABILITY - A joint effort of ISU Extension and the Rural Solutions Program of Easter Seals Iowa. The program can help farm family members with a disability stay in farming.

This newsletter from the Iowa AgrAbility Project will be sent monthly to AgrAbility families and other interested individuals. Please send comments and suggestions to:

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Phone: ISU Answerline at 1-800-262-3804

TDD: 1-800-854-1658.

Web site: [www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/)

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## Iowa AgrAbility Project

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