



AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

July 2005

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SURVIVING THE SUMMER HEAT

MEET BRAD ROHLK . . .

Brad Rohlk has farming in his blood. His father started farming when he was in high school, bought his first farm at age 30, and continued to buy land through the years. After Brad and his brother, Brian, graduated from high school, they stayed around to work the land his father had purchased. The farm now has grown to 1,100 acres, including land that is rented. The family enterprise raises crops and runs about 40-50 head of cows.

When Brad and Pam were married 22 years ago, they moved into the old farmhouse where Brad had spent his childhood. Meanwhile, his father and mother built and moved into a new house nearby. The old house needed a lot of work and Brad was constantly remodeling to make it more livable for his growing family: Sheena, who is presently studying graphic design at the University of Iowa, Justin, who attends high school, and 12 year old Shannon. Brad added insulation to the old house, updated the wiring, and remodeled the kitchen and bathroom.

A new challenge was presented in 1997 when Brad was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). As it became increasingly difficult for him to participate in the farming operation, the AgrAbility project team (Iowa State University Extension and Easter Seals

Rural Solutions) got involved. Chuck Larson, Rural Solutions, helped Brad obtain an ATV to assist in doing chores, a lift to aid in getting on and off the tractor, and hand controls for driving his truck.

About four years ago accessibility problems in the old house became a major issue and Brad decided it was time to move to town to find a more convenient place to live. They bought a home in Holstein. Mary Yearns, ISU Extension, drew a detailed remodeling plan so the home could be made wheelchair accessible. Brad said he is now free to go anywhere in the house in his wheelchair and especially likes the ramp and the roll-in shower. Brad said the carpenter was not sure about the remodeling ideas, but was all smiles when the project was done and the house turned out "neat."

Brad and Pam have enjoyed their move to town. They know everyone in Holstein and recognize the value of having good people and friends around them. Pam is also closer to her work at VT Industries, a door manufacturing plant. She has worked off the farm, mostly at VT Industries, for the 22 years of their marriage. Her earnings have been a big help with managing the cash flow on the farm as well as paying for family living expenses.

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When asked if he had any hobbies, Brad responded, “My wife, Pam, and I keep busy running to our son’s baseball and football games, and our daughter’s softball and basketball games.” They also like to go on “walks” together, since an acquaintance recently gave him an unused “Jazzy” scooter. The power chair gives him a lot more freedom to roam around the neighborhood. Even though he can still drive a pickup for longer distances, it takes a lot of effort—and some assistance from Pam—to get in and out of the truck. He takes physical therapy sessions regularly to help maintain muscle strength.

Brad likes watching movies—especially action thrillers—and thought-provoking movies, too. “Remember the Titans,” starring Denzel Washington, is one of his favorites. It’s the true story of a black American football coach who—against all odds—pulls together a mixed-race team and leads them to victory. Brad says even women who don’t think they will like a football movie will find it enjoyable, because Pam liked it, too.

Reading is a new interest that Brad is learning to cultivate, prompted by some “nudging” from Pam. She encouraged him to read the Bible, which has a lot of interesting history, and he also wants to learn more about American history.

Looking to the future, Brad is interested in researching all he can to learn about the mysteries of MS. He continually searches the internet for new information about the causes of the disease and treatment alternatives. Brad wonders if his MS was brought on by environmental problems in the Holstein area. He is hoping that a County Health Survey will be taken and the collected information can be sent to the University of Iowa to be studied. If you’d like to visit with Brad, he can be reached at

427 South Lubeck, Holstein, IA, 51025.
Phone: 712-368-2824.

INFORMATION ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS)

- U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health:
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000737.htm
- National Multiple Sclerosis Society:
www.nmss.org/

AVOID GETTING TOO HOT

Heat, sun exposure, and humidity can lead to serious health related issues in the summer. Sun burns, dehydration, and heat stress are just a few of the problems farm families may face in the hot Iowa sun. And if you are over 65 or have a disability, you may be at special risk for heat stress. Take extra precautions as directed by your physician.

With just a few simple steps you can prevent immediate sun burns and reduce your risk for health complications in the future. Some precautions to take if you must be in the hot summer sun:

- Apply sunscreen regularly
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat, protecting your head, neck, and nose.
- Limit exposure during the heat of the day (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
- Pace yourself.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Keep salts and minerals replenished. A sports drink may help, but contact your doctor if you are on a restricted diet to find the best strategy for you.
- Wear appropriate clothes, lightweight and light colored.
- Make sure that someone knows where you are and that you have a method to reach them if you are not feeling well.

More: www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/extremeheat

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FAMILY FUN FEST WRAP-UP

Thanks to everyone who attended the Family Fun Fest. As you can see from the photos: www.public.iastate.edu/~rdtrip/FamilyFunFest2005/index.htm participants had a great time! If you haven't already done so, it is not too late to return your evaluation form to Mary Yearns, 62 LeBaron Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-4380 (515-294-8520). An even bigger celebration is being planned for 2006!

HELLO AND GOODBYE

I have enjoyed my AgrAbility summer internship at Iowa State University. My

duties have included writing the monthly newsletter and demonstrating the kitchen display trailer at the Family Fun Fest and other events. It was a pleasure to meet you and learn about your "stories." I am looking forward to graduation—and employment—at the end of fall semester.

Joyce Glenn
AgrAbility Summer Student Intern
Iowa State University Extension
onejoyce@iastate.edu

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:

AgrAbility Program Specialist
96 LeBaron Hall, Ames, IA 50011
Phone: 515-294-8522
ISU Answerline at 1-800-262-3804
Web site: www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/

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