



# AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

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## LIVING WITH ARTHRITIS

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### TALKING WITH TERRY KEENER

Terry Keener grew up on a farm near the town of Harvey, Iowa. As a child, he and his family focused on doing what needed to be done on their small acreage. They also were busy with their family-owned restaurant and gas station located along the neighboring highway. He and his siblings attended country school and there were few trips made into town.

When he was 16 years old, Terry began experiencing inflammation and pain in the joints throughout his body. Trips to Iowa City became a regular occurrence so Terry could see the doctor. His was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA), an autoimmune disease where the body thinks tissue in the lining of the joints is “bad” and begins to attack it. JRA can cause long-term joint damage resulting in chronic pain, joint deformity, and disability.

Terry faces challenges because of his arthritis but he finds ways to adapt. Over the years, he has made equipment to help in performing daily tasks. For example, he has constructed tools to assist with getting dressed each morning.

Terry has worked around the farm all of his life. For 25 years, he raised feeder pigs but quit when his arthritis got worse and market prices were declining. Today his brother-in-law helps with the farming on the 80-acre farm that his mother still owns. Terry helps as he is able, which includes doing the mowing on the acreage. He also helps run the family business, which now includes just a gas station.

Terry worked with the AgrAbility program four years ago after requesting information from his local Iowa State University Extension office. With the help of Rehab Counselors, Chuck Larson and Tony Wernimont, Terry had lifts installed on two tractors and on his truck to make it easier to get in and out of these vehicles. He also got a lift to raise him up off the ground, making it possible for him to get down to work on equipment and still be able to stand up when finished.

A couple years ago, Terry had joint replacement surgery on both of his knees and hips. Prior to the surgeries Terry admitted he was “ready for the nursing home.” With his ‘new’ joints, though, he gets along well and is able to do more.

Terry says that one of the most challenging aspects of living with rheumatoid arthritis is just “getting up and going” each day. But he advised that he just takes life one day at a

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time and to find ways to deal with the challenges presented.

### FACTS & RESOURCES ABOUT ARTHRITIS

- ◆ Arthritis is a leading cause of disability that can affect people of any age. An estimated 585,000 adult Iowans are diagnosed with arthritis and 384,000 additional Iowans have chronic joint symptoms.
- ◆ *The Arthritis Foundation* is an organization dedicated to helping people with arthritis through resources, advocacy, and research. Their website is filled with information on various topics. For more information visit: [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org).
- ◆ *The Iowa Arthritis Program* is an Iowa Department of Public Health program with a focus on reducing the impact of arthritis particularly among older Iowans, rural Iowans and farmers, and Hispanic/Spanish-speaking Iowans. The program has collaborated with the University of Iowa and the Heartland Center for Occupational Health & Safety to create a brochure, "Farmers and Arthritis: Strategies for Working and Everyday Living." To learn more: visit [www.idph.state.ia.us/bhpl/arthritis.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/bhpl/arthritis.asp), contact (515) 281-5675, or email [lhendric@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:lhendric@idph.state.ia.us).

### ITEMS OF INTEREST & UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ *Arthritis Leader Training*: The Iowa Arthritis Program & Arthritis Foundation Iowa Chapter conduct leader training. Learn how to start programs like the Arthritis Foundation's Exercise and Aquatic Programs in your community. Trainings are held in fall and spring. For more information, contact the Iowa Arthritis Program at (515) 281-5675.

- ◆ *Fifth Annual Organic Conference: November 14, 2005*: Learn how to produce and market organic products from the experts. It will be held at the Scheman Building on the ISU campus in Ames, IA. For more information visit: [www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/organic05/about.html](http://www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/organic05/about.html)
- ◆ *Family Fun Fest* ~ Mark your calendars for the **2006 Family Fun Fest** event scheduled for **Saturday, June 24, 2006**. If you would like to help with planning the event for next summer, please contact me at [alundval@iastate.edu](mailto:alundval@iastate.edu) or call (515) 294-8522.

### HELLO!

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ann Lundvall and I am the new AgrAbility Program Specialist. I am a registered nurse with a graduate degree in public health nursing and environmental health. I've worked as a community health nurse in rural northeastern Missouri, and most recently as a health planner in north-central Iowa.

I grew up on a farm in central Iowa. My parents and my brother are still actively involved in grain production farming. I love to help with the harvest and other fieldwork when I get the chance.

I am excited to be part of the AgrAbility program team. Please contact me with questions you may have about the AgrAbility program or if you would like to share your personal story in an upcoming issue of the newsletter. My email address is [alundval@iastate.edu](mailto:alundval@iastate.edu) and my phone number is (515) 294-8522. I look forward to hearing from you!

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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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