

Workshop for disabled joins handicapped, rehabilitation specialists

BY SHARON B. SCHUSTER
Staff Correspondent

FREDERICK, MD — The second annual Mid-Atlantic Workshop for Disabled Individuals and Their Families in Rural and Agricultural Communities was held in Frederick County, MD, at the Sheraton Inn, March 7 and 8.

The workshop, funded by the University of Maryland, brought disabled individuals together with vocational rehabilitation specialists, counselors, extension agents, and many other resource persons, all interested in recognizing the plight of disabled individuals and exchanging information.

Dr. Gary Smith, farm safety specialist at the University of Maryland, coordinated the program's activities. "We think we have a great program," he said, "with emphasis on rural and agricultural aspects."

Faith Kirk, executive director of the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, added, "There is a dire need for information. It is a population that has not been easy to get to. Many times they don't know what is available. We're here to determine what we can do to facilitate."

The two-day workshop featured

a variety of topics presented by representatives of various agencies. A panel discussion entitled "Lifestyle of Maryland" seemed to have the greatest impact on the audience. The panel, comprised of George Moyer, Pennsylvania dairy farmer; Ben Haines and Jack Crum, Maryland dairy farmers; and Elisabeth Hudson, North Carolina homemaker, candidly discussed and fielded questions about adjustments to their physical disabilities.

George Moyer, who milks 100 cows in Myerstown, Pa., said that he remembers the day he lost his leg better than his own birthday. In the fall of 1975 he had been harvesting corn when the machine clogged. With the machine at full throttle, he climbed onto it to push the corn through. He slipped, felt a tug at his leg, and jumped to the ground with only a stump remaining where his left leg had been.

He said, "I go many places and people don't even know I have a wooden leg. Sometimes I have to prove it." Moyer then removed his prosthesis and held it in the air for all to witness. He said that he tells children that he has to stand in the corner when he goes to bed;

otherwise, "it would walk right around all night looking for me."

Moyer said the most important aspect of adjusting to living with a physical disability is to be receptive to the vocational rehabilitation programs available. He added, "I'm crippled, but I'm not handicapped."

Twenty years ago, Ben Haines of Rising Sun, Md., lost his leg in a silage auger. "While I was still caught in the machine, I thought, it's got one leg, land that's all it's getting." Haines elected to phase out of the dairy business, but continued in farm related fields. He helped design a cover shield with the manufacturer of his auger and now serves the Delmarva peninsula with equipment sales. He also loads and hauls grain and lime. "I can drive any piece of machinery going." He said that his truck has no special adaptations.

Jack Crum of Walkersville, Md., milks 300 cows. "It never crossed my mind to give up farming," he said. He lost his hand while sharpening the knives on a field chopper. Crum said that he is "blessed with an attitude," with regard to his physical disability. "It's typical of farmers to adjust because nothing goes the same every day. From the very beginning I had to think and be innovative. I go with that."

Karen Mills, a counselor with the Maryland Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, addressed the process of rehabilitation for victims of "the second most hazardous profession." Mills said, "The biggest problems are knowing what resources are available, plus the transportation getting to them. It's one of the best kept secrets around," said Mills of the Vocational Rehabilitation Process. She then outlined the five-step procedure for acquiring services.

Mills said that referrals start at the hospital, then the first step is to fill out forms and discuss the client's rights. Step 2 provides the client with free, comprehensive medical, psychological and vocational evaluations. Step 3 involves counseling, physical restoration and training, depending upon the individual's abilities

and interests. Step 4 provides the client with job readiness skills, placement and any special equipment that may be needed. Finally, step 5 is employment and follow-up.

Mills said that, through local resources, "We can help coordinate these for you."

K. Marc Tefteau, extension faculty member of the University of Maryland, said that disabled
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Home adaptations make life easier for wheelchair confined handicapped

BY SHARON B. SCHUSTER
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FREDERICK, MD — There was a time when Elisabeth Hudson thought she would die and hoped that she would. She described the pain that she experiences every waking moment: "It's like I'm on fire all the time." Hudson suffered deterioration of the spine and became paralyzed after cobalt treatments.

The middle-aged homemaker said her brother helped her to see that she could live in spite of her disabling condition. He encouraged her to live one day at a time.

Reflecting on that day, Hudson said she decided she could stand the pain "for a minute, and for a minute after that." She learned to manage her pain through humor and diversion.

She said she cultivated cheerfulness "until it became a part of me. I could put my pain at the back of my attention and distract myself." Now, Hudson is full of life, with her exuberance and cheerfulness spilling over to affect everyone who comes to know her.

At the second annual Mid-Atlantic Workshop for Disabled Individuals and Their Families in Rural and Agricultural Communities, Hudson shared the adaptations that were made to her home of 28 years in Charlotte, N.C., to accommodate her wheelchair confinement. A tour of her home through a slide presentation revealed many novel ideas that could make the lives of other disabled people more convenient.

A ramp with railings and a curb (to prevent mishaps) leads the way to the front door which bears three handles, including one on the hinge side to make closing the door behind her easier. To the right of the entrance is her lowered mailbox and an intercom. Hudson said she can talk to her visitors from her bedroom or even from the bathroom. "But," she added, "you might have to wait."

A peephole at her eye level is designed with mirrors, "so as not to look into the caller's belt buckle." Hudson seemed quite proud of her arm-controlled sewing machine, which she said is very easy to use.

To accompany the machine, she has a half-sized ironing board for pressing quilt pieces and pillow tops. A vinyl lap tray provides the writer with a smooth, sturdy surface upon which she can compose her informative pieces, eat dinner, or even put flea powder on the cat. "Then I turn it upside down," she added.

Throughout the attractive home is plenty of space to turn her wheelchair and roll out onto the L-shaped deck. Along the deck railing, the avid gardener has 38 feet of planter space in addition to the many containers that sit on the deck filled with shade-loving plants.

Of the adaptations made to her home, Hudson said many were inexpensive, and "some of the best were free."

Elisabeth Hudson is a model of independence and self-sufficiency for other disabled people, and an inspiration for everyone. "My friends are tremendously important," said Hudson. "You have to have patience with yourself and it helps to have a sense of humor."



Disabled farmers, from left, Jack Crum, Ben Haines and George Moyer display the devices that help them live more normal lives.

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