

Opportunities Workshop Offered For Disabled Farmers

UNIVERSITY PARK, (Centre) What is the most dangerous occupation? It isn't mining or heavy industry. According to the National Safety Council the most dangerous occupation in the United States is farming.

The Council estimates that between 130,000 and 150,000 people suffer disabling injuries every year as a result of farming accidents. In many cases these accidents end the victim's working life.

"To help victims, their families and rehabilitation professionals we have developed two one-day workshops to focus attention on opportunities available for these farmers," says Dr. Dennis Murphy, Penn State associate professor of agricultural engineering and executive secretary to the Pennsylvania Agricultural Safety Council. "Two nationally known experts will discuss their programs and the range of options available to farmers with severe physical disabilities," says Murphy. "These two programs are models for the rest of the country."

One of the national experts is Terry Willkomm, program director of Farm Family Rehabilitation Management, a program established by the Easter Seal Society of Iowa.

In Iowa, Willkomm's program provides on-the-farm rural rehabilitation service to farm families affected by physical disabilities. This is the only on-the-farm rehabilitation program in the United States. At each of the Pennsylvania workshops her topics will include: new approaches to farming with a physical disability, prosthetic adaptations for upper and lower extremity amputations, and the role of rural rehabilitation practitioners.

The other national expert is Bill Field, Purdue University professor of agricultural engineering and project director of a Purdue-sponsored program for physically disabled farmers called "Breaking New Ground."

Field's involvement with physically disabled farmers began 10 years ago, when he received a call from an Indiana farmer who broke his neck in an accident. The man

already had contacted several universities to get help in modifying his machinery, all to no avail. With Field's help, a Purdue University team devised a special lift that enabled the injured man to continue farming.

Further inquiry convinced Field that there was very little technical information to help physically handicapped farmers. He established Breaking New Ground. Today the program reaches thousands of farmers in all 50 states, Canada and several other countries.

Along with having assembled the largest known collection of information on ways to assist disabled farmers, Field has developed two manuals on handicapped farming methods and equipment modifications.

Because physically disabled farmers often live in isolated areas, a quarterly newsletter, distributed free, lists current technological advances for handicapped farmers. Field has also trained hundreds of rehabilitation counselors.

Field will discuss evaluation of

appropriate rehabilitation technology and modifications to the worksite for specific disabilities at both of the Pennsylvania workshops.

In addition to the national speakers, Ray Walker, acting supervisor for Facilities and Grants Management of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, will give an overview of vocational rehabilitation resources in Pennsylvania. He will explain a new four-year plan to provide rehabilitation and technical services.

"Farming requires a lot of stamina, and for those with permanent physical disabilities the challenge is even greater," explains Murphy. "We have asked local organizations to identify disabled farmers in the community." He is requesting the information so invitations

to attend one of the workshops can be sent to physically disabled farmers.

The workshops for disabled farmers and families will be held in Lancaster on March 15 and in Indiana on March 16. Registration is \$10 for disabled farmers and family members, \$25 for professionals and \$50 for vendors of products and services.

If you are a disabled farmer or know of a disabled farmer contact: Dr. Dennis Murphy, at (814) 865-7685 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. or write to him at 220 Agricultural Engineering Building, University Park, PA 16802.

The co-sponsors of the workshop are the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Inservco Insurance Services and Penn State Cooperative Extension.



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