



Breaking New Ground Resource Center
 Purdue University
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 West Lafayette, IN 47907

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The National AgrAbility Project is a partnership between:



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A USDA Program with Demonstrated Impact



As part of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, AgrAbility partners land-grant university Extension services with nonprofit disability organizations like Goodwill, Easterseals, and centers for independent living, to assist farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities.

The vision of AgrAbility is to enhance quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities, so that they, their families, and their communities continue to succeed in rural America.

“Disability” covers a wide spectrum. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Injuries:** spinal cord injuries, amputations, back problems
- **Disabling diseases:** arthritis, multiple sclerosis, diabetes
- **Conditions of aging:** vision loss, hearing impairments, reduced mobility
- **Veterans' issues:** PTSD, traumatic brain injury, other combat-related impairments



AgrAbility provides education, on-site assistance, and networking services to help agricultural workers with disabilities get the technologies and services they need to succeed.

Funding is currently available for 20 state AgrAbility projects across the country plus one National AgrAbility Project, which supports the state projects and provides limited assistance to those in need of services who live in non-AgrAbility states.



800-825-4264
www.agrability.org

A Portrait of AgrAbility Impact: Ed Bell



Ed Bell started farming as a young man in the 1970s, but his agricultural dreams were interrupted in 1982 when he was shot by an assailant and paralyzed from the chest down. After a period of rehabilitation, Ed and his new wife Debbie began farming again in 1984 with help from AgrAbility, Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the U.S. Small Business Administration. They started out with four acres of sweet corn, green beans, and strawberries.

Today, the Bells own 71 acres, specializing in strawberries and asparagus. In the 33 years Ed has been farming with a disability, the

Bells' farm has provided economic support not only for their family but many others as well. Ed estimates that he has hired a minimum of eight people per year to help on the farm, many being local youth. "I've had the privilege of writing the first paycheck to lots of folks throughout the years," Ed says.

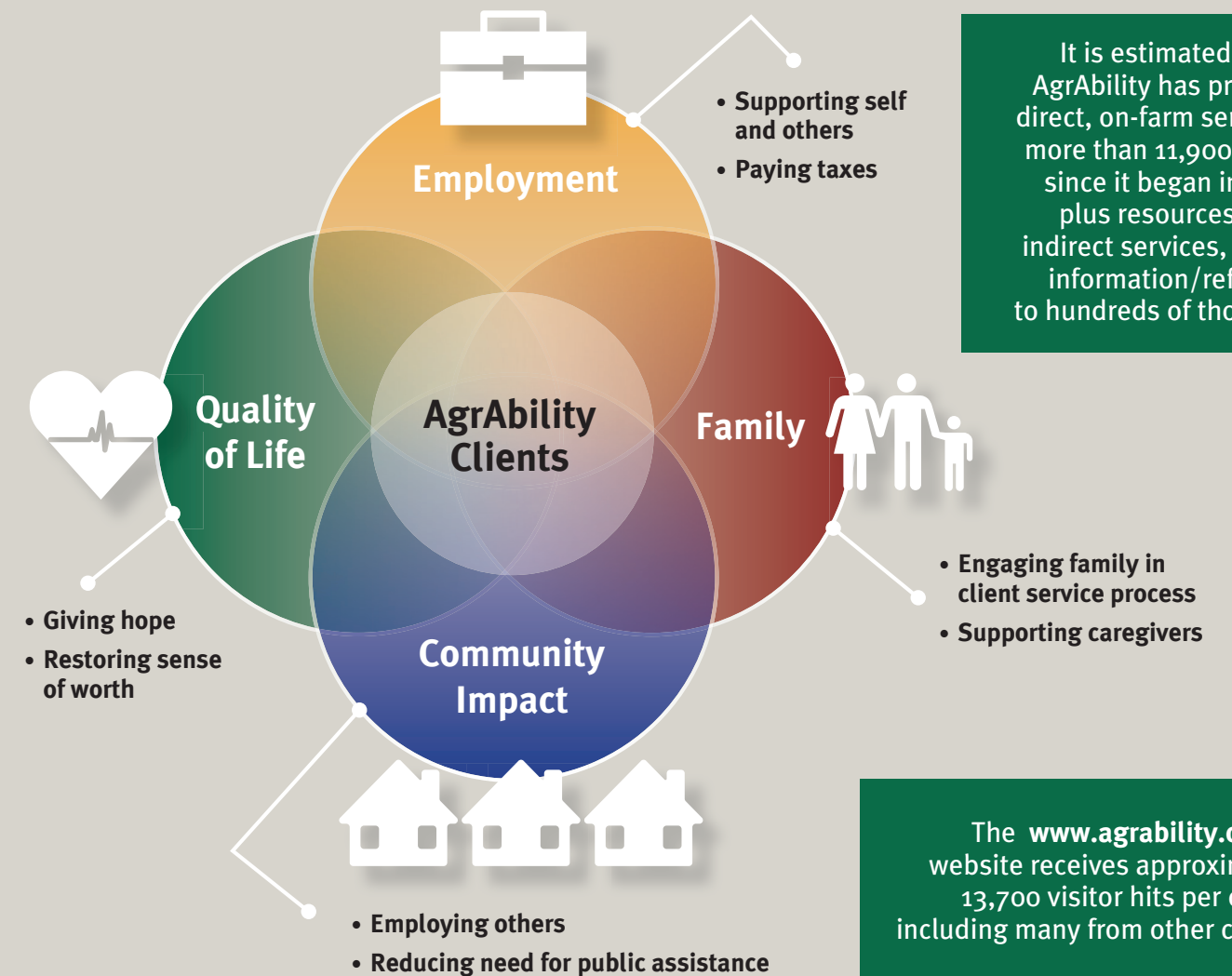
In addition to farming, Ed was the founding director of a center for independent living that provides core services to people with disabilities, the director of a therapeutic horseback riding center, and an account executive for a wheelchair company. He also continues to serve as a consultant

for AgrAbility and is a nationally-recognized motivational speaker, and the Bells were named Indiana Farm Family of the Year in 2006.

In regard to the impact of Ed's employment, he says, "My disability has not been a harsh economic burden to my community over the last three plus decades. I used some public assistance for a short time right after I got hurt but was able to work both on and off the farm and achieve economic independence. What would have been the economic cost had I been on Medicaid, SSI, food stamps, public housing, or even a nursing home or institution? The thought of that is staggering."

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AgrAbility staff members recognize that their clients are not islands – they're part of complex systems. The Program's services strive to address the whole person and impact the larger community.

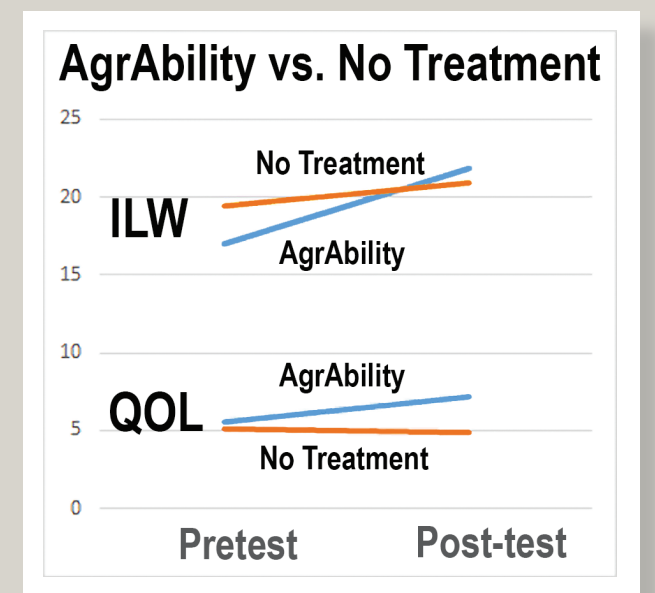


It is estimated that AgrAbility has provided direct, on-farm services to more than 11,900 people since it began in 1991 plus resources and indirect services, such as information/referral, to hundreds of thousands.

The www.agrability.org website receives approximately 13,700 visitor hits per day, including many from other countries.

AgrAbility recently conducted a 10-year study to compare the program's impact with a no-treatment comparison group. Using the McGill Quality of Life (QOL) survey and a newly-developed Independent Living and Working (ILW) instrument, AgrAbility gathered data both from AgrAbility clients and from farmers/ranchers with disabilities who had not received services.

The results: on average, the 196 AgrAbility client group participants reported: (1) increased QOL levels of 28%, while the 97 no-treatment comparison group's QOL level fell by 4%; and (2) increased ILW levels of 30%, while the no-treatment comparison group increased by 8%.



Source: Fetsch, R. J., & National AgrAbility Project Evaluation Committee. (2017, May 25). "What has AgrAbility achieved? What can we show for it?" Workshop presented at the National AgrAbility Project Advisory Team Meeting, Indianapolis, IN.