AgrAbility Helps Farmers and Ranchers with Disabilities | CPD

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AT lab coordinator Clay Christensen works on a project at the Wallace Johnson farm near Provo.

A farmer near Provo will be able to continue farming, thanks to the Assistive Technology Lab and AgrAbility of Utah, a partnership between Utah State University Extension and New Frontiers for Families. AgrAbility is part of a national program that helps farmers, ranchers and their family members stay on the farm despite limitations due to aging, disease, illness or other disability. Wallace Johnson, 75, was finding it more and more difficult to take care of his farm chores due to age-related knee problems. His son-in-law, Clay Christensen, is the AT lab coordinator at USU’s Center for Persons with Disabilities. AgrAbility program director Tana Beckstead performed Johnson’s initial assessment and recommended practical solutions to modify equipment so he could keep working. AgrAbility also helps secure funding for projects like Johnson’s. Christensen fabricated the modifications. “We did some neat things for him,” Christensen said. Projects included a handrail for the back steps of Johnson’s home, a step and handle to access his tractor, adapting and extending floodgate handles and a stand for the plow. 

Wallace Johnson “My father-in-law was reduced to tears by the things we did,” Christensen said. “For me, personally, it was rewarding. It was stuff he needed. He’s going to be able to continue to farm.” Christensen said there are many farmers and ranchers who could benefit from programs such as AgrAbility. “They are proud people. They’re the last ones to come knocking on your door for help,” he said.

“But they need just as much help as the people I see every day at the AT lab.” For more information on AgrAbility of Utah, click here.