

## Field notes from Dr. Robert Hagevoort, NM AgrAbility Program Director

The New Mexico AgrAbility Team has a lot of accomplishments so far in 2024. We also have a lot to look forward to. We have recruited a strong advisory council, who is helping us understand the needs of NM farmers and ranchers. We have been planning a *Day at the Farm* event for autumn, 2024 to offer information to NM farmers, ranchers, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and other interested parties about the power of Assistive Technology to improve the ability for food producers who may have experienced illness or injury to continue to work.

Eight of our team members were able to attend the 2024 AgrAbility National Training Workshop in Atlanta, Georgia. There, we gave three presentations: *Reaching New Heights and Expanding Audiences by Promoting AgrAbility* (NMSU Team) *AT Fundamentals Course Panel* (NMTAP Team,) and *Gender Differences in Health Conditions of Agricultural Workers* (UNM Team). We also all learned

innovative methods to support and enable people with health conditions or injuries to farm and ranch.

We are thrilled to announce that the March 2025 AgrAbility National Training Workshop will be held in Las Cruces, NM. Our state has a lot to be proud of, and we are excited to host such an important event. We will release more details as we have them.



Pictured: NM AgrAbility Team Members Julie LaJeunesse, Robert Hagevoort, Paul Ross, Sonja Koukel, Tracy Agiovlasis, Mary Thelander and Shelly Morris at 2024 AgrAbility National Training Conference with T-Bone the Welcome Cow

## Learning and Training with Occupational Therapy

**By Mary Thelander, NM AgrAbility Fieldwork Educator with the University of New Mexico**

Congratulations to occupational therapy (OT) students Brandy Runningwolf and Andrea Ellis for their completion of twelve-week fieldwork rotations with NM AgrAbility. Additionally, OT students Dany Rivera and Miranda Gonzales completed service learning projects with our non-profit partner, Mandy's Farm. Training these future OTs in the activity demands of farming and ranching helps build capacity within NM for rehabilitation and participation.

We wish a happy retirement to Janet DeWeese, who has been our farm site evaluator since 2019. Janet's keen eye and dedication to those who grow food has resulted in evaluations that help farmers and ranchers access the Assistive Technology needed to continue the work they love. Janet has kindly offered to continue to support the program, as well as to train the incoming farm site evaluator. Carmen McClelland is an OT with a graduate certificate in low-vision rehabilitation and extensive experience in Assistive Technology who will be a great addition to the team.

With a no-cost farm site evaluation, NM farmers and ranchers receive recommendations about Assistive Technology that may improve their ability to continue to do the work they love, despite an injury or health condition. **If you are, or you know a NM farmer or rancher who may benefit from a no-cost farm site evaluation, please contact NM AgrAbility at 1 (855) AGRABLE (247-2253) or [NMagrability@gmail.com](mailto:NMagrability@gmail.com).**

## **NMTAP Tech Corner: The Eyedaptic Eye4**

**By Jesse Armijo and Julie LaJeunesse with the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program**

The Eyedaptic Eye4 is a 2-in-1 wearable digital and handheld magnifier designed for individuals who struggle with Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD). AMD is the result of damage to the eye's macula which perceives the center of the visual field. AMD is the leading cause of vision loss for people 60-years-old and older. These glasses are designed to compensate for the central vision loss that affects daily lives and ability to perform tasks around their agricultural site, workplace, home, or in the community.

The Eye4 weighs three ounces. It tethers to an included Android smartphone which acts as the motherboard for the user's magnification needs. The user can choose magnification from the glasses or from the phone's camera depending on how much clarity is needed. Additional key features include an auto-zoom mode, image stabilization, and contrast enhancement. The Eye4 can assist agricultural workers with projects that require close vision such as reading material sheets and identifying seeds. It is not recommended to walk or drive while wearing the Eye4 glasses as the effects will be too disorienting for those tasks.

If you would like to try a pair of Eye4 glasses, or check out other devices that can provide magnification to tasks, you can call the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) at 505-841-4464, send us a message on Facebook, or view and request the glasses via our online database at <https://bit.ly/ATDatabase>. All of NMTAP's services and device loans are free of charge.



Pictured: A person using the Eyedaptic Eye4 to view images through an Android phone. This is an industry image.

## **Farm Apprenticeship Updates**

**By Sophie Trusty, Program Director with our Non-profit Partner, Mandy's Farm**

It's been a busy season at the Mandy's Farm AgrAbility Apprenticeship Program! Our seven apprentices started their 2nd year of our program in February and have been matched with a local farm to enhance and specialize their agricultural skills and knowledge. **We are grateful for our community farm partners: Farm of Song, North Valley Organics, Ironwood Farm, Chispas Farm, and Flora and Fauna Nursery for dedicating their time and expertise to supporting our apprentices.**

The apprentices have also started their own personal plots at our Clark Street location to gain further experience and independence with farming operations. At our Lakeview site the apprentices have planted tomatoes, garlic, onions, greens, artichokes, corn, and okra in preparation for the summer season.

We are wishing a very bittersweet farewell to Paul Ross who will be transitioning out of his role as NM AgrAbility Apprenticeship Program Coordinator this summer. Paul will always be a friend of the farm and we are so incredibly grateful for his presence and dedication to the program over the last several years. Sylvan Rose will take on the position. Sylvan will cross-train with Paul and be supported by a great team at Mandy's Farm.