



UMASH Upper Midwest
Agricultural Safety
and Health Center

UMASH SUCCESS STORIES

Aging in Place on The Farm



THE PROBLEM:

There are more older workers in agriculture than in any other industry, with **1 in 3 U.S. farmers over 65 years old**. The impacts of aging can make the hazardous environment of agricultural work **even more dangerous**.

OUR RESPONSE:

UMASH learned from aging farmers and their support systems that their biggest concerns about aging on the farm were accessing healthcare, managing stress and anxiety, maintaining balance and coordination, and preventing musculoskeletal injuries. UMASH responded to these concerns by **partnering with innovative teams in the Upper Midwest**:

AGING ON THE FARM PARTNER PROJECTS

University of Minnesota Occupational Therapy (OT)

facilitated virtual programming to five rural farmers across Minnesota to **reduce pain, improve balance and mobility, and continue activities of daily living**. OT students gained clinical experience working with rural farmers, designing two webinars for rural farmers to access on the UMASH website.

- This program introduced **OT as a resource for farmers** and shared practical tools and strategies to help farmers **adapt to bodily changes** while they age on the farm.
- **80% of farmers felt better able to manage changes** related to aging after participating in the program.
- The webinars have been viewed by almost **100 website users and over 40 times** on YouTube.



United Church of Christ Zumbrotta and Normandale Center for Healing and Wholeness

established a “Healthy Aging on the Farm” team of four faith-based organizations in a rural Minnesota county to **ask farmers about their concerns about aging in place on the farm** and how the community could best support them.

- Farmers shared their greatest challenges of aging on the farm: **maintaining their overall health and mobility and finding help with chores**.
- **Having more help around the home and adapting their home to be safer**, like installing handrails and ramps, would make aging at home easier for many farmers.
- This team plans to **create a resource guide** to increase the awareness and usage of programs already available in their communities for aging farmers.





PARTNER PROJECTS *(cont.)*

Aging in Place on The Farm

University of Wisconsin Occupational Therapy and American Parkinson's Disease Association's Wisconsin Chapter

created and distributed "Active@Home" toolkits to households with a family member with Parkinson's disease. The toolkits contained exercise and adaptive equipment, such as a modified jar opener, **to manage symptoms and increase independence**. They also offered telehealth programming to educate how to use each item to improve their symptoms.

- Participants were motivated to engage in the program for many reasons, including **"to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle"** and **"to live as normal for as long as possible with Parkinson's."**
- The toolkit is currently in **30 homes across rural WI**, with households sharing that the program and toolkit items were **very beneficial in their daily lives**.
- Students working on the project **gained valuable clinical and cultural skills** working with rural farmers with Parkinson's disease, preparing them well to work with future rural clients.



Big Stone County Area Memory Loss Connections

offered training, community gatherings, and memory loss kits to **reduce symptoms of dementia, increase awareness of dementia, and enhance the quality of dementia care** in their community.

- Over **120 physicians, nurses, and community members were trained** to improve the quality of care for older adults with dementia.
- The training **built connections** between healthcare providers and a local neuropsychologist, making **diagnosing and referring patients to dementia care easier and quicker**.
- Over **215 community members gathered** for "memory loss cafes" to **build community, share resources, and increase their understanding** of dementia.
- **25 memory loss kits were checked out more than 80 times** from a local library. The kits included items like toy tractors and farm magazines **to reduce the anxiety of memory loss** and bring back memories of life on the farm.



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