SUMMER 2021

New Mexico AgrAbility

Cultivating Accessible Agriculture

Project News

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THE NEW MEXICO AGRABILITY PROJECT IS FUNDED THROUGH A GRANT FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT AGRICULTURE UNDER AWARD CFDA 10.500 #2018-41590-28717

Summer Bloom
(Mac, 2021)

PROJECT DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Hello from the NM AgrAbility Project Team

As NMAP wraps up the third year of funding, I thought we might look back on some of the situations created by the coronavirus pandemic that radically upended our lives beginning in March 2020. As winter approached, there was concern that the flu season, coupled with the continually spreading coronavirus, would result in an increase of hospitalizations in an already maxed-out system. Thankfully, this didn't happen. In fact, influenza rates were at an all time low as most individuals were wearing masks, washing hands, and practicing social distancing. These practices, along with vaccinations, protected a majority of Americans from falling ill.

Two of the NMAP newsletters contained articles focused on stress and mental health. Nationally, reports emerged that farmers, ranchers, and agriculture workers were experiencing severe stress and high rates of suicide. In light of these troubling reports, NMAP acted in two ways:

- Joined the Western Region Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Project (WRASAP) research study: Stress and Farmers/Ranchers. Purpose: Explore the various stressors that Ag producers in the Western states face, as well as what types of information producers would most like to receive to help in managing stress. (On-going)

- Collaborated with the NM Department of Ag on a grant application for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network USDA Mental Health and Suicide Prevention funds. Scope of work: Disseminate materials and information to meet the needs of NMAP customers for evidence-based stress reduction information. (Pending award)

Now, as New Mexico begins to open up and return to some semblance of "normal," here are some highlights from the work our team accomplished despite the pandemic.

- Although some trainings and educational workshops were canceled, our University of New Mexico (UNM) and NM Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) partners successfully reached more than 160 participants with Zoom presentations covering five topic areas: Back injury prevention, safety, and adaptations; Hand injury prevention, safety, and adaptations; Hearing assistive technology for farmers and ranchers; Basic assistive technology for brain injury; and, assistive technology solutions for employment.

- Two UNM occupational therapy NMAP student interns participated in fieldwork at NMTAP and Mandy's Farm (MF non-profit). Additionally, MF pivoted the 2021 growing season to a primarily virtual model working with 11 apprentices and 16 community participants.

- Our team met with or provided information to potential clients, stayed engaged with the NMAP Advisory Council, and promoted NMAP through Zoom conferencing to approximately 50 individuals.

- Submitted a proposal to the USDA NIFA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. Award amount: $585,000. The scope of work includes business incubation, vocational rehabilitation support, and farming stipends to the NMAP apprenticeship graduates. (Under review)

These successes, accomplished despite all odds, serve to motivate our teams. We look forward to a robust and exciting 2022!

Lastly, we want to recognize the retirement of Dr. Paul Gutierrez, NMSU Cooperative Extension. We will miss his energy, sense of humor, and his expertise. Enjoy this new chapter in your life, Paul!

Cordially,

Sonja Koukel

Sonja Koukel
NMAP Program Director

WELCOME TO THE NMAP TEAM

Dr. Robert Hagevoort, a native of The Netherlands, is an Associate Professor and Extension Dairy Specialist at New Mexico State University. Prior to joining NMSU in November of 2005, Dr. Hagevoort served for over 10 years as an independent dairy management consultant in California. As an Extension Specialist, he works closely with the dairy industry on many emerging issues; environmental, regulatory, and otherwise. In an effort to rebuild a dairy program at NMSU, Hagevoort is the co-founder of the U.S. Dairy Education & Training Consortium. His current focus is the development and implementation of a comprehensive dairy workforce training and education program. Programs in dairy safety awareness, animal handling, parlor performance, calf care, feeder performance, and hospital and maternity care and mid-level leadership development are being developed and evaluated.

E-mail: dairydoc@nmsu.edu
Web: https://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/dairy/

APPRENTICE SPOTLIGHT

"Hi, my name is Jace Shingle, and I am the owner of JS Farm Fresh Eggs. I am from New Mexico and I received my Bachelor's degree in biology from the University of New Mexico. I have always had a passion to grow and nurture things, and from that I have created my chicken business selling eggs by the dozen. I currently have a flock of crested cream leg bar chickens that produce beautiful blue eggs located at Mandy's Farm. My chickens are free-range, free of antibiotics, and there is no genetic modification in my group. The goal of my business is to sell eggs and eventually move to a full-sized aquaponic farm to produce fish, eggs, and produce in a sustainable way."
(J. Shingles, personal communication, June 23, 2021)

Promoting success in agriculture

PARTNER UPDATES

UNM-OTGP

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY GRADUATE PROGRAM

Raised-bed building (Mac, 2021)

Dr. Carla Wilhite is supervising four occupational therapy interns for the New Mexico AgrAbility Project during the summer of 2021. Two students hail from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and two students are from the University of New Mexico. The interns hit the ground running applying skills they have honed through their professional programs.

Major activities have been in designing and developing an accessible microfarm demonstration plot at Mandy's Farm, creating webinars on low vision assistive technology and also women's ergonomics with NMTAP, and working with Vocational Access and Meaningful Opportunities for Success (VAMOS) program attendees at Mandy's Farm. Additionally, the interns have learned about safety issues with agricultural trailing equipment and tractors, manual squeeze chutes, and farm mobility devices.

The interns made one farm visit to a greenhouse operation in Curry County to assess for accessibility, home safety, and work modifications for a woman agricultural producer.

In their "spare time", the interns have been introduced to 3-D printing and scanning technologies at UNM-OTGP and are using Thingiverse, Tinkercad, and Makerbot software to design novel objects for printing.

Student Interns from UNLV (Wilhite, 2021)

NMTAP

NMTAP
New Mexico
Technology Assistance Program

The New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) did continue to provide services throughout the pandemic stay-at-home orders. With statewide restrictions lifting we will now be offering services in the office by appointment. This will allow for individuals with disabilities or professionals to enjoy a hands-on experience with Assistive Technology (AT) devices in the office before borrowing them to try them in their own environment. We have many AT devices that can improve vision, hearing, mobility, and other challenges that anyone has in agricultural environments, in the home, or the community. Services can be for anyone in a food growers family or work family. Call us to borrow a device for a short-term trial to see if it works for your needs, then we will help you find where to obtain it to make your life easier and safer!

We will continue to provide trainings detailing helpful devices on a video platform at this time. Many people have benefited from our trainings in a variety of areas, but specifically for farmers and ranchers with any vision or hearing loss. In February we provided a session for hearing loss, whether mild or more severe. Using loud equipment, hearing loss can develop gradually before it becomes apparent. Steps to protect hearing when working on the farm or ranch can make a difference, but there are also simple tools to hear those vital conversations. In June we provided a session on vision loss which can affect activities on the job as well as in daily home life. A few simple things can help protect vision or improve it to reduce continued worsening.

Julie LaJeunesse
AT Specialist with NMTAP

Check out our website at www.tap.gcd.state.nm.us or the NMAP website at https://agrability.nmsu.edu/ for upcoming trainings or to see all we have to offer.

NMTAP is also pleased to announce a new AT Specialist who has joined the team. Julie LaJeunesse brings experience in hearing technology and passion to help people achieve their goals in life. Staff members Julie, Jesse, or Maurice are available to help anyone in our fine state to find the tools that fit into their lifestyle. The health and wellbeing of our farmers and ranchers in NM is important as they provide us all food!!

MANDY'S FARM

Mandy's Farm is thrilled to have successfully launched another growing season for our apprentice farmers. As we enter the summer season, we have already navigated the continuing challenges of farming in a COVID-positive world, as well as significant shifts in seasonal weather patterns (from hail to heat waves).

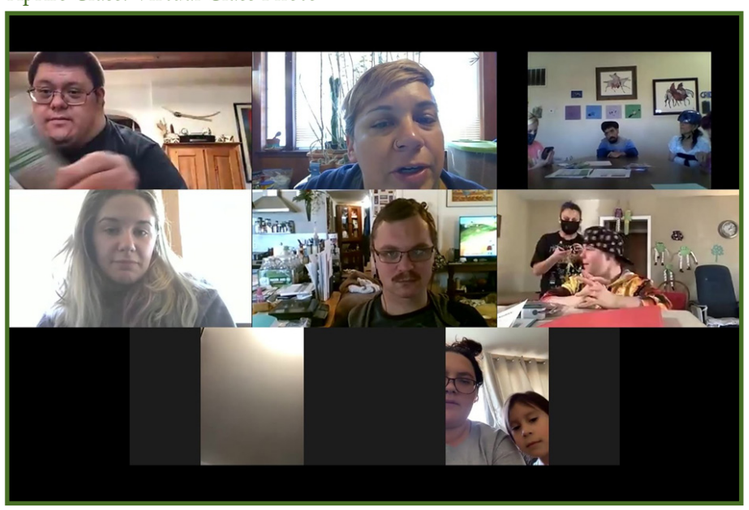
Given the unpredictability that 2020 brought, during 2021 we have continued to provide apprenticeship training and outreach through virtual workshops and technical assistance. There are currently eight first-year apprentices participating, cultivating their own food growing spaces of varying sizes. Many are growing their own food for the first time. As we reach early July, students are finally able to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Throughout the summer, we will continue to focus on harvesting and maintaining crop health. This is a time where things get grueling for many, especially those who are sensitive to heat. We have embraced working early in the mornings and resting through the hottest times of the day to help us stay safe and hydrated.

All of our second-year apprentices have continued to grow food. Two apprentices have chosen to expand their projects compared to what they managed last year. Our Occupational Therapy students from the University of New Mexico have supported our apprentices by helping them refine their business plans, marketing materials, and identifying assistive technology to support each apprentice's success.

Our program continues to exercise resilience in the face of change. One such change will require that we say goodbye to our program's educator, mentor, and creative lead as April Cox moves on to face new and exciting changes and challenges this August. We hope to introduce a new member of the AgrAbility team in the next newsletter. While we are sad to see April go, we are grateful for all she has done to build a culture of learning, collaboration, and confidence among our apprentice farmers.

Mandy's Farm is a working farm in the South Valley of Albuquerque, as well as a disability service provider, nonprofit organization, and the home of the apprenticeship portion of the New Mexico AgrAbility Project, focused on training and small business incubation for new farmers with disabilities.

April's Class: Virtual Class Photo



SUN SAFETY/SUN ILLNESS

Zoe Fonseca
UNM Occupational Therapy Student Intern

What is Sun Illness? Sun Illness can be classified as many things which can include sun poisoning and heat stroke. Sun poisoning generally means a severe case of sunburn, specifically from UV rays that can inflame your skin. Heatstroke is when your body overheats because you've spent too much time in high temperatures.

Why is it important? It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of sun illness as it can cause serious damage to your body if it goes untreated. This is an important topic to remember, especially in summer months, as this illness occurs mostly in the summer months.

Recognizing the Signs of Sun Illness
It is important to recognize the signs of sun poisoning and visit your doctor if you are experiencing these symptoms. If you believe you are having a heatstroke, it is important to contact your doctor immediately as this is a serious condition. Symptoms include:

- Rash
- Nausea
- Dehydration
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Lightheadedness
- Shortness of Breath
- Skin Redness and Blistering
- Headache
- Fever and Chills
- Pain and Tingling
- Facial Swelling
- High Body Temperature
- Altered Mental State
- Alteration in Sweating
- Rapid Breathing
- Flushed Skin
- Racing Heart

Resources

Koukel, S. (2020, March). Heat Stress: Signs and Prevention, Guide I-115. New Mexico State University, Las Cruces. https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_i/I115/welcome.html

https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/sun-safety/be-sunsmart

http://school.sunsafecolorado.org/wiss/wiss_index.aspx

https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/sun-safety.htm

What is Sun Safety? Sun safety means doing little things to help reduce your exposure to the sun while still being able to do your desired activities outdoors. Sun safety can be as affordable or as expensive as you make it and includes things like a good sun hat and sunscreen.

Why is it important? It is important to keep good sun-safe practices as many cancers are caused by too much exposure to UV rays, which are the rays that come from the sun. This type of ray can be damaging to skin cells, and it is important to protect your skin.

Best Practices for Sun Safety
Five Tips to Sun Safety:

1. Wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Wear clothing that has UPF protection for additional protection.
2. Apply water-resistant sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher and reapply every 2 hours.
3. Find a good sun hat with a large brim that covers your face and neck to help protect your neck and face.
4. Seek a shady spot to work in out of the sun; this can provide sun protection and a cooler area to work in.
5. Put on sunglasses to keep UV rays from reaching your eyes. This will provide protection for your eyes as well as making it easier to see the things you are working on.

STRESS REDUCTION/RESILIENCE

Desirey Archuleta
UNM Occupational Therapy Student Intern

Farming can be a very fulfilling and meaningful job. It can also be laborious and stressful. Every day has its obstacles that affect your life in varying ways. Stress is a normal thing to feel in this line of work. People in the farming and agricultural line of work are at risk for depression, anxiety, and suicide. There are many things that can be done to help reduce stress, and the first step is being able to recognize when we are stressed.
Stress is a state in which an individual has mental or emotional strain. This can be due to a one-time event such as a piece of equipment breaking or an event that is continually affecting the individual's life, such as lack of rain and other weather conditions that affects the crops.

Not all stress is bad! Acute stress provides us with motivation to complete a task as well as have excitement for an activity. This is a common type of stress and usually lasts a short amount of time. When stress becomes chronic or ongoing, it can become bad stress that is harmful to the body.

Farmers/ranchers can face many different events that can cause stress. These different stressors can impact your life in varying lengths of time. The events can last anywhere from hours to years. Below are a few examples of stressors that farmers/ranchers might be facing:

- Unpredictable weather
- Debt and loan payments
- Equipment breaking or needing repair
- Long work hours
- State and government regulations
- Livestock problems
- Injury

When you are experiencing stress for an extended amount of time, your body has a way of letting you know that it is experiencing something that is negatively impacting your body. Below are common side effects that can be stress related.

- Headache
- Racing heart
- Muscle tension/ache
- High blood pressure

References

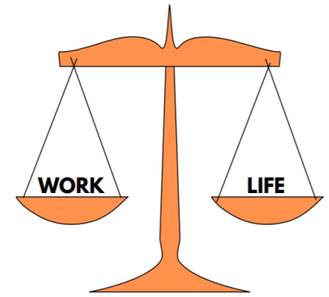
North Dakota State University. Farm Stress Fact Sheets: Stress Management for Farmers/Ranchers - Publications. (n.d.). https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/kids-family/farm-stress-fact-sheets-stress-management-for-farmers-ranchers

Stress Management for the Health of It. NASD. (n.d.). https://nasdonline.org/1445/d001245/stress-management-for-the-health-of-it.html

Stress: Signs, Symptoms, Management & Prevention. Cleveland Clinic. (n.d.). https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/11874-stress

TECHNIQUES TO HELP MANAGE STRESS

Mindfullness
It can be difficult to unwind and relax after a full day's work. Doing a mindfulness activity can help reduce stress and anxiety and help you to be more present in the moment.



Work/life balance
The work that has to be done can seem like it is never ending and there is always something to do. This may be true but remember that your body and mind need a break. Remember to spend time with family and friends and make a point to disconnect from work.

Self-care
With all the work that has to be done, it is easy to forget to take time for yourself. Not only is it important to get 7-9 hours of sleep, but eating nutritious food is also important. Both will give your body the energy it needs. Some relaxing activities can be sitting by a campfire, listening to music, and watching the sunset.

Planning
It can be helpful to set goals. This can help keep you motivated and allows you to break the work down into manageable pieces.

Remember to laugh
Although things do go wrong, it is good to joke about it and take a minute to laugh.

Talk with someone
Talk with other farmers, friends, family, or a therapist. Sometimes it is important to discuss and talk about the difficulties you are dealing with. Talking with others allows you to see that other people might be experiencing the same things and you can see how they are dealing with it.

WATERING SCHEDULE

Desirey Archuleta
UNM Occupational Therapy Student Intern

New Mexico is a place that has many challenges for farmers, and one of those challenges is the lack of water. Lots of farmers in New Mexico rely on water from the Rio Grande River. It is often that we see the river almost non-existent. Due to the lack of rain, there are lots of water restrictions. Below are some things that can be taken into consideration to help reduce the amount of water as well as still give your crops what they need.

Many farms utilize the flood irrigation method for watering their crops. This process has the crop positioned on a slight slope. The crops are then flooded with water beginning at the height point and the water runs down covering all the crops. The downside to this can be that you get a lot of runoff water as well as pooling at the bottom. Although this is not the most efficient way to water crops there are ways to improve your current setup or things to consider:

Things you can do to reduce your water waste

- Do not water between 11:00am - 7:00pm during the summer months as it is so hot that a high percentage of the water will evaporate rather than go to your crops.
- Consider drip irrigation. This can be expensive but it has been shown to be more efficient than flood irrigation as it more accurately waters the plants and there is a reduced amount of runoff and puddling.
- If you decide to have flood irrigation, dig wells to help divert the flood water and run-off to other plants.
- Consider a different type of soil. Fine-textured soils hold more water. The water does, however take longer to soak in, so it is important to water in short spurts of time but more often.
- Use cobble mulch, pebbles, stone, hay, woodchips, or volcanic ash on top of your soil to help trap the moisture.

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WATER SAFETY

Desirey Archuleta
UNM Occupational Therapy Student Intern

New Mexico is a beautiful place in the summer, full of beautiful sunsets. Unfortunately, this beautiful place also comes with dry heat with temperatures averaging around 90 degrees in the summer. As a result, individuals working outside are more prone to dehydration.

Dehydration occurs when not enough water is consumed, and your body loses or uses more water than what it has. Children and older individuals are more likely to get dehydration. A likely cause for dehydration for children is having diarrhea. Adults' bodies tend to hold less water as they get older. Many older individuals also take medication that dehydrates them, making it more challenging to keep hydrated.

Too much water can also have a negative effect on our body. When you drink water, it reduces the salt levels in your blood. If you eat good meals, and hydrate your body is able to replenish and balance the salt level. Do not drink more than 48 oz per hour as this could drastically drop the salt levels and have negative side effects.

What you can do to prevent dehydration:

- Hydrate in the morning. Have a glass of water before you start your day.
- When working outside in the heat, drink 1 cup = 8oz of water every 15-20 minutes.
- Try to drink small amounts of water more frequently rather than trying to drink lots of water at one time.
- Try to work early in the morning when it is cooler.
- Do not wait until you are thirsty. If you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated.
- Do not skip meals. Make sure you are eating your fruits and vegetables as they are another source of water for your body.
- Set a timer to remind yourself to drink some water.

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, December 3). Get the facts: Drinking water and intake. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/data-statistics/plain-water-the-healthier-choice.html

Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. (2019, September 19). Dehydration. Mayo Clinic. https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dehydration/symptoms-causes/syc-20354086

Weather averages Albuquerque West, New Mexico. Temperature - Precipitation - Sunshine - Snowfall. (n.d.). https://www.usclimatedata.com/climate/albuquerque-west/new-mexico/united-states/usnm0005

VISION THIS

Nhu Mac
UNLV Occupational Therapy Student Intern

Vision occurs when light enters your eye and is interpreted by the brain. First, the light passes through the transparent eye surface (cornea) and continues through the pupil. Since the pupil is the opening to the inside of the eye, it reacts by using the muscle known as the iris to control the amount of light coming in. Once light passes through here, it meets the lens, focusing the light on the back of the eye (retina). From here, light energy is converted into a nerve signal via the optic nerve and carried to the brain, where it is then interpreted (A.D.A.M., 2021). Thus, the meaningful sensation of vision is through nerve signals sent to the brain collected from the surrounding environment through light.

When light enters the eye, it is causing an electrical nerve threshold, activating the action potential of the cells to create a nerve signal that will reach the brain. As we age, this threshold increases, which means you need more stimulation to receive the nerve signal in the brain (A.D.A.M., 2021). In addition, there are also structural changes causing a decreased sensation of the cornea, drop in the sharpness of your vision (visual acuity), reduction of reaction time of the pupil, decrease in muscle strength, and change in the color of the lens. So, although aging is inevitable, there are preventative strategies, compensatory techniques, adaptive equipment (AE), and assistive technology (AT) to assist with these changes.

Here are some things you can do to assist with vision change for everyone, including farmers and ranchers:

Preventative care:

- Wear safety glasses
- Wear sunglasses
- Avoid direct sun exposure
- Regular follow up with eye doctor and medical doctor

Compensatory techniques:

- Decrease glare
- Increase lighting
- Use LED light bulbs
- Increase contrast to distinguish items
- Reflective and/or glow in the dark tapes on stairs and walkways

Adaptive equipment:

- Glasses
- Bifocal glasses
- Contact lenses
- Magnifiers

Assistive Technology:

- LED flashlight
- Talking calculator
- Illuminated hoof pick
- LevALERT bin level indicator
- Eyewear with LED lights
- Back-up camera with an enlarged rearview mirror

LED eye glasses (Mac, 2021)

References:
A.D.A.M. Medical Encyclopedia [Internet]. Johns Creek (GA): Ebix, Inc., A.D.A.M.; c1997-2020. Aging changes in the senses. https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003247.htm

ERGONOMICS FOR MICRO FARMING

Zoe Fonseca
UNM Occupational Therapy Student Intern

Introduction to Ergonomics

What is ergonomics? Ergonomics is the science of the work you do to fit your body's needs. These modifications can help improve your efficiency and help prevent or reduce discomfort you might feel. An important factor in ergonomics is keeping you safe while completing your necessary tasks. An example is using a kneeling pad when gardening rather than placing your knees on the hard ground.

Why is it important? It is important to have good ergonomics at your microfarm to prevent yourself from getting injured. This can also help you conserve your energy and allow for more productive work time.

General Rules

- Rotate throughout your various jobs. If you need to weed, plant seeds, water, and haul trash, it is a good idea to break these tasks up and work in shorter periods of time to avoid tiring your muscles out.
- Fit your workstation to your body. Your planting station might be too high or too low for your body. You might notice this if you are having aches and pains while doing this task.
- Have your most frequently used tools within a close distance so that you are not having to bend and reach too far away.
- When picking up items, use your legs and not your back to avoid a serious back injury.
- Find the right tool for your body. If you have a weak grip, it might be better to use a larger handled item when microfarming.

Ergonomic handle cultivator

Microfarming Modifications

Raised beds: The big advantage to using a raised bed for your microfarm is that it takes much of the strain off your back and knees while still allowing for ample space in the bed. Raised beds are also a great option if you are micro-farming from a wheelchair, as it can be adjusted to the right height to fit your body.

© 2021 Universal Design Style. http://www.universaldesignstyle.com/terraform-wheelchair-accessible-garden-kit/

TECHNOLOGY CORNER

FROM THE NATIONAL AGRABILITY TOOLBOX

TOOLS FOR FARMERS AND RANCHERS WITH LOW VISION

TALKING TAPE MEASURE

This speaking measuring device for those with low vision will come in handy for those who love to work with their hands but find the tiny lines on a measuring device difficult or impossible to read. This talking measuring tape measures lengths up to 16 feet or five meters. It is excellent for carpentry workers with low vision. Just press the button, and it announces the length. The measuring unit has its own belt clip and an automatic shut-off.
It is good for use in imperial or metric measuring. It does require a 9-volt battery (not included). Written directions and a free zippered case are included. A Spanish language version is also available.

Cost: $130

https://www.maxiaids.com/talking-tape-measure-english

HANDS FREE MAGNIFIER

A hands-free optical binocular magnifier with precision ground and polished glass lens are used to view items inches away. Powerful magnification makes this great for viewing fine print or small items without eye strain. The adjustable frame is made of lightweight, durable, impact-resistant materials. Pivot knobs can also adjust to hold the visor in any position for easy flip-up when not in use. It can be worn over prescription or safety eyeglasses. Additional lenses, either for replacement or an alternate power, are available separately.
The Optivisor Optical Glass Binocular Magnifiers range from 1.0X to 4.0X magnification and also have an optional light for purchase.

Cost: $52

https://www.maxiaids.com/optivisor-optical-glass-binocular-magnifier-10-diopter-35x

FLAT STEEL FRAMING SQUARE

This framing square with raised dots can be used as a square, ruler, and straight edge. Edges have a single dot at each 1/8", 2 raised dots at each 1/2", and 3 raised dots at each 1". Inside and outside edges of tongue and blade are marked. This product measures 24" x 16" in size.

Cost: $40

https://www.maxiaids.com/flat-steel-framing-square

MEET THE NEW INTERNS

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO (UNM)

Zoe Fonseca

My name is Zoe Fonseca, and I am currently completing my fieldwork rotations to complete my Master's degree in Occupational Therapy with the University of New Mexico. I grew up in Carson, NM (near Taos, NM), off the grid for part of my life. This has ingrained a deep love for the outdoors, animals, and self-sustainability. My goal for my time at NMAgrAbility is to learn as much as I can and to connect with the people in my community. I am hopeful to eventually work with the community again once I graduate and become an occupational therapist.

Desirey Archuleta

My name is Desirey Archuleta, and I am currently a student in the Occupational Therapy Master's program at the University of New Mexico (UNM). I grew up in Pecos, New Mexico, where I found a love for the outdoors and the community. I got my undergraduate degree in psychology from New Mexico State University (NMSU). I went on to become a teacher at a school that works with children with learning difficulties and discovered the world of occupational therapy. While working on getting into the program, I worked in the rehab department at Kindred Hospital (a long-term acute facility). I am excited to be part of the NMAgrAbility team, and I am excited to learn from the community.

MEET THE SUMMER INTERNS

UNIVERSITY OF LAS VEGAS NEVADA (UNLV)

Jen Zielinski

Hi! My name is Jen Zielinski. I am currently a student in the Occupational Therapy Doctorate program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). I grew up in Colorado where I naturally gained a love for the outdoors and the community. I received a Bachelor of Science in audiology and speech-language sciences with a minor in special education from the University of Northern Colorado (UNC). My intention was to become a Speech-Language Pathologist. For the last several years, I have worked for the Denver public school system with students who have special needs. Within this setting, I discovered what occupational therapists do, the different roles they play, and I decided this is where I need to be. I also have a degree in fine art and graphic design. I am grateful to be a part of the NMAgrAbility team, and I am looking forward to learning as much as possible about the program and the communities AgrAbility serves.

Nhu Mac

Hello! My name is Nhu Mac, and I am currently attending the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to pursue my Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (OT). I have been a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA/L) since 2016 with experience in outpatient pediatric, schools, home health, hands therapy, and skilled nursing homes. Thus, being a part of the NMArgAbility team for the summer of 2021 is such a fantastic opportunity for me to gain more experience and learn more about OT in the community setting. In addition to preventative measures, I am discovering many possibilities to improve and maintain the occupations of farmers, ranchers, food growers, and agricultural workers with disabilities and their family members through the program and its partners. As I finish my fieldwork here, I am looking forward to increasing my OT lenses in accessibility for everyone in the community through the program.