

News from Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH) and Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH)  
Volume 29, Issue 1 - December 2022

## Global health and safety: Farmers are the solution and an important part of the transformation

by Gayle Olson, MS, CHES, I-CASH Assistant to the Director and Jenn Patterson, MLitt, GPCAH Center Coordinator

The Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health (MRASH) Conference was held November 16-17, 2022, in Cedar Rapids, and brought together farmers, students, frontline healthcare workers, faculty, researchers, government officials, and other ag safety and health professionals to “Re-imagine a safe and health future for agriculture.”

Keynote speaker Matt Russel, a fifth-generation Iowa farmer and State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), kicked off the conference with a look at changing trends affecting the future of agriculture as the entire world has been affected by supply chain and worker shortages, and ongoing changes in the climate, the economy, and technology.

Russell defined agriculture as “managing living systems to solve human problems.” He said we are in the midst of a major paradigm shift that agriculture has embraced. Instead of digging up carbon and forcing nature to do what we needed it to do, we are working with nature. We are partnering with natural systems – the sun, wind, carbon cycle, biology of the soil – to get what we need. There is still a long ways to go, but Russell said agriculture is well on its way in that direction. One of Russell’s main themes was identifying and investing in leadership. He encouraged conference attendees to focus on leadership development on the farms themselves.



The MRASH keynote speaker was Matt Russel, USDA FSA.

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Russell said Iowa, specifically, and the Midwest in general, is uniquely positioned to drive the next agricultural revolution – to partner with nature and shape our future – given the land and what it can grow in this area. We have a large number of independent farmers, research institutions/public universities on the leading edge of agricultural research, and many Midwestern farm groups. He emphasized our people are essential to change.

“Our farmers play a huge role in shaping that future and the key to that is smart government and investing in our farmers and agricultural communities to encourage climate-smart agriculture. Farmers need to be at the center of all of that,” Russell said.

Farmers are under great stress, but they are not alone. We are all frustrated, and we need to help move farmers into leadership within a system that is driven by human innovation. “We need to innovate really quickly, to get to where we need to go,” Russell said. What point is the most cost-effective and fastest way to meet this innovative need? “Farmers are at the heart of this,” he said.

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## Director's Message

by Brandi Janssen, PhD

After two years online, it was a treat to be able to gather in person for the 2022 MRASH conference. We convened at the Hotel at Kirkwood Center for two days of engaging conversations aimed at “Re-imagining a Safe and Healthy Future for Agriculture.” The program kicked off with a keynote address from Iowa Farm Service Agency Director and owner of Coyote Run Farm, Matt Russell. His discussion of how we integrate good policy with good farming set us up for many lively discussions and reflections. Our attendees had the opportunity to tour two of Kirkwood Community College’s stellar programs: the Agriculture Sciences and Horticulture Program and the Health Simulation Center. This was followed by a panel discussion of Kirkwood Community College ag students who discussed their own visions for the future of agriculture.



Brandi Janssen, PhD

We didn’t leave out the excellent research and heard from presenters who are addressing some of the most challenging issues in agricultural safety in health. Topics included reducing Covid-19 infections in migrant workers, research on the association between county ordinances allowing off-road vehicles on public roads and crash rates, exposure assessment in cattle feedyards, and farm adolescent mental health. Finally, we were able to present the I-CASH Hall of Fame Award to Kathy Leinenkugel and the Outstanding Youth Grant Award to the Louisa County 4-H chapter (see page 4).

The conference also provided an opportunity for both the Great Plains Center and I-CASH to convene with our advisors to reflect on the past year and start planning for the next. I-CASH is looking forward to a productive 2023. It is the 25th anniversary of our Youth Grant Program, which we have highlighted in the 2023 Farm Safety Calendar. You can pick up your calendar at your local FSA or Extension office this winter. We anticipate more in-person events, starting with the Practical Farmers of Iowa conference, where we will have an exhibit.

Wishing you all a safe and healthy 2023.

Brandi Janssen

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## 2022 MRASH Conference Highlights

by Gayle Olson, MS, CHES, I-CASH Assistant to the Director

MRASH 2022 is in the books! After two years of seeing MRASH participants only on a Zoom screen, it was a true delight for many of us to be able to gather in person this year at the Hotel at Kirkwood Center in Cedar Rapids. And Kirkwood did not disappoint!



The conference kicked off on Wednesday, November 15 with a pre-conference workshop on Qualitative Respirator Fit Testing, sponsored and led by the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH). Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (I-CASH) Advisory Board met on Wednesday evening and GPCAH's Advisory Committee met on Thursday evening.

In addition to the keynote session based on our conference theme of "Re-imagining a Safe and Healthy Future for Agriculture," we were able to enjoy many special Kirkwood Community College features. The hotel staff went over and above by integrating local food produced by area farmers into our menu. The Ag Sciences, Horticulture and Nursing programs put together a choice of two outstanding tours of their programs, featuring several simulations they have incorporated into their training programs. One participant wrote "I really enjoyed the Kirkwood tours – I thought it was a great way to move to discussion/learning into a hands-on setting to see principles put into practice." Kirkwood students blew us away with their thoughtful and honest responses about their own visions of safe and healthy agriculture during the panel discussion facilitated by Dr. Josie Rudolph. After a number of interesting flashtalks, attendees were able to view displays by our sponsors and exhibitors, listen to some great music and network with other attendees while eating delicious food.



The MRASH student panel discussion was facilitated by Dr. Josie Rudolph, University of Illinois.

Thursday morning brought 17 different presentations to our concurrent sessions with topics ranging from adolescents to media outreach to virtual farm visits. After the awards luncheon the conference closed with small group discussions facilitated by Ahna Kruzic. Participants had an opportunity to reflect on what they learned over the course of the conference, considerations for future ag safety and health work and commitments they personally wanted to make.

In addition to those who traveled to Cedar Rapids, approximately 20 more participants joined via Zoom. Technology for a hybrid conference is challenging. We couldn't have done it without the talents of Risto Rautiainen and Abdoulaziz (Axix) Abdoulaye from the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. A huge shout of appreciation to both Risto and Aziz!

We were again able to offer a reduced cost for the conference to farmers, students and frontline medical staff due to the generosity of our three main sponsors, [I-CASH](#), [GPCAH](#) and [CS-CASH](#), and commercial and non-profit exhibitors: FarmTek, Relay Iowa, Ag Health and Safety Alliance, AgriSafe, Center for Global and Environmental Research, Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health (UMASH), Simulation in Motion and Autonomic Driving Systems for Rural America. Please help us convey our thanks to them for their participation and commitment.

Our planning committee worked through a challenging year to plan an interesting and varied program for those attending both in-person and virtually. From their thoughtful consideration and willing contributions in the

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## Promoting Extension Ladder Safety at the FFA Convention

by Jenn Patterson, MLitt, GPCAH Center Coordinator

Marsha Cheyney took new safety posters and a Plinko activity highlighting extension ladder safety to the 95th FFA Convention and Expo in Indianapolis. Over 1,000 students participated in the new activity that emphasizes planning for safe ladder use, selecting the appropriate ladder to do the job, inspecting the ladder, and how to safely use an extension ladder.

Participants indicated this new activity is a fun way to randomize ladder scenarios and answer the question: Can you do this job safely with your ladder? Students who got the “right” answer got a prize (until we ran out) and their passport stamped. Those who chose the “wrong” answer (or did not choose the best answer) still got their passport stamped, and we explained why there was a better answer to the question so they understood the considerations they needed to make when choosing a ladder for the job.

Visit the GPCAH [Resource Page](#) for information on safety and health topics that can be used by operators, managers, families, employees, and others interested in agricultural health and safety.



The GPCAH displayed new safety posters and a Plinko activity highlighting extension ladder safety at the 95th FFA Convention and Expo in Indianapolis.

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*MRASH continued from page 3*

planning stages through their facilitation and leadership in the execution of the conference, they made all the difference in the world and we are grateful for each of them! On behalf of Ralph Altmaier and I from I-CASH and Marsha Cheyney and Jenn Patterson from GPCAH, we would like to recognize Florence Becot from the National Farm Medicine Center, Devon Charlier and Carol Peterson of UMASH, Jana Davidson of the Progressive Ag Foundation, Ellen Duyzen of CS-CASH, Charlotte Halverson of the AgriSafe Network, Jan Libbey of the Iowa Food Systems Coalition, and Josie Rudolphi from the University of Illinois.

MRASH is fortunate to have so many dedicated and attentive participants. It is always our intention to engage with the communities where we hold our conference and to give farmers’ voices a platform. Here are some of the comments from our attendees:

- *Nice blend of hard science and social science*
- *This was a wonderful, engaging experience and I enjoyed the variety of sessions & how we had engagement outside of conference venue*
- *I have a greater appreciation for/understanding of just how wide this field is – I have ideas to explore this*
- *Better understanding of farmer community will make me more aware when creating educational resources*

The evaluations help us select topics and speakers for our next conference. The March newsletter will have details about the 2023 MRASH Conference including dates, location and theme.

# Outstanding I-CASH Youth Grant Award

by Brandi Janssen, PhD, I-CASH Director

Each year, I-CASH awards small grants to Iowa youth groups to carry out projects that raise awareness about farm safety and health in their communities. Most of the projects are conducted over the summer. In the fall, the I-CASH staff awards one project an Outstanding Youth Grant Award that is presented at the MRASH conference in November.

This year, the award went to ISU Extension and Outreach, Louisa County for a Progressive Ag Safety Day held in September for 150 fifth graders. The project served students who live in Louisa, Muscatine, Henry, Washington, and Des Moines counties. Area 4-H members planned the events and developed the topics that were presented to the elementary students. The event covered many of the usual topics that are appropriate for these events: Power Take Off (PTO) safety, basic first aid, grain bin safety, helmet use, sun safety, and animal safety, among others. What set this project apart from the others was an 8-minute video the 4-H members developed and produced that showed the 5th grade students and the 4-H and farmer instructors reflect on what they learned throughout the day.



According to the fifth graders who participated, they learned that it doesn't take any longer to walk around a moving PTO shaft than to go over, and doing so could save your life. They also learned that you should always use a helmet when riding a bike and wear a life jacket when in a boat.

4-H members who helped deliver the safety messages also reflected on the farm safety day. One said, "I enjoy being here because I get to teach kids how to be safe, but I get to have fun with it." Mike Jamison, Louisa County Farm Bureau president also helped deliver safety messages during the event. He said, "the highlight of the day is being able to reach out to those kids and show how it just takes a few seconds to think about safety."

4-H Program Director Samantha Jamison accepted the Outstanding Youth Grant award at the MRASH conference. She noted in her remarks that "reflection" is an important part of the 4-H curriculum. It's important for both learners and teachers to reflect on the information that was shared during the safety day and it reinforces these critical farm safety messages to young people in rural communities.

Visit [www.i-cash.org](http://www.i-cash.org) for information on the I-CASH Youth Grant Program

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*Global health and safety continued from page 1*

Russell laid out some of the ways that farmers and smart government can work together for success. He encourages anyone who wants to be an agricultural leader to apply for job opportunities at USDA (<https://usda.usajobs.gov/>).

Following Russell's keynote was an engaging panel discussion, featuring Ahna Kruzic, Associate Director of the Regenerative Agriculture Foundation who challenged us to not forget young and beginning farmers who are frequently from under-represented groups. Jesse Bell, Director of the Water, Climate and Health Program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center emphasized that how we prepare and respond to climate change is what will influence the human health outcomes we see from the changing climate and its impact on many social determinants of health. Mary Hendrickson, Director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security at the University of Missouri pointed out that the choices farmers are able to make as they face the challenges today are constrained by a consolidated food and agriculture system, providing some of the major stressors to farmers' mental health.

Conference attendees were very appreciative of the broader discussion of agriculture and insight into how to be prepared for the resulting health and safety needs. One of the participants wrote on their evaluation, "The entire Wednesday morning session introduced innovative thinking. I liked the thinking about the roles of regenerative agriculture & the importance of diversity & behavioral health."

## Recommended podcasts: Listen, learn, and stay safe on the farm

by Jenn Patterson, MLitt, GPCAH Center Coordinator

Thirty-five percent of U.S. farmers listen to ag-related podcasts, often listening for up to 12-hours a day while working. Since there are over 2.4 million podcasts out there from which to choose, GPCAH would like to recommend a few that may appeal specifically to our *Alive and Well* readers.



FarmSafe Podcast, produced by GPCAH faculty, staff, and students, consists of 15-minute episodes intended to reduce injuries and illness on the farm by improving awareness of health and safety risk factors. First-hand stories are followed by evidence-based recommendations on topics such as women in agriculture, grain bin safety, cold weather, and much more. Online resources are also available for our listeners so you can follow-up on topics that are especially important to you. If you have a topic in mind, email us at [cph-greatplainscenter@uiowa.edu](mailto:cph-greatplainscenter@uiowa.edu) or take the

[survey](https://bit.ly//GotoFarmSafe). Visit [bit.ly//GotoFarmSafe](https://bit.ly//GotoFarmSafe) or listen on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

AgriSafe Network's [Talking Total Farmer Health](https://www.agrisafe.org/talking-total-farmer-health) is a monthly podcast dedicated to protecting the people that feed the world by supporting health and safety professionals, ensuring access to preventative services for farm families and the agricultural community. Recent episodes have covered concerns for aging workers in ag, health insurance, food in the field, mental health resources, and respiratory health. If you'd like to suggest topics, or have a story you'd like to share, contact AgriSafe Network by email at [info@agrisafe.org](mailto:info@agrisafe.org) and title your email "T T F H Podcast." To see more from AgriSafe, including webinars and a newsletter, visit [www.agrisafe.org](https://www.agrisafe.org).



Al Travis is "your guy who knows a guy." Carolyn Sheridan and other Ag Health & Safety Alliance team members join "The Al Travis Show" to cover a wide range of relevant ag health and safety topics during this weekly, live 30-minute radio show. Recent topics include: winter weather prep, carpal tunnel, respiratory protection, hearing protection, and harvest safety. You can listen to the live show 10AM to 12PM M-F on KDHL AM920 or download the podcast at <https://aghealthandsafety.com/altravisshow/> and listen when you want.

### ***What is a podcast?***

*Podcasts are short, entertaining audio updates about current events and topics where informative guests talk about new topics that you may find interesting. Unlike radio shows, podcasts are available to download 24/7, so you can listen when it is most convenient for you.*



NEWS AND UPDATES

**Agricultural Safety and Health: The Core Course 2023**  
**Save the Dates for the HYBRID course: June 1, 2, 16, 23, 30.**  
The course provides information and skills needed to enable safety and health professionals to anticipate, recognize, and prevent occupational illnesses and injuries among members of the agricultural community. Activities include classroom instruction, farm tours, case studies, interactive and hands-on exercises, small group discussions, and producer, provider and industry perspectives. Expert instruction is provided by experienced faculty and specialists, including board certified physicians, nurses, veterinarians, and certified industrial hygienists. Course updates will be available on the [website](#).

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**2023 I-CASH Agricultural Youth Grants**  
Applications for the 2023 I-CASH Agricultural Youth Grants are now available on the I-CASH [website](#). Each year I-CASH provides funds for community grants to youth groups aimed at the prevention of farm-related injury. In addition, I-CASH awards an Outstanding Youth Grant and the winners are invited to present their project at the annual MRASH Conference. Past projects have included distributing safety supplies such as ear plugs and sunscreen, building farm safety hazard displays, and developing agricultural safety and health materials and presentations. Grants are only available for youth groups and organizations in Iowa. **Applications are due April 15th**, visit [www.i-cash.org](http://www.i-cash.org) for details on the Youth Grant program.

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**CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**  
The International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health (ISASH) invites abstract submissions for the 2023 Annual Conference in Tampa, Florida. Conference dates are June 18-21, 2023, and the theme is “The sun shines on it all: Sharing responsibility for agricultural health and safety.” Submit abstracts at <https://isash.org/isash-2023-abstract-submission/>

Upcoming Events

January 19-21

Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference

Ames, IA

January 31 - February 2

Iowa Ag Expo

Des Moines, IA

March 20-23

AgrAbility National Training Workshop

Spokane, WA

March 28-29

2023 Public Health Conference of Iowa

Ames, IA

April 15

I-CASH Youth Grant Deadline

May 16-19

National Rural Health Conference

San Diego, CA

May 22-24

American Industrial Hygiene Conference & Expo

Phoenix, AZ

June 1, 2, 16, 23, 30

Agricultural Safety and Health: The Core Course

Hybrid Event/Iowa City, IA

June 18-21

International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health (ISASH) Conference

Tampa, FL

July 12-15

Agricultural Health and Safety Course

Omaha, NE



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