

## Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Conference Celebrates Youth

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

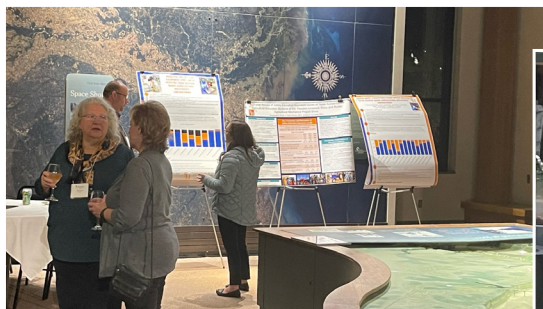
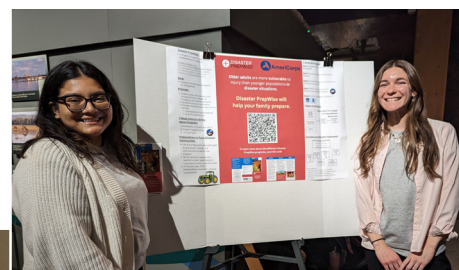
In honor of 25 years of I-CASH's Agricultural Youth Safety Grants, the 2023 Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Conference (MRASH) was dedicated to "Celebrating Youth on the Farm." And celebrate we did! Iowa's State FFA President, Holly Schmitt, delivered an excellent keynote presentation on "Opportunities and Concerns of Youth In Agriculture Yesterday and Today" relating some of her own experiences growing up on a NE Iowa dairy farm and being involved in both 4-H and FFA. She then joined a multigenerational panel to address opportunities and concerns in agriculture from different perspectives. The two grandfathers on the panel discussed changes over the course of their farming careers and concerns for their grandchildren. The panel was moderated by Josie Rudolphi from the University of Illinois.



The MRASH keynote panel addressed opportunities and concerns in agriculture from different perspectives.

Following the keynote session, participants attended a variety of presentations during the four breakout sessions. Over thirty speakers from nine states submitted abstracts for presentations and posters, and many were first time MRASH attendees. For details visit the [conference website](#).

The evening poster reception was held at the National Mississippi River Museum, a beautiful venue that combines an aquarium with exhibits on regional history. Attendees enjoyed delicious refreshments and listened to the River Reeds saxophone quartet while viewing posters, visiting museum displays and networking with colleagues.



MRASH poster reception at the National Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque, IA.

One poster display especially fit with the MRASH theme to celebrate youth. Two middle school 4-H members from Clinton County, Kara Olson and Quinn Levien, turned their experience with a utility task vehicle (UTV) rollover into a poster and presentations that have been given at several events, including the Iowa State Fair.

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## Director's Message

by Renée Anthony PhD, CIH, CSP

We are close to putting a bow on 2023 and calling it a year. I want to thank all of our readers for taking time to see what is going on in agricultural safety and health, and for all of our partners who have been working to educate and develop interventions to protect farmers from persistent and new hazards emerging on the farm.

At the end of the year, we completed testing of some innovative outreach tools to help youth (and others) better understand the personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for tasks on the farm. At the FFA conference, Marsha Cheyney and Libby Presnall used the “Wheel of Fortune” to lure in conference attendees to the booth, who then had to select a set of PPE that is optimal for a given farming task (see page 7). We will be working on kits and instructions to allow others to use these kits in the classroom. FFA instructors think this could be a useful tool to explain hazards and attire needed before taking students on a farm tour, particularly those who are going their first time.



Renée Anthony PhD,  
CIH, CSP

We have also wrapped up our second season of the FarmSafe podcast, and in November started season 3, with our new host, Libby Presnall. Look forward to upcoming episodes that include best practices for emergency preparedness and ergonomic considerations to reduce musculoskeletal injuries that are associated with farming practices. We kicked off the new season in November, and you can find us on our [website](#) or wherever you listen to your podcasts. If you have an idea for an episode, or have a burning safety and health question you want answered, let us know.

Late in 2023, we received funding for a [new project](#) to develop and evaluate new resources to help care givers better support their farm-family members with dementia. In early 2021, we shared with our [readers](#) new findings regarding agricultural workers having higher risk of dementia. We have received new funding to help improve safety of farmers living with dementia. Researchers Kanika Arora and Julie Bobitt are collaborating with the Alzheimer's Association to develop farm-relevant guidance to help family members protect farmers living with dementia from farming hazards. We will reach out to invite farming family members who are care givers to someone with dementia to participate in training sessions and to give feedback on this program.

Finally, as we wrapped up our previous 5-year project period (which was extended to a 6<sup>th</sup> year due to the global pandemic), our Evaluation team completed a multi-cycle evaluation of research activities to reflect on how our work has led to adoption of new knowledge from our studies and how we have moved from fundamental “hazard identification” to “testing and developing” tools to improve the health and safety of our farmworkers. (See figure on page 3). This work was presented at the October 2023 American Evaluation Association meeting in Indianapolis as a way to assess the contributions of the past 20 years of the GPCAH research activities. Additional summaries are on our [website](#).

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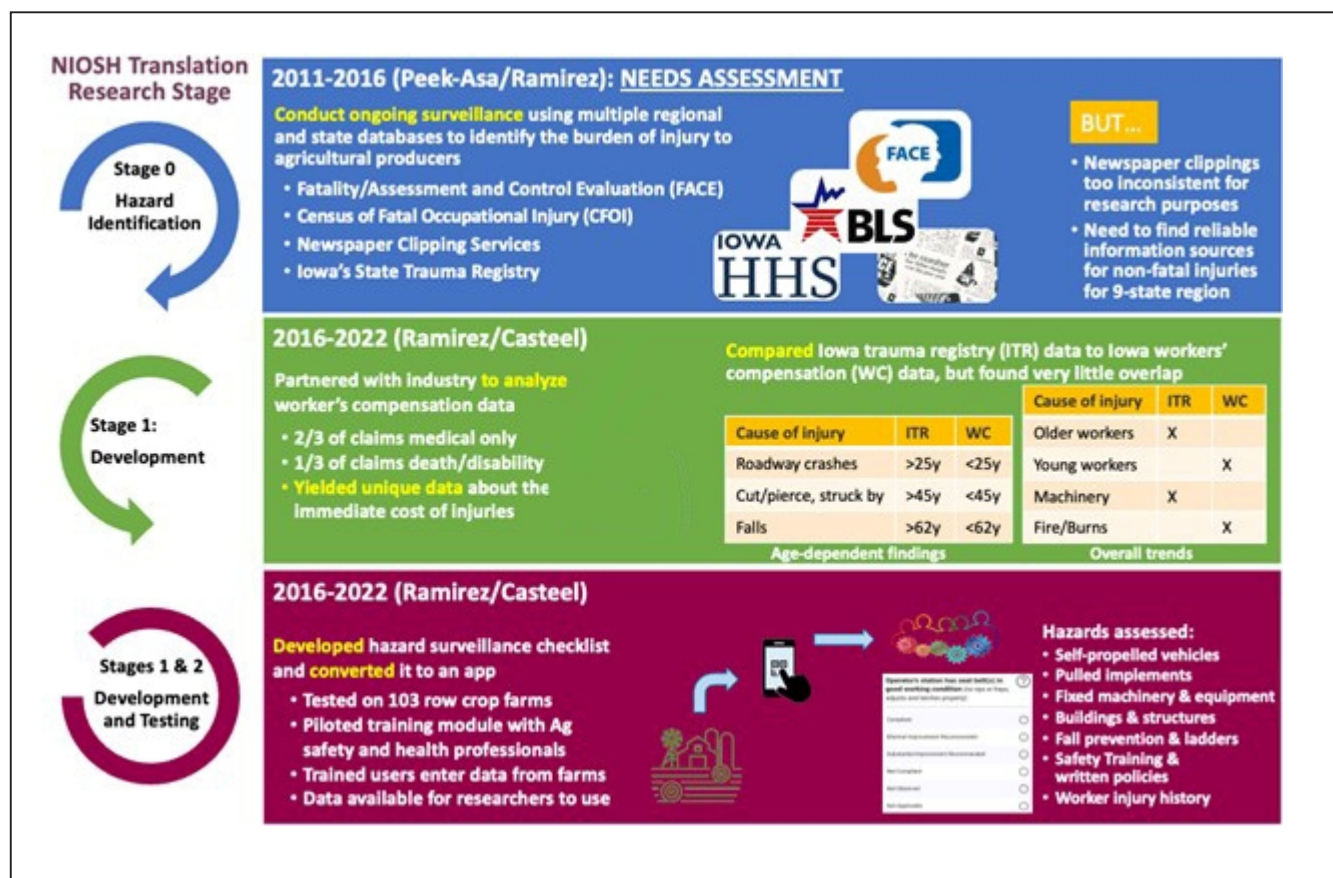
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**GREAT PLAINS**  
Center for Agricultural Health





As we enter into the colder winter months, we wish everyone a restful and restorative winter season. We will continue to develop new resources and post them on our web page, so follow us on social media or look for updates in the [Resources](#) pages on our web site.

Dr. Renée Anthony directs the GPCAH, housed in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health of the College of Public Health. She can be reached at 319/335-4429 ([renee-anthony@uiowa.edu](mailto:renee-anthony@uiowa.edu)).

## FarmSafe Podcast – Season 3

by Libby Presnell, MPH, GPCAH Research Assistant

Season 3 of the [FarmSafe Podcast](#) was launched on November 8, 2023. As a recent MPH graduate from the University of Iowa College of Public Health, I work in both the research and the outreach core of GPCAH, and also host the FarmSafe podcast.

Season 3 will feature the voices of our Midwest farmers, sharing personal experiences about their work and lives on the farm. We will hear directly from experts in the field of agricultural safety and health, covering a variety of topics, from tractor and grain bin safety to emergency preparedness and rural response. To engage podcast listeners, we have added an “episode ask,” or action item, at the end of each episode that relates to topic covered. Keeping it simple for the welcome episode, we asked our listeners to visit the GPCAH [Resources page](#) and browse the resources offered to farmers.

Stay tuned for our New Year’s special, where we will be asking the agricultural community about what they plan on doing to stay safe and healthy in 2024! Catch up on the FarmSafe episodes at [FarmSafe Podcast](#).



Libby Presnell hosts season 3 of the FarmSafe podcast.

The second day of MRASH kicked off with “Integrating Research and Public Policy”. Sally Stutsman, former Johnson County Supervisor and Iowa legislator, and Brad Wolters, Director of Federal Government Relations for the Marshfield Clinic Health System, presented perspectives on communication with policy makers. Florence Becot from the National Farm Medicine Center explained how she and her colleagues were able to leverage their research to gain support for improved childcare within the proposed Farm Bill. In the second session, Diane Rohlman from the University of Iowa clarified youth employment policies.



Small groups discussed how to integrate conference information into ongoing work.

information into ongoing work. Following the small group discussions, Central Community Schools FFA Chapter was awarded the 2023 I-CASH Outstanding Agricultural Youth Grant at the closing luncheon. See story on page 6.

Many attendees traveled to the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS) in Peosta, Iowa to attend a GPCAH-sponsored post-conference workshop on Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Planning. Presenters included Nick Ostrem discussing [Disaster Prepwise](#), Jakob Hanschu explaining [Farm MAPPER](#), and Dan Neenan of NECAS demonstrating several of the rescue training simulations available from NECAS. See story on page 5.



Dan Neenan provided hands-on demonstrations at NECAS.

Marsha Salzwedel from the National Children’s Center for Agricultural Health and Safety premiered the [Hired Ag Youth Work Guidelines](#), while her colleague, Cassandra Peltier shared research regarding how to increase utilization of the guidelines by employers.

Conference participants further explored what they learned at the conference through several small group networking discussions where they made plans to integrate the



Displays and exhibits provide new information and resources at MRASH.

#### Comments from the 2023 MRASH evaluations:

*“Great presentations that were very relevant”*

*“The policy panel was outstanding! I feel like policy is the next big leap for our field.”*

*“The events were fantastic learning & networking opportunities.”*

*“Loved the networking discussion the best today. Great discussion!”*

formerly from UMASH, Marsha Cheyney from GPCAH, Jana Davidson from the Progressive Ag Foundation, Ellen Duysen from CS-CASH, Charlotte Halverson from AgriSafe, Josie Rudolphi from the University of Illinois, and Ralph Almaier, Tabitha Kuehn and Gayle Olson from I-CASH.

MRASH couldn’t happen without the support and investment of time and money from many people and institutions. Special thanks to our **Gold level sponsors**: I-CASH, Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH), and Central Midwest Team Climate Adaptation Partnerships and to our **Silver level sponsor** Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH). The planning team worked from early spring to put together the program for the conference and are all so willing to share resources and do whatever needs done to make it happen. The planning team included Florence Becot from the National Farm Medicine Center, Devon Charlier



## Lessons Learned from the Post-MRASH Skills Workshop

by Renée Anthony, PhD, CIH, CSP

Immediately after the 2023 MRASH Conference, many of us traveled to Peosta to visit the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety ([NECAS](#)) for a post-conference skills development workshop. Last year, we provided hands-on skills for respirator fit testing (train-the-trainer), and this year, we focused on new tools to assist farmers and ranchers in pre-planning for emergencies.

Nick Ostrem presented tools from the [Disaster PrepWise](#) program, which generates a set of documents useful to have in the event of an emergency. This program was originally developed to help older citizens navigate an emergency, but it is a helpful tool for everyone. The program is expanding to develop tools for caregivers to use in an emergency. The current 5-step PrepWise system walks a household through a set of questions and then builds a document that contains information in one place. It also walks users through preparing emergency kits based on the household questions. They have recently added resources for what to think through when planning for livestock care in these emergencies. While the program currently focuses on Iowa, expanding the tool to other states is a reasonable next step.

Jacob Hanschu from the National Farm Medicine Center presented what is new in the [Farm MAPPER tool](#). This tool has been revised to add more features and address privacy concerns from previous versions – the maps are now viewable only by the person who created them. A farmer or their local firefighters can map hazards on the farm so that those responding to an emergency know exactly how to navigate hazards and to get to a safe location during a response. The tool can be accessed directly by clicking [here](#).

Dan Neenan from NECAS gave us updates on their educational programs and provided hands-on demonstrations to attendees using their mobile [rescue programs](#) training tools. We also learned about new technologies that NECAS has lined up to incorporate into 2024 training exercises. Dan demonstrated the manure rescue trailer, having Scott Heiberger (National Farm Medicine Center) use the two-finger rescue winch to retrieve the harnessed Matison Bentley (PhD Student) from a simulated manure pit. (See photo at right.)

At the end of the meeting, the three speakers realized that it would be easy to cross promote each other's tools with their normal audiences. NECAS could share Farm MAPPER tools with firefighters during training; PrepWise could share the Farm MAPPER tools with their rural clients who live on farms; Farm MAPPER could integrate PrepWise planning documents with farmer outreach. Visit the links above to find out more about these tools and help plan for an emergency on the farm.



Dan Neenan, Matison Bentley, and Scott Heiberger (left to right) provide a demonstration with the manure rescue trailer at NECAS.

## 2023 I-CASH Outstanding Youth Grant Award

by Tabitha Kuehn, BS, I-CASH Outreach Coordinator

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. Many projects are completed over summer or during harvest season. In the fall, the I-CASH staff awards one project an Outstanding Youth Grant Award that is presented at the Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Conference (MRASH).

This year, the award went to Central Community FFA in Elkader, Iowa. Their project addressed ultraviolet (UV) safety and was completed in June. The students visited farms in their area and delivered UV safety items, informational resources, and lunches to farmers as they worked. They spoke with farmers about the importance of sun protection and listened as some farmers shared their experiences with skin cancer.



I-CASH Outreach Coordinator Tabitha Kuehn (at left) with FFA members Crystal Goodrich, Blair Scherf, Payton Stannard, and advisor Meghan Bond.

The FFA members organized and completed every step of the project, including contacting and arranging meetings with partners and researching, choosing, and sourcing safety items. Through this process, they learned about safety and many other life skills like project management and communication.

This was Central Community FFA's first year applying for and receiving the grant, but they are looking forward to continuing to apply in the future and building on the success of this year's project. Students are already brainstorming topics to address and researching potential items to provide to farmers. Partners, like local commodity groups, are also looking forward to working with students on more safety projects in the future. Some partners are now working with the chapter to connect with student liaisons and collaborate beyond the youth safety projects. FFA members Crystal Goodrich, Blair Scherf, Payton Stannard, and FFA Advisor Meghan Bond accepted the award on November 9<sup>th</sup> at the 2023 MRASH Conference.

**Applications for the 2024 Youth Grants will be available in January, visit [www.i-cash.org](http://www.i-cash.org) for details.**

### NEW Ag Safety and Health Posters

Since 2017, GPCAH has provided free posters and information throughout the Midwest to assist with educating ag students about health and safety risks and prevention. **The NEW 2023 posters** are now available for download under the [Resources tab](#). Each topic includes a "How to Use in Class" section and list of additional resources. Click on each topic title for details, and click on the poster image to download the 11" x 17" poster for printing. Any materials on the [website](#) can be formatted for co-branding. The GPCAH creates resources on topics that affect the health and safety of farmers in the Midwest and continually adds to the list, so check the website often for new information.





## Meet the Flat Farmers!

by Marsha Cheyney, MPH, GPCAH Evaluation and Outreach Coordinator

You've heard of Flat Stanley, right? Now meet the "Flat Farmers" (as affectionately dubbed by our Regional Advisors), a group of 18" tall human forms reminiscent of paper dolls, with a variety of magnetic clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE).

GPCAH outreach staff spent the first few days of November at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, piloting this new outreach activity focused on PPE selection. When they entered the booth, FFA members were instructed to spin the wheel to learn what chore they would be doing that day. Chores included tasks like working with livestock, mixing chemicals, using a chainsaw, working in extreme heat or cold, mowing, riding an ATV, pressure washing, and cleaning a grain bin. Then they were assigned a Flat Farmer to dress in the appropriate clothing and PPE to accomplish that task safely. PPE options included different types of gloves, footwear, hats and helmets, respirators, and hearing and eye protection. When they were finished, outreach staff reviewed their choices and explained

what changes they would suggest (if any were needed). This often opened a conversation about the PPE choices available and best practices for using them.

This activity was well received by FFA members, advisors, as well as other exhibitors. Staff received feedback from students that this was a "fun way to learn about PPE" and a few even said it was the most fun activity that they'd done so far. Many FFA advisors asked about where we got the paper doll templates and requested that we make the "PPE kit" available for download – we are working on creating those files this winter.

While our outreach version of the Flat Farmers was laser-cut from wood with embedded magnets and laminated clothes and PPE, a simpler version printed on heavy paper or cardstock would be perfect for classroom use. Check the [GPCAH website](#) in January 2024 to download a copy of this engaging activity and build your own Flat Farmer kit.



FFA members selected appropriate clothing and PPE for the Flat Farmer at the National FFA Convention.

## NEWS AND UPDATES

**I-CASH 2024 Farm Safety Calendars** are available at ISU Extension and Outreach, and FSA county offices. The calendars feature safety and health recommendations and showcase Iowa's beautiful farm landscapes.



The **Heartland Center for Occupational Health and Safety** is now accepting pilot project proposals. Research projects must be related to one of the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) sector areas and pertain to an occupational health or safety issue. [Applications](#) will be accepted through March 1, 2024.

The **2024 Public Health Conference of Iowa** is now accepting [student poster abstracts](#). The conference will be held March 26-27 in Des Moines, IA. The deadline for submission is January 29, 2024.

The **Hired Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines (HAYWG)** have been published. The [HAYWG](#) are designed to help farm employers and supervisors of hired youth reduce the risk of injury for young workers. HAYWG includes guidance for training and supervising young workers, information on regulations and tip sheets for supervising youth performing common farm tasks.

**Save the Date!** The 2024 International Society for Agricultural Safety & Health (ISASH) Conference will be held June 17-20, 2024 in Portland OR. Visit the [website](#) for conference details.

### Upcoming Events

January 19-20

**Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference**  
Des Moines, IA

January 24-25

**Iowa Pork Congress**  
Des Moines, IA

January 30-February 1

**Iowa Ag Expo**  
Des Moines, IA

February 8-9

**2024 Farm Transitions Conference**  
Hybrid Event/Ames IA

February 13-14

**Minnesota Pork Congress**  
Mankato, MN

February 23-25

**Western Farm Show**  
Kansas City, MO

March 25-28

**AgrAbility National Training Workshop**  
Atlanta, GA

March 26-27

**2024 Public Health Conference of Iowa**  
Des Moines, IA

April 16-18

**Midwest Stream Forum for Agricultural Worker Health**  
Albuquerque, NM

### Are you an alumni of the Agricultural Safety and Health Core Course?

*What additional information or skills do you need now?*

As we plan for the **2024 Ag Course** we will be reaching out to course alumni for input, or you can contact us at [cph-greatplainscenter@uiowa.edu](mailto:cph-greatplainscenter@uiowa.edu).



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