National Children’s Center turns 25

Non-fatal injury rates have dropped since center established in 1997

The National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, part of the National Farm Medicine Center, is celebrating 25 years of preventing injuries associated with the agricultural worksite, one of the nation’s most hazardous worksites and the only one where children of any age may be present.

Barbara Lee, Ph.D., director of the National Children’s Center since its inception, recalls that before the National Children’s Center, “there were relatively few resources and virtually no guidance on strategies to safeguard working and non-working children on farms.”

The national approach to childhood agricultural injury prevention has paid off. Among early Children’s Center interventions was the development of guidelines for parents to match chores with their child’s developmental and physical capabilities. Follow-up data demonstrated a 56 percent decline in youth farm injury rates from 1998 to 2009, which ranked among Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report’s Top Ten Great Public Health Achievements 2001-2010.

The “guidelines for parents” have since been updated as the “Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines,” and are available on a mobile-friendly website (www.cultivatesafety.org/aywg) in multiple formats.

The center’s staff has continually grown in numbers, expertise and external partnerships. The Childhood Agricultural Safety Network, led by the National Children’s Center, now includes more than 110 organizations via its online community. National Children’s Center highlights can be found at https://www.marshfieldresearch.org/nccrahs/25years.

Storytelling for safety

The in the National Children’s Center’s new Storytelling project is online (https://marshfieldresearch.org/nccrahs/storytelling). Jaxon Boomsma, 7, died in a tractor-related incident at a relative’s farm in five years ago. The article addresses the incident, the grief, the family’s decision to become safety advocates, and the importance of saying “no” to extra riders, especially children.

The Storytelling project builds on experiences and partnerships with the translational Telling the Story Project, a collaboration of the National Farm Medicine Center, Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH), Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH), and the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH). These stories weave prevention messages into first-person injury narratives.

Jaxon Boomsma
More than 45,000 people attended 2022 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days at Roehl Acres and Rustic Occasions in Clark County, July 12-14, with many visiting demonstration areas of the National Farm Medicine Center and the National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety. Farm Medicine partnered with Central Fire and EMS District, Pittsville Fire Department, Progressive Agriculture Safety Days, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, local FFA chapters and others to highlight ways farmers can keep themselves and their families safer, said Outreach Specialist Melissa Ploeckelman, who served on the Wisconsin Farm Technology Days Executive Committee. The Farm Safety and Rescue Area featured live demonstrations of a tractor rollover, a tractor rollover rescue and a grain engulfment rescue. In addition, 49 farmers registered in the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program (www.ropsr4u.org) which has received significant support from the Auction of Champions since 2013. The National Children’s Center collaborated with Play ‘N Wisconsin to provide a safe play area within the Youth Area, where staff talked with parents about best practices to keep youth safe when working or playing on the farm.

Outreach Specialist Melissa Ploeckelman coordinated the Farm Safety and Rescue Area.

Firefighters and farmers may have different jobs, but both face risks as a part of their everyday duties. Farm Medicine brings them together to better prepare for the risks that farm emergencies pose to emergency personnel. Agriculture Rescue Training will be offered, October 21-22, 2022, in an effort to reach all departments in Wisconsin that could benefit from this specific, hands-on training. This year also features a train-the-trainer option, giving those that would like to host their own event additional training and experience. In 2021, despite challenges posed by COVID-19, 70 emergency responders from 29 departments in Wisconsin came to Heiman Holsteins and Heeg Farms Inc., near Marshfield for training. The goal of the program, entering Year 2, is to train 500 emergency service personnel over five years. The 2021 event was made possible with donations from the Auction of Champions, Life Outreach Specialist Melissa Ploeckelman, WRDN/Durand, Wis., describes what it feels like to be trapped in grain during a rescue demonstration.

Ag Rescue Training, Oct 21-22

Our Mission

“Wealth with the ultimate goal of improving human health, wellbeing and safety of rural and agricultural communities, the National Farm Medicine Center acts as a national resource by conducting high quality research, developing and delivering health and safety information, exploring innovative intervention models, and leading initiatives and networks.”

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