



WRASAP

Western Regional Agricultural
Stress Assistance Program

WINTER 2021

WRASAP Partner Highlight: University of Idaho Extension



Left to Right: Lance Hansen, David Callister Bracken Henderson

The University of Idaho Extension has created a behavioral health intervention program to address the rising number of farmers in need. Three extension agents, Lance Hansen, Bracken Henderson and David Callister from distinct regions of the state compose the University of Idaho Farm Stress Management team. Hansen is extension educator and county chair of the Madison County extension office, Henderson is Extension Educator — Horticulture, Agriculture, 4-H based in Franklin County, and Callister, Extension Educator and County Chair, hails from Butte County. The following information was kindly provided by Lance Hanson.

Two major components comprise the program- the Mental Health First aid (MHFA) course, which is been operating for approximately a year, and a Farm Stress Management (FSM) course, operating for approximately two years. The evidence based MHFA course has been widely adopted by agricultural support organizations throughout the country as a means to respond to behavioral health crises. Given that 88% of Idaho's land area is categorized as rural, isolation and a paucity of culturally competent responders is a real challenge. In Idaho, twelve certified instructors, trained by the three extension agents, travel throughout the state, equipping staff who routinely interact with producers, such as Northwest Farm Credit.

To implement the FSM workshops, Hansen, Henderson and Callister completed Michigan

State University's "Communicating with Farmers Under Stress" and "Weathering the Storm" training courses. According to Hansen, a highly interactive format with small groups renders the greatest active participation from attendees. He also noted the import of including farm family members in the course as they typically initiate, and partner, in intervention. Participation is highest when the agents "find farmers where they already are", pairing farm stress programming with existing Extension courses and meetings at "potato and cereal schools" within the state.

With the educational foundation in place, the farm stress team has recently turned toward identifying and collaborating with ag centric counseling services throughout the state. In Madison County, Hansen has found value in partnering with other mental health intervention programs such as the "Madison Cares" educational series at a nearby hospital. He also observed that exposure to the mental health needs of students at nearby Brigham Young University has heightened community awareness. Such collaborations continue to chip away at the stigma agricultural producers so often grapple with, as well as orienting care providers to the unique challenges that define the farming community.

In 2022, the team plans to develop and deliver "Everyday Democracy", a community-based program structured to transform conversation into action and tangible change, to 17 rural communities in Idaho. Cumulatively, the three courses contribute towards WRASAP's goal of targeted outreach to "farmers or people working with farmers to address stressors and behavioral health".

As interviewee, Hansen shared some personal background information. "I was born and raised in Rupert, Idaho, where I spent most of my time wakeboarding and having fun on the Snake River. I lived in Venezuela for two years, attended USU for my bachelor's degree and Western New Mexico University for my master's degree. I've worked as an Extension Educator with the University of Idaho for almost five years and done my fair share of traveling to Mexico, Portugal, Spain, Denmark, England, and across the US. I've been married 18 years, have twin daughters and three fur babies. I have a great family that supports me, and they are the emotional connection that keeps me centered."

Farewell, Kate Seymour

As we know, Kate Seymour has moved on from WSU and WRASAP, returning to her roots in Detroit and applying her many talents to a new discipline, commercial electric vehicle fleets. We caught up with her recently to reflect on her time spent with WRASAP.

If we return to the beginning of WRASAP, can you

describe how it came together?

If we go back to Don (McMoran) and I, we're not behavioral health people; we're not well versed in suicide prevention. I didn't know any of the folks in Skagit county who had killed themselves but I saw the grief through Don. It was clearly a priority for the community. So it started very much at the county level and from there, my role focused on program and team development. So going from county to state-wide to FRSAN regional NW to the larger regional WRASAP program... I'm very happy with the growth there and happy to build in more competencies with all the partners because we really did just start without a lot of academic experience...but more with the passion and the willingness to show up and address it.



What do you consider essential for real change to occur?

We need everyone to see themselves as essential stakeholders, farmers and non-farmers. If there was an upside to the pandemic, it was the focus on stress and anxiety all of a sudden. Hopefully that was a threshold moment for some farmers, to be able to at least to say out loud that they need help; maybe not as scary.

Without fail, different people are working on the same things simultaneously and totally siloed. Hopefully WRASAP is able to create a platform for some of these folks to find resources in real time for collaborative work.

How have the skills you gained through WRASAP informed your approach to your new position?

WRASAP took the big, scary out the equation because it was big and scary with a lot at stake and so now it's like "Will this person get an electric truck?" There's not as much at stake here. My bosses might not want to hear that!

What would you like to convey to the WRASAP team at this juncture?

"I feel really humbled, so much gratitude to work with people of their caliber, especially Bob Fetsch. I was just taking notes. I'm so proud to have been on such a competent team of people and you know, none of them had to be there. They all have full time jobs already! I'm also really grateful to WSU Extension and Don for giving me the chance to try. I feel very blessed to build a program that is this big, this cohesive and brings real help to people who need it."

P.S. Don McMoran owes Lori Mercer \$5.00 for the bet he lost, predicting that Kate would decline this interview. 😊

WRASAP Baseline Data Collection Team Update

Michelle Grocke has kindly provided an update below. Feel free to reach out to her with

questions at michelle.grocke@montana.edu.

The WRASAP Baseline Team has successfully created Statewide Summary reports for all states/territories in the Western Region that had sufficient survey responses to our Agricultural Producer Stress Survey. For access to these reports, please click here: <https://farmstress.us/wrasap-baseline-data-collection/>. The team is currently analyzing survey data to create an Aggregate Western Region report that will be available via the same link. The Baseline Team also conducted phone interviews with a subsample of survey respondents; data from these interviews are currently being analyzed and will be made available via a report soon. At the start of the New Year, the Baseline Team will launch the Agricultural Worker survey, in hopes of better understanding the current stressors faced by Agricultural workers across the Western Region, and which stress management topics and dissemination strategies they are most likely to utilize.

Farm Stress News and Resources: AgWellness podcast



WRASAP's baseline state surveys have already revealed trends to inform effective programming. For instance, of the eleven state and territory reports, podcasts consistently ranked in the top half of preferred methods of farm stress informational dissemination (#7 of 16 choices); state-based results (the two territories eliminated) show that podcasts fall in the top third (#5 of 16 choices). Utah State

University is meeting that expressed need with a new podcast, "[Ag Wellness](#)". Ag Wellness aims to explore mental health concerns, resources and information for farmers and ranchers. This particular format diverges from other offerings in that conversations are capped off with a segment provided by a Dr. Ty Aller, a licensed mental health professional with the Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice at Utah State University. The first episode introduced the podcast's theme and format while the second featured Jordan Dallin, brother of co-host Josh Dallin, who shared his experience with suicidality and eventual treatment- a powerful episode well worth your attention.

When asked what goals drive the content of the podcast, producer Alex Schiwal replied, "just first to get these stories out there and share the fact that this a huge issue in our farming and ranching communities and just reduce the stigma around mental health issues. And then also share that there are people nationally and locally working really hard to provide resources and get help out there. I think that really is our goal: first, to reduce stigma and second, to let people know that there are people out there trying to help." She attributes the co-hosts' use of lay language as a key contributor to its

success. Josh Dallin and Jake Hadfield are both Utah State University Extension agents; “they sound like they’re from these areas because they are. They grew up there, they’re very down to earth and they can easily talk to people”. In addition to Aller, Dallin and Hadfield, Schiwal underscored the contributions of Tasha Howard, Extension Assistant Professor and Juab County Extension Director. The team utilizes social media as the primary outreach vehicle, supplemented by newsletters and eventually local radio station advertising. The monthly offering is available through Spotify, Apple and Anchor platforms.

As researcher at the Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice at Utah State University, Schiwal might not fit the typical pedigree of a podcast producer. With a background in gerontology and a PhD in Human Development and Family Studies, she arrived at this juncture rather organically. Initially employed by the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (MHDD) National Training Center, “someone said ‘hey, let’s start a podcast’ and somehow I got pulled into that with no experience and we ended up producing 30 episodes for a two-season series and I was somehow the producer with no background.”. When she found herself at Utah State University and Extension desired a podcast, she once again found herself the likely candidate. Her familiarity with WRASAP partners from her time at the MHDD Center, paired with having grown up in rural Montana, also prepared her for the undertaking.

Outside of work, Schiwal spends most of her time reading, painting, hiking with her dog, bird watching, camping, and working on her garden. She loves taking road trips around Utah and to her home state of Montana, noting “I’m happiest when I can disconnect and slow down for a few days.”

[Visit our clearinghouse](#)

If you know of any resources or organizations serving farmers, ranchers, and/or agricultural workers that would be a good addition to the clearinghouse, email info@farmstress.us

WRASAP Small Grant Program: James Craig

WRASAP’s small grant program seeks to fund projects that educate agricultural support personnel, reduce farm stress or suicidality amongst farmers and ranchers. Dr. James Craig, Rural Rehabilitation Specialist with the Colorado AgrAbility Project (CAP), has parlayed this opportunity into creating the Colorado

AgrAbility College of Agricultural Sciences (AGSCI) website. Currently in development, the site will provide agricultural producers real time access to a wealth of support for all topics germane to the CAP, including farm stress and behavioral health. While much content will be informational, Craig hopes to incorporate more interactive, dynamic features over time, such as workshops, peer group postings, client success stories, podcasts, polls and surveys. It will also serve as a vehicle for behavioral health referrals through Chad Reznicek's, CAP's Behavioral Health Specialist, involvement. Finally, the platform will serve as an additional space for WRASAP partners to contribute applicable materials as well as event announcements.



Craig credits CAP's lineage of building relationships throughout the state as a springboard for the website's potential impact. Dr. Fetsch's studies, correlating assistive technology services for disabled farmers and ranchers with higher levels of hopefulness, also informed Craig's philosophy. He noted, "What we found when taking quality of life surveys was that this whole thing of hope really worked very well to alleviate a lot of problems. So our approach to mental health was to take care of physical needs first to alleviate immediate stress, then focus on mental health issues". WRASAP's baseline survey results also confirmed farmers' preference for virtual engagement. Given many farmers and ranchers' stoicism and concern about stigma, Craig stressed the value of mechanism that they "can feel safe on, they can trust, can maintain confidentiality and work on their own time schedule".

While Craig will manage the content and framework, a website developer has been enlisted to ensure professional presentation, intuitive accessibility and optimize exposure. Once it goes live, the website's existence will be conveyed through CAP's listserv of approximately 700 subscribers, newsletters, and email blasts.

Beyond work, Craig's life can only be described as varied. In his own words, "I grew up on a ranch in North East MT on the Canadian border. I rodeoed in high school and later in the Marine Corps. Much later as a Senior rider, I team roped and rode bulls and served as a judge for the Northern Rodeo Assn and the Senior Rodeo Assn. I sky dive and scuba dive (now really only once a year as a celebration of longevity). I began skydiving and scuba in the Marine Corps starting Jump School in 1959 Followed by scuba school at the San Diego 10th St. school. I own a small Jacobite Uprising museum of about 100 plus pieces mostly original to the 1685 to 1746 Scottish Highlands. I operate a traveling museum at Celtic festivals from April to Oct. and display the pieces and we do steel on steel demonstrations of classical fight scenarios."

WRASAP partners, collaborators and stakeholders are invited to apply for funding through the Small Grants Program. The goal of the program is to support strategies which address agricultural stress in the Western Region. Small Grants are offered four

times per year in the fall, winter, spring and summer. The WRASAP Small Grant Program **Q1 deadline is March 31, 2022; Q2 deadline is .**

Apply for up to \$10,000 to address farm stress and suicide prevention in your area. Funding opportunities are available for translation, outreach, and professional development.

[Learn more](#) about the WRASAP Small Grant Program, eligibility, and how to apply.

WRASAP Network Quarterly Meeting

The WRASAP network quarterly meeting is a space for stakeholders in the western region to build connections and collaboration to assist farmers, ranchers, and agriculture-related workers in times of stress. The network seeks to offer a conduit to improving behavioral health awareness, literacy, and outcomes for agricultural producers, their families, and communities. At these meetings, WRASAP collaborators present their efforts, including small-grant recipients, and offer opportunities to pose questions and bring experiences to the table. The meeting is open to the public.

Join us for the Western Region Agricultural Stress Assistance Program (WRASAP) Network Quarterly Meeting

Thursday, January 13, 2022 1:00PM PST | 2:00PM MST | 3:00PM CST | 4:00PM EST

This is a 90 minute networking event.

High levels of stress are present in agricultural communities. Unstable finances, the pressure of multigenerational farm lineage, injury, chronic illness, harsh weather conditions, and more recently stressors associated with COVID-19 are among the challenges producers face daily. The WRASAP network of partners believes that the unique needs of agricultural communities must be addressed. This is done through communication and collaboration with partners across the Western region to offer education, support in navigating resources, and funding opportunities for agricultural communities.

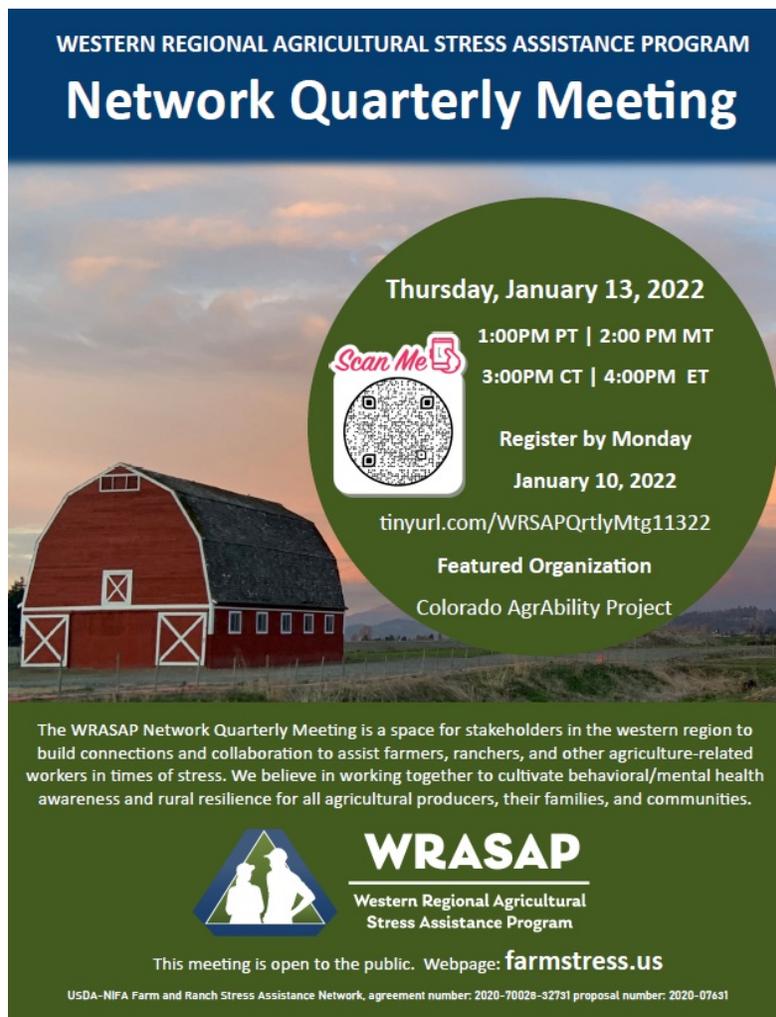
Chad Reznicek, Behavioral Health Specialist with the Colorado AgrAbility Project, will be presenting *Advances and Barriers in Increasing Behavioral Health Support for Colorado Farming and Ranching Families*. This presentation will highlight Colorado's strengths and needs related to behavioral health support for rural communities from the lens of national trends and best practices with a focus on accepted criteria of *Accessibility, Affordability, and Acceptability* as a method of evaluation, we will discuss

initial findings and current efforts to improve the availability of quality behavioral health services tailored to the needs of agricultural communities.

Intended Audience: WRASAP lead agencies; WRASAP collaborating organizations; any agency/health provider/program providing services to producers (agricultural farmers, ranchers, workers, business owners, and non-industrial private forest owners and managers) and their families in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

Register [here](#) to join this free webinar. The last day to register is Monday, January 10, 2022; all registrants will receive connection information upon registration submission.

[Click Here to Register for the Upcoming Network Quarterly Meeting](#)



WESTERN REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL STRESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Network Quarterly Meeting

Thursday, January 13, 2022

1:00PM PT | 2:00 PM MT
3:00PM CT | 4:00PM ET

Scan Me 

Register by Monday
January 10, 2022

tinyurl.com/WRASAPQrtlyMtg11322

Featured Organization
Colorado AgrAbility Project

The WRASAP Network Quarterly Meeting is a space for stakeholders in the western region to build connections and collaboration to assist farmers, ranchers, and other agriculture-related workers in times of stress. We believe in working together to cultivate behavioral/mental health awareness and rural resilience for all agricultural producers, their families, and communities.



WRASAP
Western Regional Agricultural
Stress Assistance Program

This meeting is open to the public. Webpage: farmstress.us

USDA-NIFA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, agreement number: 2020-70028-32731 proposal number: 2020-07631

The Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program (WRASAP) is a 13 state/four territory, ten agency collaborative supported by the USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN), under agreement number: 2020-70028-32731 proposal number: 2020-0763. WRASAP strives to support the mission of the larger

FRSAN framework: "Establish a network that connects individuals who are engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations to stress assistance programs. The establishment of a network that assists farmers and ranchers in time of stress can offer a conduit to improving behavioral health awareness, literacy, and outcomes for agricultural producers, workers and their families."

Prevailing Goals:

- Grow WRASAP network throughout the Western Region; invite new stakeholders, align with existing networks, and develop best practices for building state networks.
- Expand clearinghouse of resources initiated in FY2019 WRASAP to the entire Western Region and make the resource more publicly available.
- Educate internal and external partners on program activities and how to access resources.
- Provide a range of services and targeted outreach for farmers or people working with farmers to address stressors and behavioral health.

The Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program is an equal access/equal opportunity program.

Website: farmstress.us