

## MRASH Keynote Emphasizes SOPs for Safer Farms

by Brandi Janssen, PhD

The keynote event for this year's Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health (MRASH) conference actually started months before we convened in Council Bluffs on November 27. With the goal of building a meaningful event for all participants, the conference planning team connected with Idaho rancher and farm management expert Dick Wittman early in the year. Wittman travels nationally, promoting best management practices to ensure that family farms remain the cornerstone of our food system. A critical component of good management, according to Wittman, is including safety-related Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the overall farm management plan.

The conference planning committee recruited three Iowa farmers this summer and provided them with Wittman's guidebook, *Building Effective Farm Management Systems*. They then arranged two conference calls for Wittman to consult with them about their farm management practices, especially as they relate to safety. At the MRASH conference, the farmers joined Dick on a panel presentation to talk about the changes that they are implementing on their farms.



Dick Wittman, Brad Forristall, Josie Rozum, and David Rosmann participated in a panel discussion at the MRASH Conference.

Josie Rozum manages operations, sales, and marketing for her family's dairy and creamery in Ely, IA. She noted that she felt reassured after the first phone call with the group and realized that "all of us on the panel were all going through the same things." David Rosmann, who farms with his dad and brother on their 5<sup>th</sup> generation certified organic farm in Harlan, agreed stating, "Our farm is organized chaos most days." Both emphasized how important it is to go through all of the farm's activities and think through the procedures needed to manage the operations.

Brad Forristall farms with his family and manages a crew of about 25 employees. His motivation for improving safety is his three young children. He says, "All my kids are on the farm every day." In addition, he notes that his employees are critical to the farm, "They all contribute something. Without them, our operation wouldn't go."

One of the first things that Wittman recommended to the group was to go through a "process of formalization," where you get all of the leaders together to discuss how to implement SOPs on the farm. Wittman points out that this can be challenging, but the goal is to celebrate the successes of the previous generation and build on them. "It's not that they [the older generation] don't have SOPs, it's just all in their head. Now with multiple generations and more complex farm organizations, you have to sell it as meeting the needs of the next generation. It's about leveraging the knowledge in the senior generation."

That rang true for Josie Rozum. When her parents started the dairy, it was just the two of them and they were the total labor force for the farm. Then, as the children grew older and they added the creamery, the operation became more complicated. For Rozum, the SOPs provide an opportunity for clarity. She says, "We have to define clarity with our family, when do we show up for work and when do we leave? How much time can we take off?"

Brad Forristall admits that this process isn't always easy. "It's hard to drink beer with your buddy the night before and then say, 'tomorrow I'm going to do an employee evaluation.' But the SOPs help with that because everyone knows what to expect."

## Director's Message

by Brandi Janssen, PhD



Midwest Rural Agricultural  
Safety and Health Conference  
**STRESSING RESILIENCE**

November 27-29, 2018~Mid America Center, Council Bluffs, IA

We wrap up our year with another very successful Midwest Rural and Agricultural Safety and Health meeting. We met in Council Bluffs from November 27-29 and had more than 150 participants. The topics were diverse this year, as we kicked off with an afternoon workshop and discussion led by Dr. Mark Grey of the University of Northern Iowa, focusing on immigrant farm workers' health and safety. Dr. Grey, trained as an anthropologist, talked about Iowa's considerable diversity (over 180 languages are currently spoken in the state) and the challenges and opportunities that go along with a diverse workforce. Participants came away with a better understanding of how to best support new Iowans and how we, as safety and health professionals, can help farm managers improve the health and safety of their employees.



Brandi Janssen, PhD



Risto Rautiainen, Director of CS-CASH, and Melissa Ploeckelman, Outreach Specialist at the National Farm Medicine Center lead a discussion at the MRASH Conference.

We also had an engaging set of breakout sessions with presenters from all over the Midwest discussing topics such as college agricultural health and safety programs, hearing protection, injury surveillance, rural nursing distance learning, and farm stress and behavioral health. The final day included an in-depth discussion of the multi-center Telling the Story project and the awards banquet.

The conference would not have been possible without the work of many people across the region. I'd like to especially thank Risto Rautiainen and Ellen Duysen at the Central States Center for Agricultural Health (CS-CASH) for advertising the conference locally, providing and running the sound system, and covering other countless details. Jenna Gibbs and Marsha Cheyney from the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health were indispensable. Finally, the MRASH conference would not happen at all if not for our dedicated conference organizer, Gayle Olson.

In addition to MRASH, I-CASH had a successful year overall, reaching over 3,500 farmers, farmworkers and youth and distributing more than 21,000 prevention resources statewide. Our work would not have been possible without the engagement of our partners, especially Iowa State University, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. A special note of congratulation goes out to Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, who won his bid for election this fall. We will continue to work closely with IDALS and our other partners to improve the health and safety of our agricultural workforce.

Despite these successes, I-CASH again faces funding threats. Reductions in state support have caused the University to ask us to significantly reduce our reliance on the General Education Fund, which supports the vast majority of our budget, over the next two years. I-CASH is the only active agricultural safety and health organization dedicated solely to Iowa's farmers. Given that occupational fatality rates are higher than any other industry in our state, reducing support for prevention education puts our farming population at risk. We will continue to fulfill our mission, as mandated by the state of Iowa, as much as possible. We will also be working with all of our partners in the coming year to ensure I-CASH's sustainability. Contact me if you would like more information about how you can help us keep Iowa's farmers healthy and safe.

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I-CASH | Iowa's Center for  
Agricultural Safety and Health

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Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship  
Iowa Department of Public Health • Non-profits for Farm Health

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Farm Families Alive & Well  
Published 4/yr  
Kay Mohling, Ed.  
319/335-4219  
[kay-mohling@uiowa.edu](mailto:kay-mohling@uiowa.edu)

## I-CASH Hall of Fame Award Presented to Kelley Donham

by Brandi Janssen, PhD

The 2018 I-CASH Hall of Fame award was presented to Kelley Donham at the recent MRASH conference. This award recognizes individuals or organizations in the public or private sector in Iowa who have made substantial or long-term contributions to the health and safety of Iowa's agricultural community.

Dr. Donham is professor emeritus of Occupational and Environmental Health at the University of Iowa. He holds BS and MS degrees from the University of Iowa and a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Iowa State University. He is the founding director of I-CASH, and co-founder of the Rural Health and Safety Clinic of Eastern Iowa. He is author of countless peer reviewed articles, the foundational textbook *Agricultural Medicine: Rural Occupational and Environmental Health, Safety, and Prevention*, now in its second edition, and a co-author of *Agriculture at Risk: A Report to the Nation*, a document that laid the groundwork for decades of work in agricultural safety and health.



Kelley Donham was presented with the 2018 Hall of Fame Award by Brandi Janssen, I-CASH Director.

Carolyn Sheridan, founder and Executive Director of the Ag Health and Safety Alliance wrote, "Kelley is known to me as the grandfather of ag health and safety. My career in agricultural safety and health started with learning from Kelley at the U of Iowa in 1990. His passion for what we now call one health, and his interest in the relationships between human and animal health was inspiring. And he has continued to motivate me and many others in our careers."

Cheryl Tevis, retired from *Successful Farming* magazine wrote, "In 1981, two years after I had begun writing for *Successful Farming* magazine, Kelley contacted me with a story idea. The result was a two-page story, called *Farmlife can be hazardous to your health.*"

He concluded the story with these words, "One step would be to begin thinking about health and safety from a different viewpoint --as an economic problem. It's not economical if you can't work because of an illness or injury, or if you have to rehire a new employee every month because of poor working conditions in your confinement building. As farmers and researchers, we must be aware of the health hazards which current agricultural trends create, and find ways to reduce their effects on the farm family of the 1980s."

"That was the beginning of three decades of my working relationship with Kelley Donham. It would be an awesome challenge to sit down and calculate how many stories that I wrote with Kelley as a contributing resource and source. His generous contributions of time and talent toward training the next generation of ag safety and health professionals, and advancing the cause of agricultural health and safety are unparalleled."

Matt Nonnenmann is an associate professor in Occupational and Environmental Health at the University of Iowa. He said that Kelley is a person with an unstoppable work ethic and a pioneer in the field. He also shared that Dr. Donham was "the only professor I had who brought beer to a final."

Congratulations to Dr. Donham on a remarkable career and an unparalleled impact on the field of agricultural safety and health.

For more information on the I-CASH Hall of Fame Award visit [www.i-cash.org](http://www.i-cash.org)

## Outstanding Youth Grant Awarded

by Brandi Janssen, PhD

Mitchell County Extension won the 2018 I-CASH Outstanding Youth Grant Award. Olivia Logue, the Mitchell County Youth Coordinator, and Sydney Patterson of St. Ansgar FFA attended the awards banquet to present their project and its impact.



Brandi Janssen, at left, with Sydney Patterson of the St. Ansgar FFA Chapter and Olivia Logue, Mitchell County ISU Extension Youth Coordinator.

In this project Mitchell County 4-H County Council, along with St. Ansgar and Osage FFA Chapters, planned and presented farm safety information to 130 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the St. Ansgar and Osage school districts. FFA chapter members developed and delivered presentations to the students and assembled and distributed first aid kits.

Mitchell County Extension wanted to help students understand the impact that accidents can have and how quickly they can happen. Many of the students in Mitchell County have family or friends who are still directly involved in production agriculture. Many students enjoy being on the farm and riding in the equipment. However, most do not realize the hazards that surround them when on the farm. We need to educate children to help them understand the hazards that are associated with farm machinery, animals/pets, ATV's, and even lawn equipment. It is our goal to help students understand what kinds of accidents can happen, and why they happen, which will help them prevent future accidents.

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



Farm safety information was presented to 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in the St. Ansgar and Osage school districts.

## Research to Practice

### Anhydrous Ammonia Preparedness Workshops Featured at 2018 MRASH Conference

by Jenna Gibbs, MPH, PhD, GPCAH Coordinator



Dan Neenan leads an anhydrous ammonia safety workshop at the MRASH conference.

Dan Neenan from The National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS) led two anhydrous ammonia safety workshops at this year's MRASH conference in the Council Bluffs area. Neenan had received a pilot grant from the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH) to develop the training for multiple audiences including first responders, agricultural workers, educators, and farm families. The program used a new portable anhydrous ammonia simulator. The anhydrous simulator was donated by an agricultural producer for educational use. In the workshop, Neenan covered the basic health effects resulting from ammonia exposure, safety procedures during tank transport and application, proper use of personal protective equipment, and basic first aid.

Despite the cold, rainy weather—Neenan also showcased the anatomy of the anhydrous tank outdoors and presented real life case studies for discussion. Both sessions at the conference had more than 25 participants. Participants were able to take home some samples of personal protective equipment.



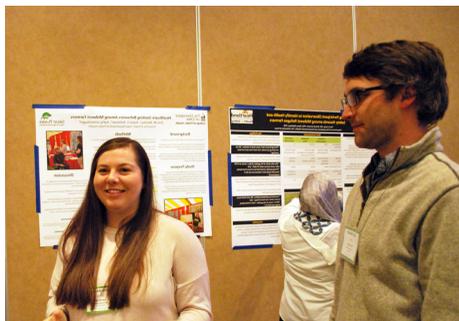
Two anhydrous ammonia safety workshops were held at MRASH.

Visit [www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah](http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah) for more information on the GPCAH pilot grant program.

## MRASH Career Luncheon

by Kyle Godwin, I-CASH Program Assistant

The student networking lunch at the MRASH Conference is an opportunity for students that will soon be entering the job market to interact with those already employed. Students from universities across the heartland, including Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois, attend the lunch. During lunch, students got to meet professionals working in the industries related to agricultural safety and health as well as those in academia. Some of the professional participants have been involved in agricultural safety for years, others are just getting started, and still more have served in many different roles. The varied backgrounds of the attendees are often pointed out at the luncheon. One student from the University of Iowa stated that this luncheon “offers different perspectives ... giving us a sense for what it could be like in those jobs.”



Graduate students provided research posters and participated in the career luncheon at the MRASH conference.

The luncheon allows students to make connections, network, and learn about new opportunities in the professional environment of agricultural safety and health. Connections may be made here that continue to develop at later meetings. New introductions could turn into future working relationships, and job opportunities with potential employers may be discovered. In addition, students are able to interact with each other and develop relationships between themselves. The luncheon can be as productive as the student is willing to make it, and it offers the possibility of lifelong benefits.

## Upcoming Events

January 17-19

### Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference

Ames, IA

[www.practicalfarmers.org/news-events/events/annual-conference](http://www.practicalfarmers.org/news-events/events/annual-conference)

January 23-25

### Sioux Falls Farm Show

Sioux Falls, SD

<https://siouxfallsfarmshow.com>

January 29-31

### Iowa Power Farming Show

Des Moines, IA

<https://iowapowershow.com/>

February 22-24

### Western Farm Show

Kansas City MO

<http://westernfarmshow.com>

May 7-10

### National Rural Health Association Conference

Atlanta, GA

[www.ruralhealthweb.org](http://www.ruralhealthweb.org)

June 10-14

### Agricultural Safety and Health Course

Iowa City, IA

[www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/education/ag-safety-and-health-course](http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/education/ag-safety-and-health-course)

June 24-29

### ISASH Conference

Des Moines, IA

<https://isash.org>

## Agricultural Safety and Health: The Core Course

The University of Iowa College of Public Health  
145 N. Riverside Drive Iowa City, IA

**June 10-14, 2019**

**Networking Reception – Monday, June 10, 2019 – 4:00-6:00 pm**

- Interactive Agricultural Safety and Health Activities
- Safety and Rescue Demonstrations
- Research Poster Display
- Classroom Instruction
- Panel Discussions and Case Studies
- Farm Tours

Fee waiver applications, continuing education, and course information:

[www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/education/ag-safety-and-health-course](http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/education/ag-safety-and-health-course)



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