It is late August as I write this and the hottest days of the summer are upon us. I'm thinking of all the farmers and other outdoor workers battling the heat and I'm reflecting on another year of farm safety outreach. This year felt more normal than the past few. We gathered mostly in person for the Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health (MRASH) conference in November and there was an uptick in interest in our youth grant programs. The ROPS Rebate Program was as popular as ever, and we retrofitted 25 tractors this year.

Our staff also spent much of the year focusing on a center-wide evaluation to better understand the impacts of our many programs. We worked with the University of Iowa’s Center for Evaluation and Assessment to interview our advisory board members, organizational partners, seasonal campaign and youth grant recipients, and MRASH planners. If you participated in this process, thank you for your input!

We were glad to learn that I-CASH’s partners value our educational resources as being high quality and relevant to the farm community. Several participants also commented on the depth of expertise and commitment of our staff. Seasonal Campaign recipients regularly use the materials in other programming that their offices provide, such as pesticide trainings and ag update meetings. They also described how they learn from the materials and share them with their personal networks. The youth grant program was commended for providing a real-world experience for young people who might otherwise only learn about farm safety and health in the classroom. Across all programs, participants described I-CASH as a leader in agricultural safety and health and an organization that brings together collaborators from diverse backgrounds to improve safety and health. You’ll see some of the comments throughout this report.

We also received many excellent recommendations to build our programming even further. We will spend this year implementing many of the suggestions we received, including providing more outreach to our youth grant recipients and developing curricula that can be included with seasonal campaigns and then delivered by our partners at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach (ISUEO) and Farm Service Administration (FSA). We’ll continue to ensure that our materials are beneficial for the many audiences in the agricultural community and add expertise to our advisory board.

We are also in the midst of some staffing changes in our team. First, we are delighted to have hired a new Outreach Coordinator, Tabitha Kuehn, who brings experience in conservation and land management. We have also benefited from another year with our student program assistant, Maddie McCabe. We have a couple of departures to announce as well. Ralph Altmaier, who has been the I-CASH jack-of-all-trades since 2013 will retire in November. Ralph’s experience in farming and industrial hygiene has been immensely beneficial to our work. Finally, this is my last annual report, as I am stepping down as I-CASH director this fall to take on other responsibilities at the University. It has been a great honor to work with the I-CASH staff and to serve Iowa’s farmers in this role. I am very proud of our accomplishments over the past 10 years, and I know that I-CASH will remain an important resource for the Iowa farm community.

I-CASH is only as strong as our partnerships across the state, and we are grateful to all those who provide us with feedback and expertise, distribute our products, or just reach out and say that they appreciate the work that we are doing.

BRANDI JANSSEN
I-CASH DIRECTOR
Farms are not exactly like other workplaces, each operation has a different mix of enterprises, production practices, and labor sources. I-CASH works to identify solutions that are most applicable to Iowa’s farms, from grain bin safety to reducing falls, we provide resources and information that farmers can use every day to stay safe.

**Agricultural Youth Grants**

This year marked 25 years of the I-CASH Agricultural Youth Grant program, which provides grants to Iowa youth groups who help educate community members and improve safety on farms in their area. Since 1998, I-CASH has awarded 215 grants in 66 Iowa counties, totaling nearly $110,000. Group leaders were interviewed about the impact of the youth grants and described the broad impacts of the program. One said, “I think the impact is that they actually get real life experience rather than just reading ads and seeing classroom study.” In 2023, 10 grants were funded:

- **Adair-Casey/Guthrie Center (AC/GC) FFA Chapter**: will be developing a school garden to provide locally grown produce for the AC/GC School District. Students will plant, harvest, and deliver the food they grow to the school nutritional staff. Students will also learn about food safety and agricultural safety as they navigate growing their own food.

- **Central Community FFA Chapter**: members will inform farmers about ultraviolet (UV) ray protection and thank farmers for their efforts in food and animal production. The FFA Chapter plans to distribute UV protection materials such as sunglasses, SPF lip balm, sunscreen, hats, and more to farmers in the field and at local co-ops.

- **Clarke County ISU Extension and Outreach**: will develop an educational program for students and farmers about chemical and medication safety. The 4-H members will gather chemical look-a-like and safety resources to educate their fellow classmates and local farmers. They will also put together to-go bags for local farmers that include resources, personal protective equipment (PPE), and chemical storage signs.

- **Floyd County ISU Extension and Outreach & Charles City FFA Chapter**: will work together to deliver safety and mental health resources to local farmers in 5-gallon buckets. The mental health and safety resources will be delivered during harvest season and will include first aid kits, snacks, mental health educational information, hats, and gloves.

- **Sioux Central FFA Chapter**: members will speak with farmers at grain terminal locations about respiratory health and hearing. During their annual “Feed the Farmers Day,” students will visit with farmers at grain terminals and listen to farmer experiences, as well as share resources to help farmers make safe choices.

- **South Hardin FFA Chapter**: members will distribute 5-gallon buckets containing safety items to farmers and discuss the importance of safety while operating large equipment, staying alert and focused while machinery is moving, and provide resources to producers.

- **South Winneshiek FFA Chapter**: members will assemble “Be a Warrior, Take a Break” snack bags that encourage farmers to take a break during harvest season. The bags will be distributed at local co-ops, and students will promote the activity on social media, the school website, and local media.

- **Washington County 4-H and ISU Extension and Outreach**: will continue their popular “Stay Safe, Take a Break” program with students providing resource bags to farmers in the field, and reminding them to take breaks during harvest. This year “Stay Safe, Take a Break” will focus on fire safety and distribute fire extinguishers to the farmers they visit. Youth members will also create a display about the “Stay Safe, Take a Break” project for the county fair.

- **Wayne County FFA Chapters**: will work together to cook, assemble, and distribute over 400 meals to Wayne County farmers and their crews during harvest season. This year they will distribute fire extinguishers along with the meals and speak with farmers about fire and equipment safety.

“IT’S IMPORTANT THAT KIDS LEARN ABOUT SAFETY... WE’LL NEVER KNOW HOW MANY KIDS WE INFLUENCE BECAUSE THE ACCIDENTS WON’T HAPPEN.”

**Past Youth Grant Recipient**
Outstanding Youth Grant

Each year, I-CASH awards an Outstanding Youth Grant at the Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Conference (MRASH) in November. Selected from the recipients of the annual Agricultural Youth Grants, the Outstanding Youth Grant Award provides extra recognition to a project that is particularly creative or reaches a wide audience in a new way.

This year the award went to Louisa County ISU Extension and Outreach for a Progressive Ag Safety Day held 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.

ROPS Rebate Program

I-CASH continues to devote funding to the ROPS Rebate Program, a cost-share program for retrofitting older tractors with roll-over protection. Iowa has one of the highest rates of fatalities from tractor rollovers compared with other states. In the past year, I-CASH has assisted with 25 retrofits, totaling about $55,000; the average cost share provided by I-CASH was $2,191. Both part- and full-time farmers used the ROPS Rebate Program and farm sizes ranged from 15–1600 acres.

Promoting the ROPS Rebate Program

I-CASH emphasized the importance of Rollover Protective Structures (ROPS) on tractors for Farm Safety Week in September 2022. In collaboration with the Iowa-Nebraska Equipment Dealers Association and the National ROPS Rebate Program, media packets were distributed outlining the burden of injuries and fatalities because of tractor rollovers and promoting the importance of ROPS and the ROPS Rebate Program. The media packet motivated coverage of ROPS by KCRG, Radio Iowa, Quad Cities NPR, and many local and regional newspapers.

The “luckiest grandpa in the world” uses ROPS Rebate Program for grandson

Gary Stripe of Garden Grove, IA used funds from I-CASH and the ROPS Rebate Program to retrofit a 1965 International 706 that he purchased for his 15-year-old grandson, Coy. Stripe, who had a close call on a tractor when he was young, said, ”I decided that Coy could get a tractor and still get his sunlight [to work on his tan], but he needed something safer on top. Because things happen.”

The ROPS cost share was a big help to the Stripe family when they purchased the tractor. They would not have had the extra cash on hand to pay for it out of pocket. Stripe says, “it means quite a bit to us.”

Both Stripe grandsons are very involved in the farm. Coy is the designated cow-checker and spends almost every day after school out checking cattle. Stripe says, “He does a lot of work, he’s very responsible and he just turned 15. He can run anything. But, things are gonna happen and I thought, you know, we’d better be safe.” (A longer version of this article can be found in the April 6, 2023 issue of Iowa Farmer Today)
I-CASH’s successes are rooted in our partnerships with many different organizations, beyond farmers and across borders. We benefit from partnerships outside of the traditional occupational safety and health realms. This year, we’ve developed many new partnerships in Iowa and beyond to work toward our vision of safe and healthy farming for all Iowans.

“The ability to bring a lot of important stakeholders to the same table [including] producers and even legislators, I think that’s really a great thing.”

**I-CASH ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER**

**Seasonal Campaigns**

I-CASH Seasonal Campaigns are distributed quarterly through all Iowa State University Extension and Outreach (ISUEO) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices in the state. This year, more than 36,500 prevention materials (plus an additional 4,564 requested items) were provided to ISU Extension and Farm Service Agency offices. Recipients report that they use materials to convey health and safety information to their friends and families, as well as to their office’s visitors. One said, “I always read through the campaign material when I get it and then I typically give it to my dad.” In addition, ISUEO staff often share campaign materials beyond their offices, such as at training sessions, farm safety days, and by distributing to other organizations, such as the local veterinarian’s office.

“I’m just glad that I-CASH does work with the USDA and the Farm Service Agency to get that information out in front of producers, because we can teach them from a young age to an old age. And even the old timers can learn something new every day, too. So, it’s good for them.”

**FSA SEASONAL CAMPAIGN RECIPIENT**

**FALL 2022**

**LIGHTING AND MARKING**

Research from the UI College of Public Health has found that states with more stringent policies about lighting and marking on farm equipment have lower rates of roadway crashes involving motor vehicles and farm equipment, so the Fall 2022 campaign focused on equipment lighting and marking to reduce the risk of roadway crashes. I-CASH distributed a resource from our partners at the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH) showing how to properly place lighting and reflective strips on farm equipment. In addition, 9-inch strips of red, orange, and yellow reflective tape were distributed to each FSA and ISUEO office (to apply as shown in the GPCAH handout) to make farm equipment more visible on public roadways.

**WINTER 2022-2023**

**SAFETY CALENDAR**

Each winter I-CASH creates and distributes a safety calendar with evidence-based safety and health information. The 2023 calendar marked a milestone worth celebrating, the 25th year of the I-CASH Agricultural Youth Grants. As with past years, each month included a timely safety or health recommendation. In 2023 all safety messages and photos came from past agricultural youth grant projects. Topics included chemical and pesticide storage, combine fire safety, designated areas for bystanders/guests, electrical safety, farm safety walk-through, handling facilities for livestock, lawn mower safety, livestock reminders for fair visitors, needlestick injury prevention, PTO shields, snowmobile regulations, and the importance of taking breaks during long hours on equipment. We also were able to share the beautiful photography of Emily Buffington Carol, DeAnn Scott-Harp, and Mary Swalla Holmes, as well as I-CASH staff members Brandi Janssen and Gayle Olson.

**SPRING 2023**

**CHEMICAL STORAGE**

The Spring 2023 campaign focused on proper chemical storage of farm and household chemicals to prevent misuse and prevent unintended exposures. I-CASH distributed chemical storage information cards that provide guidelines and recommendations for safely storing chemicals. In addition, “CAUTION” and “WARNING” signs were provided so that chemical storage facilities can be properly marked regarding the chemicals present.

**SUMMER 2023**

**SAFE MOWING**

The summer campaign focused on safe mowing and reducing the number of mowing injuries with a booklet of resources and a selection of safety glasses delivered to all FSA and ISUEO offices. Since mowing is a responsibility that is oftentimes given to youth, the resources focused on youth mowing safety. However, the information can be applied to all age levels and safe mowing habits should be practiced by everyone, regardless of age. Resources from the American Academy of Pediatrics, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, the National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, and St. Luke’s Kansas City Health System were combined into the safety booklet covering many aspects of mowing safety like PPE, youth safety, and mowing conditions.
I-CASH Partners with Sociomedical Institute in Slovenia

I-CASH expanded its reach beyond Iowa through a bilateral partnership with Dr. Duška Knežević Hočevar, senior research associate at the Sociomedical Institute ZRC SAZU in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Dr. Knežević Hočevar received grant funding to visit the US and work with I-CASH from September through December 2022 to understand current programs related to mental and behavioral health in farming. While she was here, Dr. Knežević Hočevar also visited the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, the National Farm Medicine Center, and the Upper Midwest Center for Agricultural Safety and Health. She met with I-CASH advisory board members and extension partners in order to draft proposals for culturally relevant mental and behavioral support for farmers in Slovenia. In June 2023, I-CASH Director Brandi Janssen traveled to Slovenia to give presentations to Slovenian researchers, policy makers, farm associations, and farmers about support for US farmers provided through federal and state policy and I-CASH. This visit was funded by a University of Iowa College of Public Health Global Travel Grant.

Above: Presentation at the Slovenian Chamber of Agriculture to Chamber members, farm organizations, and members of the Slovenian Ministry of Agriculture.
Top right: I-CASH Director Brandi Janssen and Duška Knežević Hočevar visit Slovenian farms in the highland Alps.
Right: Presentation to researchers at the Sociomedical Institute ZRC SAZU in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

I-CASH is part of the USDA funded North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, based at the University of Illinois. In collaboration with ISUEO Behavioral Health Specialist Dr. David Brown, we have developed a new agriculture-focused curriculum for mental health providers called Relationships Can Heal. This continuing education session provides an overview of agricultural practices in the Midwest so that providers can be more informed about their agricultural clients’ work experiences. The program was piloted in May 2023 and will be presented four times in the upcoming fall and spring across Iowa.
New I-CASH Outreach Coordinator

In February 2023 I-CASH welcomed Tabitha Kuehn as the new I-CASH Outreach Coordinator. She grew up in Underwood, Iowa and has always had a strong interest in land stewardship, conservation, and agriculture. Her college internships provided insight into both worlds - how to use pesticides safely dealing with invasive plant species, as well as learning to properly operate machinery like tractors and chainsaws. After graduating from the University of Iowa, she worked as Project Coordinator for the Lower Skunk River Water Quality and Soil Health Initiative in southeast Iowa. Tabitha has helped increase I-CASH’s outreach efforts and visibility by providing information at statewide events, offering guidance to Agricultural Youth Grant applicants (and visiting their events), and initiating contributions to the Conservation District of Iowa monthly newsletter.

“Their connections with policymakers at the state level mostly, but also at the regional level and at the county level is a strength of the center.”

I-CASH ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Alive & Well Newsletter

In collaboration with the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health, I-CASH distributes a quarterly online newsletter to more than 1500 people. The newsletter helps connect our health and safety community with agricultural news and events, new research projects and findings, opportunities for funding, and celebrations of award winners.

Conservation Districts of Iowa Newsletter

In June 2023, I-CASH contributed to Conservation Districts of Iowa’s monthly Connections newsletter. This newsletter is distributed to the soil and water conservation district commissioners that represent the 100 districts across the 99 counties in Iowa. Various county level Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) staff also receive these newsletters. The June newsletter highlighted I-CASH’s history and current programs.
The Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health (MRASH) Conference was held November 16-17, 2022 at the Hotel at Kirkwood Center, Cedar Rapids, IA. The hybrid conference brought together farmers, students, frontline healthcare workers, faculty, researchers, government officials, and other ag safety and health professionals to “Re-imagine a safe and healthy future for agriculture.” The Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH) hosted a pre-conference workshop on Qualitative Respirator Fit Testing. Throughout the conference, researchers presented topics ranging from adolescents to media outreach to the farmworker issues, academic research, rural health, health care, and outreach. In addition to their expertise, Advisory Board members help develop and implement all I-CASH’s initiatives.

I-CASH Advisory Board
The I-CASH Advisory Board, a diverse group of agricultural stakeholders and health and safety professionals, provides the organization with deep expertise and statewide engagement. Advisory Board members bring experience with agriculture, youth safety, migrant farm worker issues, academic research, rural health, health care, and outreach. Thank you to our sponsors and planning committee members.

The entire Wednesday morning session introduced innovative thinking. I liked the thinking about the roles of regenerative agriculture & the importance of diversity & behavioral health.

MATT RUSSELL

Keynote speaker Matt Russell, 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. 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 panel following Russell’s keynote featured Ahna Kruzic, Associate Director of the Regenerative Agriculture Foundation; Jesse Bell, Director of the Water, Climate and Health Program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center; and Mary Hendrickson, Director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security at the University of Missouri. As the whole food system grapples with changes brought by the pandemic, MRASH helped participants think through how we can re-imagine health and safety work to best serve all members of the agricultural community.

“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.”

MATT RUSSELL
Iowa’s Center for Agricultural Safety and Health

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