FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Easter Seals’ Rural Solutions Helping Iowa’s Farmers

Des Moines, Iowa, August 12, 2011 – The Rural Solutions program provides a unique service to Iowa farmers and their families not available through any other entity in the state of Iowa. Founded by Easter Seals Iowa in 1986, the program has received national and state awards and has been replicated in over 30 states around the country. Easter Seals Rural Solutions program is celebrating 25 years of serving Iowa farmers and their families.

In 1992 Bob Brown, now a retired farmer, injured his hand in a combine incident. He learned about the Rural Solutions program at the hospital. Bob was a carpenter as well as a farmer. Rural Solutions helped him with modifying his tools so with the use of only two fingers; he was able to use the hand tools in his farming operation, along with his off-farm employment as a carpenter. In addition to hand tools, Easter Seals provided him with the tools to psychologically adjust to his disability by offering him emotional support, along with connecting him with another farmer who had a similar disability. Bob is now in turn helping others who want to know how he was able to keep working with a disability by offering support and encouragement.

Not only did Bob want to continue to farm and live the rural way of life, but with limited use of his right hand, he wanted to be sure he remained safe on the farm. Secondary injuries/illnesses are very common among farmers who have disabilities, many of whom “make do” rather than seek professional guidance on how to safely continue their operations. Easter Seals’ Rural Solutions staff shared with Bob various factors to consider on how to prevent secondary injuries and illnesses.

For farm family members with a newly acquired disability, Rural Solutions offers them often the only hope they have to return to farming. This program allows farmers to continue to be gainfully employed, taxpaying citizens and allows them to be as independent as possible in their communities and continue to live in their own homes. Less than 20% of the people served in the Rural Solutions program acquire their disability as a result of a farm related incident. The majority of persons served acquired their disability as a result of a health condition i.e. stroke, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, etc.

Since the program’s inception, Rural Solutions has served more than 1,700 Iowa farmers with disabilities, from all 99 counties, making it possible for them – and their families – to continue farming.

The Rural Solutions program directly serves Iowa farm family members in all 99 counties. Specifically, it helps Iowa farmers and their families with disabilities to
return to farming by making modifications to their farm equipment and their homes so that they can continue to make a living by farming. The services are provided on site, at the farm to meet the individual needs. Some of the modifications that the Rural Solutions has designed and help farmers with are grain bin lifts, tractor/combine lifts, extended and widened tractor steps, modified hand tools, tractor/combine seating systems, and porch lifts to name a few. Home accommodations have included ramps, making bathrooms more accessible and widening doorways among the many others.

Program components include: agricultural worksite and home modification consultations, services for the family, information and referral, and equipment loan services.

For more information about the Easter Seals’ Rural Solutions program please contact the intake coordinator at 515.309.1783 (phone), 515.289.4069 (tty), info@eastersealsia.org or visit our website at www.eastersealsia.org.

About Easter Seals Iowa
For 85 years, Easter Seals has been providing services that help children and adults with disabilities gain greater independence. In 2010, Easter Seals Iowa provided direct services to more than 2,300 Iowa individuals with disabilities and their families in nearly all 99 counties across Iowa.

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