FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Easter Seals’ Rural Solutions Helping Iowa’s Farmers

Des Moines, Iowa, August 17, 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.

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.

In a split second, your life can be changed forever. Craig knows how true this is after becoming a paraplegic when he fell through a roof near his hometown in western Iowa. This disability almost made him lose the one thing he loved doing the most – farming. He spent two weeks in the hospital before the doctors could perform surgery on his spinal cord. After that, he spent weeks working on his rehabilitation before returning home. During his weeks of rehabilitation, Craig met with Chuck Larson of the Easter Seals’ Rural Solutions Program. For many farm family members with a newly acquired disability, Rural Solutions represents their only hope for returning to farming.

After the first meeting at the rehabilitation center, Craig was discouraged by his disability and wondered if he would ever be able to return to farming. Chuck suggested some modifications that could be made to his equipment based on other clients with similar disabilities. After hearing his options, Craig started to believe he would eventually be able to return to farming.

With Chuck’s help, Craig was able to meet with a talented welder who was able to design some ideas on how to create a chair lift. This lift would help him get in and out of a tractor. The welder was able to create a chair lift that Craig could use to transfer him from his wheelchair to the chair on his lift and to his tractor seat. The lift moves up and down and swings in and out to allow Craig to transfer himself from one seat to the other. After Craig is inside the tractor, the lift sits in a raised position to clear the wheel fender.
Eventually, Craig decided he needed a lift that he could use with his combine. This lift allows Craig to roll his wheelchair onto the lift, secure his chair, and raise his chair to the combine platform. He is then able to roll onto the platform and transfer over to the combine seat. His wheelchair can be secured onto the platform so he is able to get out of the combine as needed.

The Rural Solutions Program provides a unique service to Iowa farm family members with disabilities and their families. This program helps farm family members make modifications to their farm equipment and homes. To describe how useful this program is, one has to go directly to the people it serves. Craig plans to continue to contribute to the family farm and is grateful for the help Easter Seals has provided. “Most of all, Easter Seals has given me the hope that I could continue, that things could be done to help me do what I thought I never would be able to do again.”

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.

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 over 85 years, Easter Seals has been providing services that help children and adults with disabilities gain greater independence. Easter Seals Iowa provided direct services to more than 2,700 Iowa individuals with disabilities and their families in nearly all 99 counties across Iowa.

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