



Grand River Agricultural Society

Community Report
2023/2024



President's Message

This year has been one of remarkable achievements and steadfast dedication to our mission of supporting innovation, education, economic growth, and community, enabling agriculture and the environment to thrive.

Innovation is at the heart of progress. This year, GRAS has invested in cutting-edge agricultural technologies and sustainable practices. We have supported numerous projects that aim to reduce environmental impact while increasing productivity and finding solutions. Our partnerships with research and tech companies have been instrumental in driving forward-thinking solutions that benefit our agricultural community and the environment.

Education is a powerful tool for change, and GRAS is committed to supporting learning opportunities in the agricultural and environmental fields. We expanded our educational programs this past year by partnering with AgScape to host a one-day "thinkAG Career Competition", bringing awareness of career opportunities within the ag sector to grade 8 and 9 students. We are also pleased to have continued our scholarship program, with 12 scholarships of \$2,500 each through the GRAS program, along with \$14,000 in scholarship support through Indspire's Building Better Futures Program for Indigenous students.

Economic growth is vital for the prosperity of our community. Through grants, financial assistance, and networking opportunities, we have helped to support a resilient and dynamic agricultural economy. Our efforts have not only boosted local organizations but also contributed to the overall economic health of our region. One of our most significant initiatives has been the Rapid Response for Business Development (RRBD) program. Launched in April 2022, RRBD was designed to support the GRAS commitment to impact investing by helping to fuel innovation in agriculture and the environment. After two successful years, we announced that we are doubling the annual funding to \$100,000. Over the last two years, RRBD has provided funding for 10 Ontario companies to respond rapidly to global market opportunities.

It is with great excitement that Grand River Raceway (GRR), with support from Ontario Racing, announced the construction of a new 5/8-mile track. Work began in mid-August 2023 and was completed at the end of April 2024.

Our commitment to our team and our ability to overcome challenges have been fundamental to our success. The dedication and hard work of our staff and directors have enabled us to navigate the complexities of this year with resilience and grace. Their continued support has been crucial in achieving our goals and driving our mission forward.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to our vision and mission. The challenges our industry faces are significant, but with the dedication and passion of our members, partners, and community, I am confident that we will continue to make meaningful progress. Together, we will nourish people, animals, and the planet, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for all.

On behalf of the board, we look forward to another year of growth, innovation, and community building.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Garth Green".

Garth Green
President, Grand River Agricultural Society

Our Vision

Nourishing people, animals, and the planet.

Our Mission

Supporting innovation, education, economic growth, and community enabling agriculture and the environment to thrive.

Values

- Partnering with others
- Making a difference
- Caring about people
- Doing the right thing
- Reimagining the possible
- Celebrating diversity



This year...

\$3.7
MILLION

Spent on goods and services

\$3.6
MILLION

Capital improvements

\$1.47
MILLION

Total staff wages and benefits

\$501
THOUSAND

Agricultural events and community support

GRAS Team Facts

Our workplace is comprised of **60%** females.

10% of the workforce is over the age of 70 years of age.

Comprehensive employee benefits to individuals that work 25 or more hours. Part-time and full-time. Employees have access to an Employee Assistance Program for their personal wellness.

In 2023, the team was proud to receive the President's Award from the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce which recognized their efforts to help the community thrive and fundraise.

We're proud to continue growing our team, with a vision to have a talented, diverse, and happy group of employees that want to be brand ambassadors and support all we do.

Philanthropic Funding

WAYS WE GIVE



Philanthropic Funding
Apply for financial funding for your not-for-profit or charitable organization.
Application deadlines are March 31 and September 30.



Scholarship Program
Students enrolled in an agricultural or environmental program in college or university can apply.
Applications open April 1 and close July 1.



Community Mini Grants
Apply if your organization is working on a local community project related to agriculture or the environment.
Applications open March 1 and close March 31.



Rapid Response for Business Development
Increase sales and innovation in your ag-tech or green-tech company.
Applications open April 11 and close March 31.



Gift-In-Kind Requests
Discounted spaces for meetings, training, or events for your not-for-profit or charitable organization.
Applications are always open.

GRAS is known for its philanthropic contributions to the community through scholarships, community mini-grants, and major donations. GRAS is striving to bring agriculture, education, and community together.



Commitment to Community

International Women's Day Lunch

Another successful International Women's Day at The GrandWay in support of The Grand River Cancer Centre!

It was a beautiful lunch with a room full of women and men celebrating our fearless leader Katie Giddy, VP, Operations, as she shared her

cancer journey with her bestie Sally Litchfield. With some laughs, tears, and a lot of compassion they took us through the ups and downs of their story. GRAS matched community donations and raised \$5,735 for The Grand River Cancer Centre.



Mother's Day Brunch

We spoiled local 'moms' with a delicious brunch on Sunday, May 14 at The GrandWay Events Centre in Elora. The team served a full breakfast as well as mimosas, caesars, and of course great coffee! GRAS donated a portion of ticket sales and flower sales (donated by Buds and Blossoms), along with guest donations during the event, totalling over \$875 to Elora House.



We hosted our first AgScape thinkAG event

On November 23, GRAS welcomed 300 Grade 8 and 9 students, from Upper Grand District School Board, into the Grand River Raceway barn for an educational afternoon.

The barn was filled with booths from ag-related businesses and organizations to bring awareness to ag-related career opportunities for students to consider. A great way to highlight the opportunities in the industry as the students make their course selections. GRAS supported the event by being the host venue, securing livestock to have onsite for live demonstrations, providing lunch for station volunteers, and gave out prizes (with snacks) for the students to enjoy.



Harness the Hope Night is keeping its PINK appeal

It was a very pink night of fundraising for breast cancer on August 18. GRR "painted the track pink"! Guests and the GRR team wore pink, The GrandWay served pink cocktails/mocktails and pie slices, and horses and drivers even dressed in pink. Prizes for Best-Dressed were given out to honour the guest, horse, and groom with the best pink outfit.

A portion of sales were donated to Hareness the Hope along with sponsor and guest donations, GRAS matched all donations for the night up to \$12,500. The total donation was over \$25,000! Hosting events like this allows more funding to support resources for those facing big challenges in their personal life, their family, and in their surrounding community.

Our very own Katie Giddy was honoured by family and friends as she continued her breast cancer treatment. They got to share positive words in the race program and a named horse race on her behalf.



Friends of Katie Giddy | Photo credit James Woods



GRAS supports Hope House with their mission to provide food security with a focus on mental health

Hope House Guelph provides tangible, compassionate assistance, and care to those in the Guelph Community through immediate relief and ongoing support with the goal of a greater level of independence. Hope House challenges the stigma associated with poverty and promotes long-term self-sufficiency.

Since 2018, Hope House has been operating the North Field Food Farm at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in North Guelph, where they use a holistic approach to addressing community needs. The North Field Food Farm embraces horticultural therapy. The farm provides a therapeutic space where individuals can engage in farming activities as a form of therapy.

Connecting agriculture, community, and people's health is another important piece of the GRAS mandate and mission. GRAS was pleased to support Hope House with a cheque for \$5,000 towards this project.



GRAS philanthropic funding continues supporting a community garden for seniors

Beyond Housing believes people living in affordable housing should be able to do so with a sense of dignity. This means being attentive to building housing that not only meets their financial needs but responds to their physical and mental well-being. Access to a vibrant outdoor space is integral to this.

Beyond Housing is currently completing construction of a 28-unit addition to Sprucelawn Apartments for Seniors in St. Jacobs (Woolwich Township). They have also designed an outdoor green space accessible for all tenants. The sitting area will encourage conversation and community and accommodate tenants with various ranges of mobility.

As a huge supporter of the environment, agriculture, and of course gardening, GRAS was excited to support Beyond Housing's new project. GRAS has a mission to support innovation, education, economic growth, and community enabling agriculture and the environment to thrive. In November 2023, GRAS proudly presented a cheque for \$6,500 towards the new outdoor garden space.



Photo credit: Beyond Housing rendered image.



Building an impact with Equine Guelph

Equine Guelph submitted its first GRAS philanthropic application in 2014. They received funding support for several initiatives from the development of LAER, education in barn fire prevention, biosecurity, and equine first aid training, Equine JobTrack re-development, and youth education initiatives.

Wellington County has the most horses of any county in Ontario. Equine Guelph is focusing on regional initiatives and being a model across the province and Canada as part of a bigger vision (i.e. a national roll-out of LAER,

JobTrack, etc.). Together, Equine Guelph and GRAS are helping to "Bring agriculture, education, and community together" as well as a special shared interest in the health and well-being of horses and the sustainability of the equine/racing industry.

Thanks to GRAS's foundational funding of \$50,000/year over the last 3 years, these programs are not only growing but thriving with the advantage of partner support.

Community Mini Grant Recipients

Our Mini Grants are for community organizations and charities needing funding for a project benefiting our local community. Grants are available for an amount of \$1,000 for agricultural or environmental initiatives.

2023 Recipients:

- Ontario Carriage Driving Organization
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Centre Wellington
- Stephanie Lam (supplement to Canadian Nuffield Ag Scholarship)
- Fergus & District Horticultural Society
- Elora Farmers' Market
- Elmira Developmental Support Corporation
- Wellington Dairy Producer Committee
- Fergus Agricultural Society; Breakfast On the Farm
- Ontario Farmland Trust

\$7,900

Total mini grant funding dispersed in 2023.



Impact Investing



SPARK V3 provided a stage for start-ups

SPARK V3 is GRAS's popular ag-tech event hosted at The GrandWay Events Centre. For its third year, GRAS had 150 guests, including investors, students, ag start-ups, media, and agricultural and environmental specialists.

Four start-ups were selected to pitch their product/services at the event 1) ApiSave; 2) Proteins Easy Corporation; 3) Healthy Hydroponics; and 4) Cattleytics; with one winner, voted by the audience, who won \$5,000. These funds were from a combination of ticket sales and sponsors RH Accelerator and Western Fair District, and then matched by GRAS. Past pitch companies progress were also featured. Thank you to all who made this another successful event.



GRAS is doubling its investment in Rapid Response for Business Development to \$100,000!

GRAS announced that after two successful years of delivering the Rapid Response for Business Development (RRBD) initiative, they are doubling the annual funding to \$100,000.

RRBD will provide up to \$10,000 to enable young Ontario companies in the ag-tech, green-tech, and agri-food industry to seize market opportunities and secure sales of their products or services. The initiative has provided funding for 10 Ontario companies to respond rapidly to global market opportunities.

RRBD allows these companies to quickly take advantage of market opportunities and secure sales. The money supports eligible travel and associated costs required to "close the deal" with business connections.

"Rapid Response for Business Development provided \$50,000 last year that led to \$3.5 million in new sales, which is an outstanding ROI. We are committed to continuing this support of Ontario entrepreneurs so they can showcase their products, sell them worldwide and continue to thrive right here in Canada!"

- Deborah Whale, VP and Chair of the GRAS Outreach Committee

Working with CanLead Solutions, the next round of applications opened on April 1, 2024.

Application criteria can be found at: grandriveragsociety.com/philanthropy

Providing an impact investment of \$100,000 to VETSon and Harvest

Since 2022, GRAS has been providing funding to innovative companies focused on agricultural and environmental technology. In collaboration with RH Accelerator, GRAS has had the opportunity to review pitches from several companies over the past two years. In this round, there were two excellent opportunities with one key thing in common—dedicated and innovative entrepreneurs looking to solve very real, but different, industry issues.

"There is no better investment than an investment in the future of agriculture and the environment," says Deborah Whale, VP of the GRAS board. "Committing patient capital to support the growth of companies such as VETSon and Harvest Genomics shows not only our commitment to innovation and economic development, but our recognition of talented Ontarians looking to change the future."

VETSon provides a telemedicine platform with a mobile app for farmers to connect with their veterinarian virtually. The farmer can show in real-time issues with their animals as they are occurring, then order medication and have it delivered direct to the farm. The interaction is automatically recorded for the veterinary and farm record keeping. The platform allows veterinarians to be able to serve more clients in a day, and farms get rapid access to veterinary services.

Harvest Genomics specializes in innovative agricultural testing solutions. Their flagship products include herbicide resistance testing for field crops, which is currently lab-based, but aims to become a quick, field-side test. They also offer a unique sequencing-based test for detecting tomato brown rugose fruit virus in greenhouse tomatoes, the first of its kind in Canada.

Scholarships



GRAS established this scholarship program to provide financial assistance for students who are permanent residents within our membership area of Wellington County, Perth County, and the Region of Waterloo, and who are entering or enrolled in college or university programs in agricultural or environmental fields of study.

2023 Scholarship Recipients (\$2,500 each):

- | | |
|---|---|
| Katelyn MacGillivray
Bachelor of Commerce, Food & Agricultural Business
University of Guelph | Emily Lennox
Bachelor of Science, Agriculture
University of Guelph |
| Shayna Morphy
Bachelor of Environmental Sciences, Geography & Environmental Management
University of Waterloo | Derrick Knill
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph |
| Devin Johnston
Bachelor of Science, Agriculture
University of Guelph | Kate Martin
Master of Animal Biosciences - Nutrition Major
University of Guelph |
| Mary Brander
Bachelor of Science, Agriculture - Animal Science Major
University of Guelph | Matthew Whittemore
Bachelor of Science, Agriculture – Crop Science Major
University of Guelph |
| Kiera O’Hearn
Bachelor of Science, Honours – Animal Biology Major
University of Guelph | Rhiannon James
Master of Science, Environmental Sciences
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph |
| Melyssa Favero
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph | Julianna Tindall
Bachelor of Science, Agriculture – Crop Science Major
University of Guelph |



Education

Connecting women at the Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference

This past November, GRAS had the privilege of sponsoring two students (in an agricultural or food post-secondary program) to attend the Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference in Niagara Falls. Emma Stock and Taylor Legge got the opportunity to celebrate their passion for agriculture. They heard from a variety of speakers who shared their personal stories, developed soft skills in leadership and career building, networked and built connections with women from across the country and sector, shared ideas

and different perspectives, spoke with like-minded individuals, and practiced their skills in multiple workshops.

Attendees were surrounded by others who were looking to be inspired and encouraged by a career in agriculture. GRAS was proud to send both students for a motivating experience at this once-in-a-lifetime event! Encouraging women to begin careers in agriculture is a true passion for the GRAS mission.



Participating in the event proved to be an incredibly uplifting journey as I absorbed the empowering stories of successful women from around the country, sharing insights on mental health, entrepreneurship, and overcoming challenges. The event not only served as a powerful reminder that I am part of a community with limitless potential but also left me with a newfound sense of motivation and eagerness to embrace exciting new possibilities. Reflecting on the invaluable insights gained, I’m genuinely excited to channel this inspiration into concrete actions in my own life.

– Emma Stock

The advancing women in ag conference was a fantastic experience for me! I got the opportunity to meet so many great women working various careers in the ag industry, and to hear great speakers and learn lots from them! During the conference I was able to connect with other students who had been sponsored to attend the event and hear about everyone’s pathway into the ag industry...I would highly recommend it {this event} to any young people looking to start out in the agriculture industry! I greatly appreciate the support of Grand River Ag Society in allowing me to attend this event and I hope they continue to support other students in the future!

– Taylor Legg



Horse Racing at Grand River Raceway



In 2023, Grand River Raceway (GRR) celebrated 20 race seasons! Total wagering on GRR live racing for the 2023 season was \$13,883,449 which is an increase of 29% from the 2022 season, smashing an all-time wagering record at GRR that was previously set at of \$12,960,412 in 2006. The daily average over 47 race cards was \$295,392.53 which has increased from \$234,557 in the 2022 season. A total of \$4,249,700.00 in purse money paid out over 476 races. Averaging \$90,419.15/card which is down slightly from last year.

\$13,889,449

Wagered from all sources on horse racing at GRR

\$4,249,700

Total purses paid

47
RACE CARDS
CONTESTED

**JUNE TO
SEPTEMBER
2023**

\$295,393

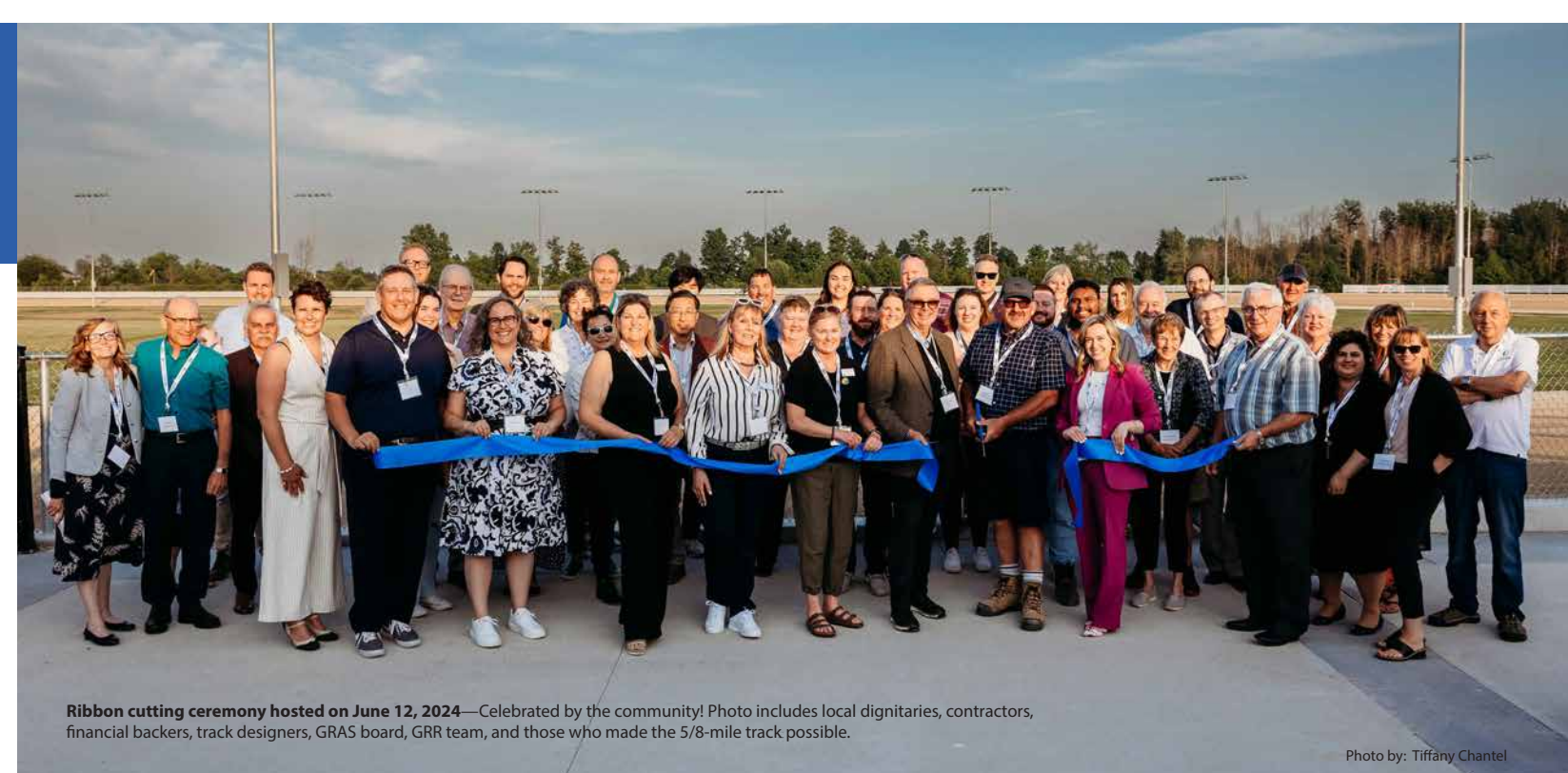
Average wagering per race card at GRR

\$90,419

Average purses paid per card

\$29,228

Average wagered from all sources per race



Ribbon cutting ceremony hosted on June 12, 2024—Celebrated by the community! Photo includes local dignitaries, contractors, financial backers, track designers, GRAS board, GRR team, and those who made the 5/8-mile track possible.

Photo by: Tiffany Chantel

Top Trainer title for 2023 was earned by Brett Lester. He had 69 Starts, 18 wins, 12 seconds and 13 thirds. Total money earned at Grand River Raceway was \$88,007.

Top Driver was earned by Colin Kelly. He had 228 Starts, 42 wins, 29 seconds and 30 thirds. Total money won at Grand River Raceway was \$245,760.

The 34th Industry Day card, which featured 11 races, had an all-sources handle of \$590,824. That was the biggest handle in the history of Industry Day at Grand River.

The 5/8-mile track a welcomed addition to the industry



GRR, with support from Ontario Racing, announced in April 26, 2023 that they were proceeding with the construction of a 5/8-mile track. Work began mid-August 2023 and was completed at the end of April 2024, just in time for the 2024 race season.

The the 5/8-mile track has brand new LED lighting, track surface, camera operating poles, timer boxes, and more.

In addition to elevating the racing experience, the 5/8-mile track provides a valuable training ground for local horsemen, broadening the facilities accessibility to the racing community.

GRR extends a heartfelt thanks to all the contractors and workers whose dedication and expertise brought this project to fruition. Special recognition goes to Doug McCaig, Facilities Manager, for his exemplary leadership throughout the construction phase.

“The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. It’s rewarding to see the hard work of our team and contractors pay off in such a significant way.”

- says Doug McCaig, Facilities Manager



Photo by: Dave Landry

DO BETTER

Do Better captured the \$205,200 Battle of Waterloo presented by Winbak Farms. The gelded son of Bettors Delight, was driven by Sylvain Filion for trainer Gregg McNair and owned by Bob McIntosh and Marv Chantler of Mardon Stables. Do Better remains undefeated through five starts, amassing \$181,150 to date. The win gives Filion his first Battle of Waterloo trophy and Bob McIntosh his second in this marquee event.



Photo by: Dave Landry

CHEESE PARTY

Cheese Party won the \$138,400 Battle of the Belles for driver Trevor Henry and trainer Kyle Bossence. The daughter of Betterthancheddar is owned by Kyle Bossence, of Arthur, Ontario. The win gave owner/trainer Kyle Bossence his first victory in this event and gave Cheese Party the first win of her career increasing her earnings to \$82,525. This was Trevor Henry’s second straight Battle of the Belles title.



Photo by: Jessica Halliday



At The GrandWay, we have a philosophy that every event we hold is an experience and our team works hard to bring our guests' vision to life. We take a down-to-earth approach and welcome guests to tap into our network and expertise. Our team takes pride in hosting your event, always executing it with a smile!

2023 to 2024 saw positive growth year over year at The GrandWay Events Centre as we welcomed returning guests and several new ones.

We saw happy couples tying the knot, accompanied by a range of family celebrations such as bridal and baby showers, milestone birthdays, and more.

The GrandWay also supported clients through the emotional planning for celebrations of life. Taking a simple and elegant approach to ensure families put their own special touches to these events while honouring those loved and lost.

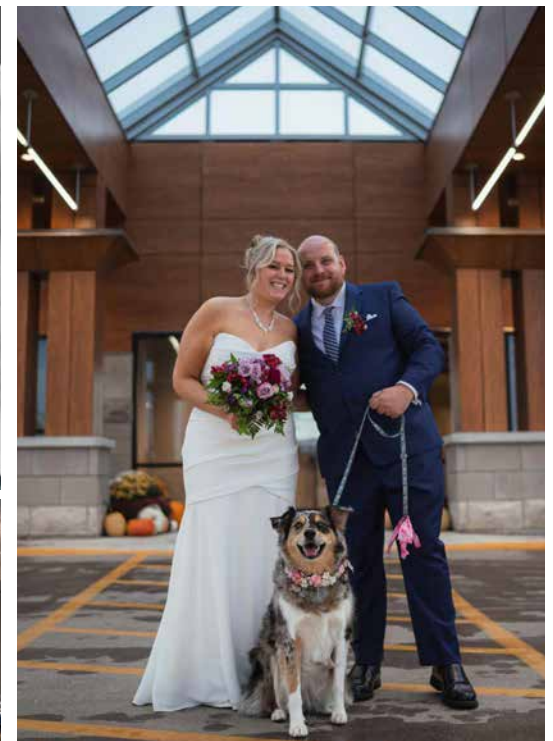
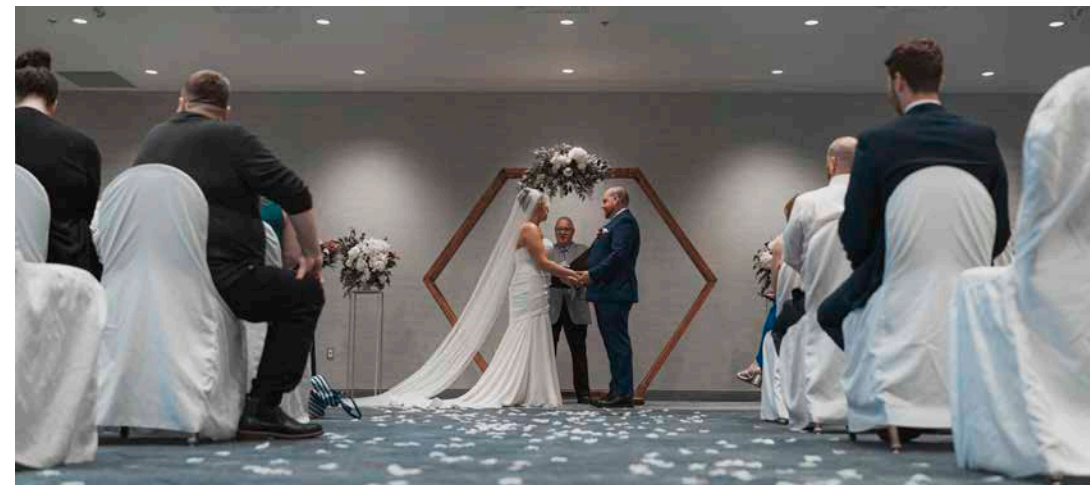
Corporate clients continue to be at the core of The GrandWay's business, we thank these businesses for trusting us and choosing us time and time again with their meetings, team building, business showcases, conferences, training, and more.

We headed into the 2023 holiday season hosting a record number of celebrations November to January.

The GrandWay continues to open our doors to charitable organizations and groups offering a discounted room rental rate. We take pride in providing a space that allows these organizations to raise funds supporting our local community.

As a hub for entertainment, we continued a sold-out season of Yuk Yuk's events, drag shows, and a return of our Murder Mystery Dinner Theatres. We also kept favoured events such as Mother's Day Brunch and International Women's Day Lunch on the calendar! The GrandWay isn't limited to the indoors, we were thrilled by the number of groups that joined us for a Patio Party in VIP style during our horseracing season.

The GrandWay proudly helped local organizations raise over \$330,000 through fundraising events held in our space!



Meet The Board

GRAS Partnerships



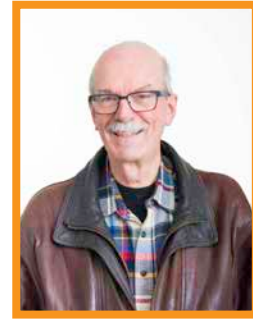
Garth Green
President



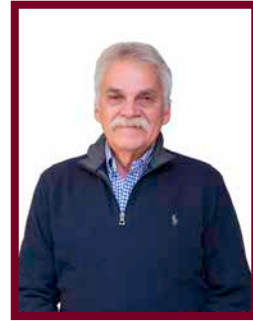
Deborah Whale
1st Vice President



Brendan Ross
2nd Vice President



Robert Davies
Legal Secretary



Don Jewitt
Past President



Cynthia Philippe
Director



Jason Castellan
Director



Skip Maher
Director



Cindy Lindsay
Director



Diane Squires
Director



Tony Morris
Director



Joe Stutzman
Director



Terry Thompson
Director



Dorothy Key
Executive Assistant/
Board & Member Liaison

Our partners are making great waves in our community.
We are proud to work with each of them and see their projects flourishing.



ONTARIO
AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE



GRAS is governed by a volunteer board of directors, all with diverse backgrounds in agriculture, finance, law, corporate, and so much more. This team works towards fostering innovation and relations in the agriculture and environmental sectors. They proudly set the strategic direction for the organization.







Grand River Agricultural Society

7445 Wellington County Rd.21
Elora, ON N0B 1S0

519-846-8879 | grandriveragsociety.com

