



Grand River Agricultural Society

Community Report 2020/2021



President's Message

2020/2021 will be a year we all remember, filled with challenges both professionally and personally, as businesses, organizations and families were forced to bend and not break, to adapt to the ever-changing forces that the virus inflicted on the global community.

As an organization, the Grand River Agricultural Society was not immune to the pandemic. We were forced to deal with the pandemic and its impact on our business, and we were also faced with the loss of our friend and long-time president Paul Walker. Paul's passion and commitment will not be forgotten. Like so many others this year, we had to pick up the torch and march on as an organization.

As we look back it is important to recognise the amazing team members that make up the Grand River Agricultural Society's family of staff and board of directors. Without their commitment, pride, and flexibility working and adapting quickly to the changing government regulations, we would not be in the position we find ourselves today, in many ways much stronger and focused on what matters to each of us personally and as an organization.

The list of changes this past year is extensive, as we completed the new facility and as I write this report, we are getting closer to having actual people using our spaces. We developed a new logo, launched a newly designed website, and increased our social media presence.

We have also increased our philanthropic reach, as we continue to fulfill our mandate as a champion of agriculture, environment, and education. We have provided and continue to provide scholarships to a house of rising stars in the Agricultural and Environmental studies arena. They provide such inspiration and reassurance that the future of our industry and the community is in excellent hands going forward.

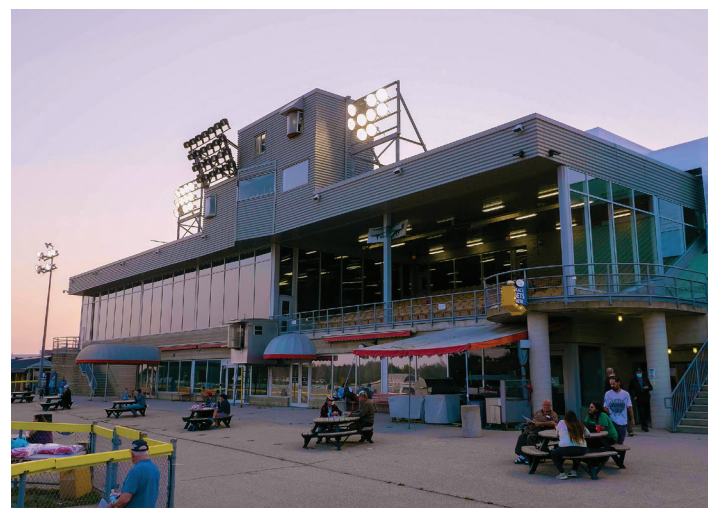
We are truly grateful for the opportunity to help make our community better and provide financial support where we can to help our community.

Once again, thanks to our dedicated team of staff, our community, and our board of directors for the past year. We look forward to the future and the new normal.

Respectfully,

Garth Green
President, Grand River Agricultural Society





Grand River Agricultural Society

The Grand River Agricultural Society (GRAS) is a not for profit organization that owns and operates the Grand River Raceway and The GrandWay Events Centre. 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.

Our New Look

It was very important to us to create a new and unique logo, while still speaking to our core values of community and philanthropy. Our logo combines both natural and modern elements to achieve a confident, yet familiar and approachable, feel.

The 4 colours in the logo are used to represent the pillars of GRAS, while also creating a dynamic leaf icon. The green represents our support of agriculture, the blue is for our commitment to the environment with a nod to the Grand River Raceway, the yellow is for our philanthropic initiatives and the small piece of burgundy represents our newest pillar, The GrandWay Events Centre.





The racing season started off as spectator-free, but we were allowed 50 spectators at the beginning of July and finished with 100 spectators allowed outdoors.

Our Mission

The Grand River Agricultural Society, through its people, activities and facilities excels in creating unique experiences fulfilling the dynamic interests of our guests.

Our Vision

To be recognized as a leading destination for unique agricultural, environmental and entertainment experiences.



Economic Impact

**\$2.3
MILLION**

Since 2004, the Grand River Agricultural Society has provided funding and Gift-In-Kind support for initiatives totaling \$2,314,114.

2020-2021 GRAS Philanthropic Commitments:

Agriculture/ Environment

- Jersey Ontario **\$1,200**
- Ontario 4-H Council **\$5,000**
- Ontario Farmland Trust **\$7,500**
- Erin Agricultural Society **\$10,000**
- Guelph Humane Society **\$10,000**
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Guelph **\$5,000**

Community

- CW Skatepark **\$1,500**
- Habitat for Humanity **\$1,000**
- Helping Hungry Heroes **\$25,000**
- Centre Wellington Rotary Club **\$700**
- Centre Wellington Food Bank **\$6,000**
- Children's Foundation of Guelph **\$500**
- Elora Rocks Lawn Bowling Club **\$2,200**
- Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce – Awards of Excellence **\$750**

Education

- AgScape **\$15,000**
- GRAS Margaret Bolander Award **\$250**
- GRAS Dougals Campbell Award **\$250**
- GRAS Scholarship/Bursary Program **\$25,000**
- University of Guelph – OAC Student Recruitment and Liaison Program (second installment) **\$53,375**

Events

- **Local Biz Night:** Provided tarmac tent rental for CWCC
- **Awards of Excellence:** Provided parking lot rental to CWCC

Most of our traditional gift in kind of facility space and support did not take place in 2020/21 because events were being cancelled due to COVID health measures. Sponsored events such as Waterloo & Grand River Dairy Show, Grand River Pull & Truck Show, and Pizza Perfect were also cancelled due to COVID health measures. We look forward to hosting and supporting these events again in 2021/22.



GREAT PLACE TO WORK CERTIFIED

The team at Grand River Agricultural Society (GRAS) and Grand River Raceway are proud to announce they once again are certified as a Great Place to Work®.

First awarded in 2019 as a Great Place to Work, and then later recognized on the 2020 list of Best Workplaces™ in Retail and Hospitality, the organization is thrilled that they continued to receive incredibly positive feedback about employment at GRAS and Grand River Raceway.

“It has been a challenging year for everyone, and the entertainment industry is no exception,” shares Rena Edmondson, HR Manager at Grand River Raceway. “Despite our very best efforts to engage, motivate and reward our team, you don’t truly know that you are doing a good job until you ask, and we are thrilled that our team feels so strongly about working at Grand River Raceway.”

The certification is awarded after a thorough and independent analysis conducted by Great Place to Work® Institute Canada. This certification is based on direct feedback from employees, provided as part of an extensive and anonymous survey about the workplace experience.

\$1.9 MILLION

Spent on goods
and services

\$4.8 MILLION

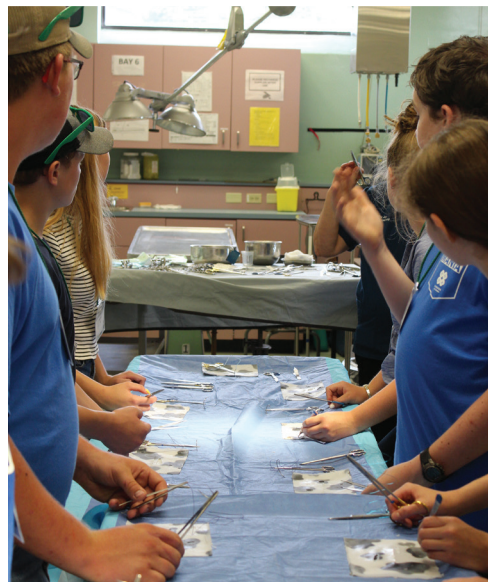
Capital
improvements

\$1.3 MILLION

Total staff wages
and benefits

\$216 THOUSAND

Agricultural events and
community support



Community Events



Drive-In Movie Nights

We hosted two Drive-In style movie nights in the parking lot on July 18th and August 22nd. Individuals pre-registered and paid online. There were just over 40 cars at each event.

These events were held because we wanted to provide the opportunity for people in our community to get out for a night, since there weren't many events due to the pandemic. We received a lot of positive feedback from both nights!

Food Truck Tuesdays

From June 15th - September 1st, we hosted a "Food Truck Night" every Tuesday.

We had Spanky's BBQ - our permanent food truck during the summer - plus one other local truck for the first half of the summer due to Public Health regulations. After Stage 3 was announced, we were then able to have Spanky's plus two other local trucks. This was a great way for us to help promote the "shop local" initiative within our community. There was an average of 100+ people each night.



Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce Awards of Excellence

For the last few years we have been the location of the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce's Awards of Excellence Gala, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic they were not allowed to host an indoor event in 2020. The team at CWCC still wanted to host their event, so we pivoted the 'gala' to an outdoor Drive-In style event in our large parking lot. The event was still a huge success with approx. 80 vehicles in attendance.

Impact Investing

Grand River Agricultural Society and RH Accelerator cooperate to support Innovative Agri & Food Companies

Grand River Ag Society (GRAS) and RH Accelerator Inc. announce they will work together and co invest in support of local early stage innovative companies in the agriculture, food and cleantech industries.

"In its over 130 years as an Agricultural Society, GRAS's roots form the foundation for philanthropy on which we operate today. Through the success of Grand River Raceway, and our ownership of the building which is home to Elements Casino Grand River, we have the financial ability to look beyond traditional giving and venture into new ways of fulfilling our mandate in an impactful way," says Garth Green, President of the Board at Grand River Ag Society.



Grand River
Agricultural Society

Deborah Whale, Vice President adds, "The GRAS Board of Directors is comprised of a number of successful local business owners and community leaders, with an entrepreneurial spirit that found us seeking opportunities beyond our community mini grants, philanthropic giving and scholarships. Through our commitment to impact investing, we are looking to create long term sustainability in the Ag and Environmental sectors, and fuel innovation right here in our backyard."



Joe Dales, Co Founder at RH Accelerator Inc.

"We are very pleased to be teaming up with the Grand River Ag Society to support some promising new businesses," says Joe Dales, Co Founder at RH Accelerator Inc. "RH Accelerator will help recruit the innovative companies, conduct due diligence and co invest with GRAS providing our 12 month founder/company development program. The combination of GRAS plus RHA resources will help the companies be more successful and grow, creating jobs and business activity in the region. This sector of the innovation economy is growing rapidly and our region has tremendous potential."

According to AgFunder's latest Agri-FoodTech Investing Report, \$19.8 billion has been invested in AgriFood tech across 1,858 deals in 2019. The report covers the wide range of agri food innovations, eGrocers and restaurants to farming agtech, ag biotech, farm robotics and equipment, bioenergy and biomaterials. The South Western Ontario farming and food industry is a hotbed of innovation that fosters a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.

"With a mandate that strives to bring Agriculture, Education and Community together, what could be more impactful that combining all three. By partnering with RH Accelerator and entities such as Western Fair we can have a more fundamental impact together, supporting initiatives in Wellington, Waterloo and Perth in a new and innovative way," comments Katie Giddy, Director of Hospitality, Sales & Marketing at Grand River Raceway.

Grand River Agricultural Society and RH Accelerator welcome applications to the Impact Investing Program.



Grand River Agricultural Society

Scholarships



The Grand River Agricultural Society (GRAS) established this bursary/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 are entering or enrolled in college diploma or university undergraduate agricultural and/or environmental programs.

Our 2020 Scholarship Recipients were:

Nora deVos

School: University of Guelph

Ryan Gill

School: University of Guelph

Rachel Mulder

School: Fanshawe College

Riley Bauman

School: University of Guelph

Lexi Johnston

School: University of Guelph

Claire Arsenault

School: Trent University

Derrick Knill

School: University of Guelph

Ryan Biggs

School: University of Guelph

Matthew Whittemore

School: University of Guelph

Kate Martin

School: University of Guelph

"This award will really help me in the future - I want to attend vet school some day, so with this scholarship I now have more opportunities to expand my knowledge in the agriculture industry. Plus it helps with the financial burden of post secondary loans. I am very thankful that this scholarship was available to me."

- Lexi Johnston
University of Guelph

"This is huge to me because not only will it help me a lot with my schooling, but I've grown up in this community and I really believe in hanging around your community as much as possible. Whether that's playing hockey, helping on a friend's farm, or holding the door at Tim Hortons. It means everything to me to be noticed and receive this award in my community."

- Ryan Biggs
University of Guelph

"This is an awesome opportunity to help me pursue my education and to get me to my future career goals. I would like to own a farm one day and for it to have the added value of an events venue to host agricultural events and to be a spot to promote agriculture in the community."

- Rachel Mulder
Fanshawe College



Senator Rob Black presenting Scholarship award to Rachel Mulder

Community Impact Stories

Guelph Humane Society \$10,000

GRAS funding supported our purpose-built space in our new home and helps GHS provide ongoing best practice sheltering to farm animals in care. Our new facility incorporates more indoor/outdoor space, improved lighting and better ventilation, which results in less stress for animals in our care. Our previous facility was cramped and did not reflect the work that we do in our community. It did not have a dedicated farm animal space. Small pens needed to be temporarily constructed and frequently moved within spaces designed for other purposes.



It was not uncommon for our education/large staff office to also house a chicken/duck pen. Our previous facility was also challenging since it did not have a temporary holding area for farm animals awaiting transfer to our partner north of Guelph or to foster. Our new facility has a flexible holding area and a treatment area that provides ongoing benefits to all our animals.



Our farm animal program is essential in our community. GHS services Wellington County which is predominantly rural. We also service the City of Guelph which allows hens to be housed on residential properties. Our service area requires a program model that is unique and diverse to address the needs in our community. Our farm space and program not only provides care to stray and surrendered companion farm animals, it also supports owners who are accessing one of our GHS Cares programs such as Pets in Transition and Emergency Boarding.

We experienced immediate positive impact of GRAS funding. 10 days after we moved into our new location, early March 2021, we welcomed our first farm animal: Jamie the hen. Jamie was also our Early Bird Draw mascot for our first online lottery. Jamie has since been adopted and is enjoying her HappyTail.

Elora Skatepark \$1,500

Thanks to the \$1,500 GRAS grant, we were able to plant 80mm caliper Pyramidal Oak trees at the Skatepark in Elora and they look fantastic! Up until these trees were planted the space was looking forgotten and sad unless community members were there, but now the space looks like it is alive and thriving.

Often when projects like this are built, it is the landscaping that cements the project into place giving it a sense of community and thoughtful placement. It is with this that your funding money for this makes this area a success.



Erin Agricultural Society \$10,000



The GRAS funding meant so much to our organization because we were able to realize the full potential of some of our poorly lit areas. Without this generous funding from GRAS, we would not have attempted this major infrastructure project. And because we now have three additional hydro poles of a much greater height, we are finally able to provide WiFi coverage to the entire fairgrounds. With the WiFi upgrades, we can now use computerized entry forms and show results will be available much sooner.

The Erin Agricultural Society is unique to other fairs in Wellington County as we own our own property. So, for many years, our twenty-five acre fairgrounds has been under-served in respect to electricity and proper lighting.

Now, we have been able to upgrade our electrical power on our fairgrounds, change the lighting at our track to energy efficient LED fixtures, remove old pole towers and install six new, energy efficient light poles with photo control and outlets at our gates. These updates will allow our gate attendants to have sufficient lighting in the evenings and enhance the security and safety on our property.

AgScape \$15,000

Connecting in a Virtual Education Environment

In September 2020, schools across Ontario entered a new virtual learning environment. Zoom, Google Meets and YouTube became spaces where AgScape had to become versatile as teachers, to meet a surging demand for interactive and digital resources. Online became the new reality, a reality that AgScape embraced with help from the Grand River Agricultural Society's (GRAS) philanthropic funding and our shared goals for supporting agriculture engagement and awareness across the province.

The move to virtual education has been both a challenge and an opportunity in that AgScape had to reenvision our programs very quickly but it has also allowed us to connect with a wider audience, including new school boards in previously underserved areas. Over the last year, conversations about food security, supply chain, shortage of labour and more have been brought to the forefront and having GRAS's support to develop programs and resources in a timely fashion has helped achieve a greater impact with our educators and students in making them aware of these important topics.

It has also allowed us to find new ways to work with industry partners to share knowledge not only within the education environment, but ways in which everyone can successfully navigate a new virtual educational landscape.

Thanks to GRAS we were able to pivot quickly in taking on this new digital landscape, continuing to offer our programs free of charge, and building the reach of agriculture education to students, teachers, and agricultural societies throughout Ontario.

Become food literate. Explore our Agriculture & Food System.

- CORN**
In this tour, you'll meet Justin who is an organic grain farmer and busy planting his crop.
- ASPARAGUS**
Visit Dalton White Farms and meet Rebecca, an Ontario asparagus farmer. Learn all about this summertime favourite.
- GREENHOUSE TOMATOES**
Learn with Mike, an Ontario greenhouse grower, who will discuss the process of growing various vegetables in a greenhouse and the importance of pursuing a career in the agri-food sector!
- EGGS**
Meet Ontario egg farmer, Megan! Visit her egg packing room and learn everything about egg farming including how important it is to technology!
- DAIRY**
Meet Ontario Dairy Farmer Ashley! Learn all you'd like to know about raising cows, producing milk and how technology is important to dairy farming.

Fun Fact: There are over 20,000 farm operators in Ontario with only 9% of that being individuals under the age of 35.

AgScape
Leading Agriculture and Food Education in Ontario

Horse Racing at The Grand River Raceway



For the 48 date meet, total wagering on Grand River Raceway (GRR) live racing was \$12,953,560 for a daily average of \$269,866. During the same period in 2019, 48 race dates were conducted, \$10,382,493 was wagered, with a daily average of \$216,301. The total wager was up 25% over last season. A total of 489 races were conducted this year, 1 less than the same period last year. Ontrack wagering at GRR was \$69,995, or \$2,692 per card once customers were permitted onsite.

The site had been closed to customers, opening to up to 100 pre-registered guests outside since July 27th.

The main building was closed for the meet, and the Lighthouse Restaurant was closed due to construction. Onsite wagering for the fiscal year was \$177,073. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, wagering took place at the site from late July until the end of September on live race dates only, and from March 24th to March 31st of 2021.

\$12,953,560

Wagered from all sources on horse racing at GRR

\$4,747,114

Total purses paid

**48
RACE
DATES**

June - September
2020

\$177,073

Wagered on-track on all horse racing

\$98,898

Average purses paid per card

\$26,954

Average wagered from all sources per race



Scott Coulter won the title as the leading driver at Grand River Raceway. The Brantford, ON resident won 47 races in 271 starts. A long time participant at Grand River Raceway, Coulter has over 5,300 victories and in excess of \$35 million in purse earnings throughout a career that began in 1995.

Trainer Richard Moreau recorded 17 wins and trained horses to purse earnings of \$112,396 to win the dash title in 2020. During the summer Moreau eclipsed 6,000 wins and \$60 million in career purse earnings. He has been named Canada's Trainer of the Year in each of the last seven years.



The \$200,964 Battle of Waterloo was won by Bettor Sun, driver Doug McNair, and trainer Gregg McNair. The Sunshine Beach colt is owned by breeder Willow Oak Ranch of Rogersville, Tennessee. The victory was the 4th for the McNairs in GRR's signature race.



Scarlett Hanover and Ed Hensley left from the second tier and carved out a solid pocket trip to take the \$128,149 Battle Of The Belles final in a new stakes record of 1:54.3.

Ashleigh Hensley trains the Bettors Delight daughter, for owners Burke Racing Stable, Frank Baldachino, Jandt Silva Purnel & Libb, and Weaver Bruscelli LLC.



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 believe that event planning should be as enjoyable as the event itself, which is why we take a down-to-earth approach and welcome guests to tap into our network and expertise. We take pride in hosting every event, and always execute with a smile!

We are ready to say 'I do' at The GrandWay! Whether it is a 250-guest lavish affair or a quaint outdoor ceremony, we can accommodate it all. Our Events & Experiences Coordinators will work with guests every step of the way to plan their perfect day. With many unique spaces to choose from, delicious in-house catering, and an accommodating events team – we can make wedding dreams come true.

We want to make any special occasion memorable. Take advantage of our all-inclusive packages or create a customized one – either way, our Events & Experiences team will work with guests to turn their vision into a reality.



Our Board room is perfect for any business meeting or conference. Our brand new board room has a full A/V set up, so it is the ideal space for a day of team building activities, a networking meeting, or a conference call – whatever the reason, we have you covered.

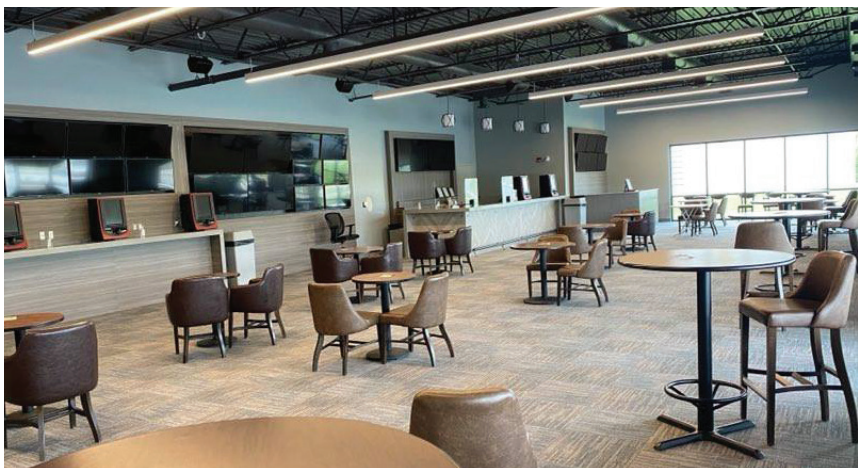


Located just steps away from the beautiful village of Elora, The GrandWay stands on our 53-acre property and strives to provide all of the amenities you would expect of an urban event centre but with the added beauty and charm of the country. Our location, accommodating events team, and passion for event planning truly allows for a unique planning experience.

Welcome to The THE GRANDWAY *Lounge*

Settle in trackside at the new 200 person GrandWay Bar and Lounge. The perfect place to gather with friends in a casual and relaxed environment for live racing, sports, and entertainment. You can grab a drink, a bite to eat, and place a bet all from the convenience of the lounge.

The lounge menu will provide a selection of items made in-house with fresh local ingredients. Enjoy great food and friendship at The GrandWay Lounge.



Meet The Board



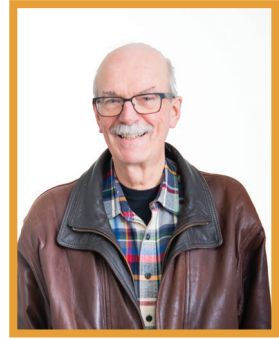
Garth Green
President



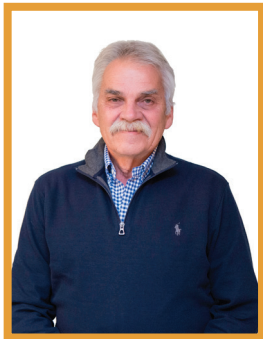
Deborah Whale
1st Vice President



Jean Szkotnicki
2nd Vice President



Robert Davies
Legal Secretary



Don Jewitt
Past President



Peter Ayranto
Director



Jason Castellan
Director



Skip Maher
Director



Tony Morris
Director



Diane Squires
Director



Gord Surgeoner
Director



Tom Wilson
Director



Dorothy Key
Executive Assistant/
Board & Member Liaison

GRAS is run by a volunteer board of 12 directors, all with diverse backgrounds in agriculture, finance, law, corporate, etc.. This group is interested in fostering innovation and relations in the agriculture & environmental sectors.

In Memory of

Passionate, persistent, and community minded

are just a few of the words that could be used to describe

Paul Walker

Paul took such great pride in the Grand River Agricultural Society (GRAS), Grand River Raceway, and most recently the addition of The GrandWay. Since 2007, he has served as a dedicated president to the Grand River Agricultural Society, after first joining the association in 2006 when it was formally known as Woolwich Agricultural Society.

During his time with GRAS, Paul has led the organization through growth and change. He loved to be onsite, and nothing put a bigger smile on his face than presenting scholarship cheques, welcoming folks on local biz night, joining the crowds looking for a winner trackside on Industry Day, or watching bus after bus of children arrive to learn about agriculture and food through Pizza Perfect. He has even been known to don a costume during various events at the Raceway!

Paul was a champion for all that GRAS represents – the promotion of agriculture and the environment, assisting local community drives, supporting the equine industry and facilitating youth education through events, scholarships and 4H. He worked tirelessly to see these goals and values achieved. The Grand River Agricultural Society board and the Grand River Raceway team are deeply committed to continuing his legacy.



**His contributions will be forever celebrated
and his presence forever missed.**



Grand River
Agricultural Society

Grand River Agricultural Society

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