

# Community Report 2022/2023

# President's Message

2022/2023 were years we will remember as those filled with challenges, both professionally and personally, as businesses, organizations, and families adapted to the ever-changing forces being inflicted on the global community.

As an organization, the Grand River Agricultural Society was able to adapt and flourish as the veil of COVID-19 was lifted. For the first time in two years, both The GrandWay Events Centre and the Grand River Raceway were able to fully welcome members of the public back to our facilities.

As we look back, it is important to recognise the amazing team members that make up The GRAS Family of staff and Board of Directors. Without their commitment, pride, and flexibility in working and adapting quickly to ever-changing government regulations, we would not be in the position we find ourselves today. In many ways we are stronger and more focused on what matters to each of us, personally, as well as organizationally.

The list of activities GRAS participated in this past year was extensive, from hosting numerous community and ag-industry events at The GrandWay Events Centre to supporting community organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club Bingo, and Harness the Hope, to name but a few.

On behalf of GRAS and the membership, the Philanthropic Committee has extended our philanthropic reach and fulfilled our mandate as a champion of agriculture, environment, and education. We continue to provide scholarships for the next generation of rising stars within our catchment area of Wellington-Waterloo-Perth, in the field of agricultural and environmental studies. We also worked with Indspire to help Indigenous students overcome funding barriers in similar fields of study.

We are truly grateful of the opportunity to support the enrichment of our community and provide financial assistance where we are able.

Once again, thanks to our dedicated team of staff, to our community, and to our Board of Directors for their dedication over the past year and as we look toward the future.

Respectfully,

Garth Green GRAS 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
- Caring about people
- Reimagining the possible
- Making a difference
- Doing the right thing
- Celebrating diversity









The Grand River Agricultural Society (GRAS) is a not-for-profit organization that is part of The Grand Family which includes 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.











# **Economic Impact**



Since 2004, the Grand River Agricultural Society (GRAS) has provided funding, gift-in-kind support, and impact investing for initiatives totalling \$3,489,994 and growing.

# Agriculture/ Environment

#### 2022-2023 GRAS Philanthropic Commitments:

- Ontario 4-H Council (3<sup>rd</sup> installment) \$5,000
- Wellington Federation of Agriculture \$15,000
- Ontario Beekeepers Association \$5,500
- Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame \$1,500
- The Guelph Humane Society \$5,000
- Jersey Ontario \$4,000
- Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) \$20,000
- Nature ReCombined Sciences Inc. \$20,000



- Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce Awards of Excellence \$850
- Community Mini Grant Program \$6,000
- Erin Agricultural Society \$5,000
- Harness the Hope matching funds \$12,500
- Calves for Community matching funds \$2,400
- Food Day Canada Contest \$250
- Elementary School Breakfast Program \$40,700
- OAAS \$2,500
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Guelph \$5,000
- Elora Centre for the Arts Tree Program \$15,000



- University of Guelph OAC Student Recruitment and Liaison Program (4th installment) \$55,258
- GRAS Scholarship/Bursary Program \$30,000
- GRAS Margaret Bolander Award \$250
- GRAS Dougald Campbell Award \$250
- Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference East \$4,000
- Grow Our People Summit \$10,000
- Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce (CWCC) \$1,000



#### Room Rental:

- CWCC Awards of Excellence
- CWCC Local Biz Night
- CPN Breakfasts
- 100 Women Who Care
- Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame
- Learning Foundation Fundraiser Dinner
- Rotary Club of Fergus-Elora
- Elora Lions Club
- Numerous ag-related organizations

#### Other GRAS supported events:

- Groves Community Hospital Foundation/Elora Salem Horticultural Society – annual maintenance of the Healing Gardens
- Mounted Games Across Canada in-field competitions
- Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association facility & refreshments
- West-Central Junior Dairy Show facility & staffing
- Waterloo & Grand River Dairy Show facility & prizes
- Pedal for Portage food & beverage



# **Environmental Impact**

This year...

\$3.8 MILLION

Spent on goods and services

\$411 THOUSAND

Capital improvements

\$1.7
MILLION

Total staff wages and benefits

\$572 THOUSAND

Agricultural events and community support



# **NEW EV Charging Stations Installed**

Grand River Raceway received a non-repayable contribution of \$50,000 from RTO4 to install 14 Level 2 charging stations. This is part of an overall Government of Canada investment of over \$78 million, which includes an almost \$10 million top up to FedDev Ontario's original \$68.5 million

contribution for 11 Regional Tourism Offices and Indigenous Tourism Ontario.

This Tourism Relief Fund (TRF) investment will help GRR attract new visitors and drive economic growth in Wellington County.

### Other GRAS Environmental Initiatives

The kitchen now uses all recyclable and organic containers.

#### Organics recycling initiative:

• The kitchen is using a service that collects and delivers all their organics to an offsite farm in Arthur where it gets blended into their organic soils.

#### Food diversion initiative:

 If we have leftover food product, we use Second Harvest donating it to a local organization in need.

#### All tables and chairs on the patio are made from recycled milk containers:

- This is done in a recycled plastic plant in Stratford.
- 579 milk jugs = 1 Adirondack chair

A reforestation initiative on approximately two acres of our property will be happening in the spring of 2023.

There are lots of ways GRAS, GRR, and GrandWay are looking out for our environment. See all environmental initiatives at grandriveragsociety.com/blog/.



# Commitment to Community

# In-Person Pizza Perfect returned!



Pizza Perfect is a FREE activity-filled program designed specifically for Grade 3 students.

Pizza, arguably a favourite food of most students, typically represents all four food groups identified by Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and is an excellent topic for a comprehensive study of agriculture, nutrition, food processing, economics, mathematics, science, arts, and language – even careers.



For two days in March, GRAS welcomed 700 students, adult supervisors, and teachers through the Grand River Raceway paddock to visit various stations to learn about dairy, soils and vegetables, meats and meat alternatives, grains, and field crops. Each booth was led by enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers who provide positive learning experiences for all students.

We were thrilled to bring back the in-person event and in addition, we kept the Virtual "Personal-Sized" Pizza Perfect option for those classes who were unable to attend in-person. GRAS registered another 240 students through the virtual event, which was available the last week in March.

We look forward to welcoming even more students in 2024! Check out grandriveragsociety.com, sign-up for GRAS emails, and/or follow GRAS on social to keep in the know.













GRAS continued this beautiful annual event at The GrandWay Events Centre. This year we hosted over 100 local ladies in our large ballroom to celebrate International Women's Day on March 9. This event was presented in collaboration with the GRAS and The GrandWay. While the ladies enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch, five women from the Centre Wellington community shared their personal stories, reflecting on the challenges, opportunities, and strengths in their own personal journeys.



# Breakfast from the Farm

The 2022 Breakfast from the Farm was hosted August 27 on the in-field of Grand River Raceway. Farm and Food Care Ontario, with the support of the GRAS team and The Fergus Agricultural Society, put on a great event with 70 volunteers and over 800 people (kids and adults!) passing through the various displays.













The event included sprayers, combines, goats, sheep, horses, and cows, along with interactive and educational booths for all to enjoy.

The GRAS booth gave out fun activity bags for kids and the opportunity to spin-the-wheel to win various prizes. Grand River Raceway's mascot, Grandy, even stopped by to take a few pics!

The GrandWay Kitchen prepared breakfast sandwiches, fruit, and juices that were graciously served by GRAS board members. At the end of the event, all guests could walk away with a goodie bag with everything they would need to make a pancake breakfast at home.

This fun event helps build public trust in food and farming in the province while bringing farmers and agricultural education straight to the people!



### Virtual Earth Day Contest

GRAS hosted the annual Virtual Earth Day Contest, this year highlighting the importance of dedicating our time, resources, and energy to solving climate change and other environmental issues. When we INVEST IN OUR PLANET together, we are supporting healthy, happy, and wealthy communities worldwide. Students from grades 1 to 8 submit a story, project, poster, or full class project on the topics related to "investing in our planet". Winners received cash prizes!







Why is local food so important to you? This was one of the questions for contestants to answer in order to win a prize pack valued at \$250! This event helped raise awareness around supporting local food businesses. Through this fun online event, we celebrated our local farmers and food sources!

# Impact Investing

SPARK II

SYMPOSIUM

### SPARK II - Connecting ag and green-tech start-ups with investors

On April 11, The SPARK II Symposium came back for the second time, still focused on igniting collaboration where agri-food innovation meets investment.

The symposium featured emcee Dr. Deb Stark, former Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Ontario; Board member of CAPI, and an Investor with Golden Triangle Angel Network, and welcomes from Deborah Whale, 1st Vice President of GRAS, and The Honourable Rob Black, Senator (Ontario).

The event kicked off with Andrea Gruza, Managing Partner with Bonnefield Inc, speaking on 'Agriculture as an Asset Class'. Then 5 chosen businesses had 15 minutes to present their pitch for funding to a room full of investors, government organizations, media, and other agricultural organizations.

The five presenting companies were:

Company 1 - MYCIONICS

Company 2 - BIO DIFFUSION TECHNOLOGIES

Company 3 - VIVID MACHINES

Company 4 - DAIRY DISTILLERY

Company 5 - eQ CELL INC

The event closed with Jay Bradshaw, former President of Syngenta Canada and a Managing Principal of Ag Capital Canada, talking about ag and green-tech as meaningful and powerful investment opportunities. With over 150 attendees in person and online virtually, the event was another great success!







### From Ireland to Canada...

StrongBó Agritech, an Irish Startup has spread across the Atlantic to Canada!

They have secured seed funding to enable the commercialization of their 'Weigh&Spray', a hardware enabled software product poised to revolutionize the beef production sector.

GRAS has invested \$100,000 in this technology along with additional investment from the 519 Growth Fund and Enterprise Ireland.

StrongBó's cutting-edge hardware automatically collects Frequent Animal Weights, which are then analyzed to provide the farmer with a business intelligence platform

Continued ->





### First round Rapid Response to Business Development a success!

Last year, GRAS announced the launch of the Rapid Response for Business Development (RRBD) Initiative to support their ongoing commitment to impact investing by creating long-term sustainability and fueling innovation in the agriculture and environmental sectors. The GRAS RRBD was modelled on a similar successful government program that was previously available through the Ontario Agri Food Technologies Association (OAFTA).

This initiative is committed to providing up to \$10,000 to support Ontario-based agriculture, agri-food, agri-products, and clean-tech businesses as they work with established business connections to advance market opportunities and secure sales for their innovative products, processes, or technologies.

Over the past year, this initiative has provided up to \$50,000 in support to these agricultural/green-tech businesses, with expected generated sales from the funded companies of \$3,530,000.

The latest in GRAS's Philanthropic and Impact Investment Initiatives, the program is designed to enable businesses, with preference to those located in Wellington, Waterloo, and Perth counties, to respond quickly to global market opportunities.

Here are this year's approved funding recipients:

Harvest Genomics - \$8,000 Metagenom Bio Life Sciences - \$9,800 PlantForm Corporation - \$6,500 Wood & Water Inc (Culcherd) - \$10,000 Escarpment Laboratories - \$10,000 Prisum Coatings Canada - \$7,500

The RRBD initiative will provide support for eligible travel and associated costs that are required to work with clients where there is a high potential to "close the deal" with real and established business connections. Working with CanLead Solutions, RRBD applications will remain open until March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 or until all funds are allocated. GRAS has a multi-year commitment to the program.



# An exciting investment with StrongBo!

and decision support tool. This data is then used by the farmer and their advisors to make smarter decisions on a daily basis, but also allows them to plan with greater certainty into the future. StrongBó now operates a subsidiary from Hamilton, Ontario. Its Canadian office is currently based in The Forge at McMaster, who have worked closely with the

StrongBó team to bring these devices to the Canadian market.

GRAS looks forward to seeing what comes next with this new technology in Canada!



# Scholarships



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 who are entering or enrolled in college or university programs in agricultural or environmental fields of study.

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

#### Josh Brander

Associate Diploma in Crop Technology Lakeland College

#### Olivia Chiu

Master of Science, Clinical Studies Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph

#### **Andrew Edmondson**

Bachelor of Engineering, Co-Op - Water Resources Engineering Major University of Guelph

#### **Brendan Gill**

Bachelor of Commerce, Food and Agricultural Business Co-Op University of Guelph

#### **Rhiannon James**

Master of Science, Environmental Sciences University of Guelph

#### **Lexi Johnston**

Bachelor of Science, Agriculture - Animal Science Major University of Guelph

#### **Derrick Knill**

Doctor of Veterinary Medicine
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph

#### **Daniel Marquez**

Environment and Business Co-Op Program University of Waterloo

#### Johannes Renecker

Bachelor of Science, Agriculture - Crop Sciences University of Alberta

#### Anuja Shrestha

Doctor of Philosophy, Plant Agriculture University of Guelph

#### Julianna Tindall

Bachelor of Agricultural Science - Crop Science Major University of Guelph

#### Matthew Whittemore

Bachelor of Science - Agriculture Science Major University of Guelph



### **Indspire: Building Brighter Futures**

Bursaries, Scholarships, and Awards for Indigenous Students!



GRAS teamed up with Indspire to provide scholarships to Indigenous students attending post secondary education!

This past year the recipients of Indspire's Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships and Awards were announced. GRAS was proud to see their donation of \$14,000 support indigenous students going into post secondary programs.

Specifically the GRAS scholarship supports students who are enrolled in agricultural or environmental fields of study. Students must have a GPA of 75+ and be from the province of Ontario. Students from Ontario attending institutions in other provinces are also eligible.

The Building Brighter Futures program provides scholarships, bursaries and awards to thousands of Indigenous students every year.

Indspire recognizes that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students encounter additional barriers to completing and funding.



Indigenous education,

L'éducation des autochtones.



I wanted to send a sincere thank you, Nia:wen'kowa, for the unexpected scholarship award for my Master's thesis.

I wanted to let you know conversations on water rights in the Ontario Great Lakes basins are of utmost importance in this research, including the institutional tools that are available through colonial law that govern this water system.

Having a generous scholarship from your organization is a strong indicator that your support for Indigenous students will continue to transmit into your work. Being awarded this scholarship makes me aware that equity in policy and legal frameworks for freshwater and agricultural health are of great importance to you as well.

Again, thank you for the support.

-Miranda Black

### Impact of the student awards:

- Approximately 90% of the awards recipients will graduate
- 58% of graduates achieved an undergraduate degree
- 89% of graduates are employed
- Over 50% of graduates have continued towards another post secondary credential
- About 60% of employed awards recipients work in fields that impact Indigenous people



# **GRAS Impact**

### **GRAS** supports sustainable innovation

GRAS x Bioenterprise partnership

\$15,000

3 year commitment



Giving back to the community is part of the DNA of GRAS. This includes a strong commitment to social entrepreneurship and expanding its philanthropic mandate – which inspired the decision to become a Sustainable Innovation Sponsor with Bioenterprise Canada, Canada's Food & Agri-Tech Engine.

"What we are looking to do is fund early-stage companies who have an innovative approach to solving problems or creating products in the agriculture and environment space," says Katie Giddy, VP, GRAS. "As an early investor in ag tech companies, we've opened doors, and by being an agricultural society that is steeped in deep history, we have come to find ourselves in a position of credibility, especially to those outside of agriculture."

GRAS was one of the first organizations to back Ag Capital Canada and has more recently also built a collaboration with The51 Ventures, which focuses on supporting women-led and diverse businesses. It was through its ongoing search for partners and likeminded organizations that GRAS made a connection with Bioenterprise Canada.

GRAS felt that with Bioenterprise's national network, mentorship capacity, and depth of expertise, as well as its commitment to sustainable innovation, they were an attractive partner for GRAS.

"This connection to innovation is a particularly important part of our strategic plan. It's about connectivity in this ecosystem, and by working together, we can have access to people, processes, and places," Katie says. "The hope is that being aligned with an organization like Bioenterprise can help us collectively make any gains in this space go further."

Credit: https://bioenterprise.ca/grand-river-agricultural-society-supports-sustainable-innovation/





# **Community Matters**

## Harnessing the Hope at the Ontario Women Driver Championships



Harness the Hope brought awareness and support to the OLG Ontario Women Driver Championship and breast cancer. Sponsored by OLG and Ontario Racing, the event raised \$12,500 from cash donations, merchandise, and driver purse donations and then GRAS made a matching donation of \$12,500 to bring the total to \$25,000!



Harness the Hope was founded in 2005 following the Dustin family's first (of three) personal experiences with a breast cancer diagnosis, treatments, and survival. Harness the Hope is a fundraising initiative that organizes events and initiatives to benefit causes that enable breast cancer research. awareness and support services for cancer warriors and survivors.







# Calves for Community - 4-H Dairy Show



August 26-27, 2022

Calves for our Community was hosted in August, benefiting Groves Memorial Community Hospital, Fergus. Locally a small group of dairy champions came together to host a small hybrid auction. The sale took place as part of Junior Show, held at Grand River Raceway, Elora.

The goal of the event was to raise much needed financial support

for the hospital and to help raise awareness in our local community of the depth of generosity of the rural community supporting the hospital.

Farmers don't always have a lot to give, but collectively as a community they come together to move mountains.

# **Community Mini Grant Recipients**

RARE Charitable Research Reserve - \$1.000 "Regenerative Agriculture in the RARE's Food Bank Garden" Initiative

Erin Soil Health Initiative - \$1.000 The Community Steward Forum and The Farmer Forum/Summer Social

The Elora Community Swan Program - \$1,000 Materials/Labour for the swans' winter housing

Elora Rocks Lawn Bowling Club - \$958 Hybrid, disease resistant grass for the Club greens

Wellington Dairy Producer Committee- \$1.000 Refurbishment of cargo trailer into a refrigerated trailer

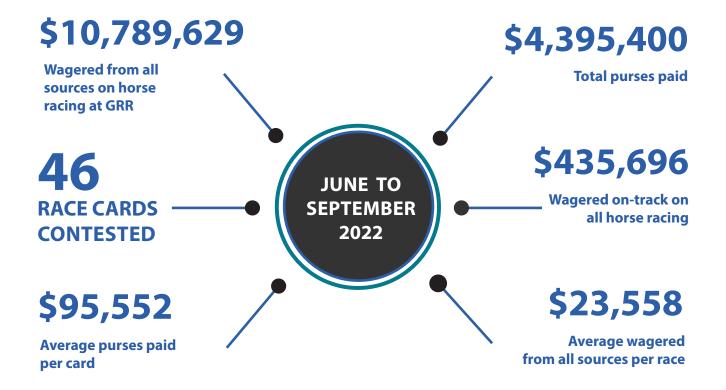
Wellington County 4-H Poultry Club - \$1,000 Purchase of incubators



# Horse Racing at Grand River Raceway



Total wagering on Grand River Raceway (GRR) live racing for the 2022 season was \$10,789,629 over 46 cards for a daily average of \$234,557. During the same period in 2021, 47 race dates were contested, \$10,165,586 was wagered, with a daily average of \$216,289. The total wager was up 6% over last season. A total of 458 races were run this year, 27 less than the same period in 2021. Ontrack wagering on GRR totaled \$435,696 or \$9,471 per card. Average field size dropped slightly to 7.3 from 7.9 in 2022 as the available horse population in Ontario decreased across the board.





### The Grand River Raceway is a Great Place to Work yet again!

Grand River Raceway is proud to continue to be certified as a Great Place to Work® since 2019. They are exceptionally proud to have been recognized for three consecutive years on the 2020-2022 List of Best Workplaces™ for Retail & Hospitality.

Great Place to Work® (greatplacetowork.ca) is the global authority on high-trust, high-performance workplace cultures. Through the support of GRAS, Grand River Raceway

continues to create effective Human Resources programs, employ enthusiastic collaborative team members that promote and sustain a strong workplace culture.

We are privileged to have a dedicated team working together to serve our community members and honoured that they continue to provide positive feedback.





Brett MacDonald earned top driver honours narrowly over Tyler Borth in what was a tight season's long race. The resident of Freelton, Ontario, won 43 times during the meet and racked up \$258,501 in purse earnings. Helping him establish his best overall season to date in Ontario that saw him visit the winners circle 328 times and earn more than \$2.5 million in purses.

Jodie Cullen of Dundas, Ontario, held on to take the trainers title, posting 16 victories from just 50 starts for an incredible 32% win rate. She added \$140,675 in purse earnings to her resume. 2022 was also a career year for the Cullen barn in Ontario, as she amassed 181 wins and more than \$2 million in purse earnings.





#### **SOUNDS GOOD**

Sounds Good captured the \$204,000 Battle of Waterloo presented by Winbak Farms. The son of Bettors Delight was driven by Doug McNair for trainer Gregg McNair and owned by Michael and Sam Sergi of Canton, New York. This was the 5<sup>th</sup> win in the event for team McNair, making Doug the winningest driver and father Gregg now sits 2<sup>nd</sup> behind only Carl Jamieson's 6 victories.

#### **BIG BIG PLANS**

Big Big Plans was up in time to win the \$155,000 Battle of the Belles for driver Trevor Henry and Hall of Fame trainer Robert McIntosh. The daughter of All Bets Off is owned by Robert McIntosh Stables, Mardon Stables, and Dave Boyle all of Ontario.





# THE GRANDWAY

Cheers to our first year operating at full capacity! The GrandWay Team has worked tirelessly to serve the Centre Wellington and surrounding communities.

In 2022, couples were able to plan their weddings with confidence and we saw a record number of weddings being hosted in The GrandWay Hall, patio, and centre field (inside the race track). We continue to push forward the GRAS mandate as The GrandWay welcomed over 100 not-for-profit organizations to utilize our space for fundraising, business meetings,

training, and more! We have continued to be gratefully overwhelmed by the number of charities and not-for-profit groups who have used the space to raise significant funds for community organizations. This past year we helped organizations raise over \$345,000 for the Centre Wellington and surrounding community!

The GrandWay was also designed to be a hub for entertainment, as we have enjoyed hosting performances from Elora Community Theatre, Yuk Yuks, and Doll Haus Entertainment.













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. We take pride in hosting every event, and always execute with a smile!













# Meet The Board



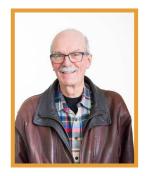
Garth Green President



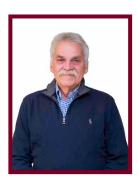
Deborah Whale 1st Vice President



Jean Szkotnicki 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President



Robert Davies Legal Secretary



Don Jewitt Past President



Brendan Ross Director



Cynthia Philippe Director



Jason Castellan Director



Skip Maher Director



Cindy Lindsay Director



Tony Morris Director



Diane Squires Director



Gord Surgeoner Director



Dorothy Key Executive Assistant/ Board & Member Liaison

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



# **GRAS** Partnerships

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























































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

519-846-8879 | grandriveragsociety.com





