



ROCKTON AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

Home of the World's Fair | Thanksgiving Weekend



To all our Society Members, Volunteers & Sponsors,

Congratulations on a successful 171st Rockton World's Fair. I am so happy to share we held a safe Fair that was enjoyed by over 31,000 attendees. Although mother nature did not cooperate over the weekend, we should all be proud of the success of our 2023 Fair. As your President I had the privilege of spending time in all areas of the Fair and it was such a great opportunity to better understand all the amazing things our Fair offers. What stood out most, was seeing how much we can accomplish when we all work together. None of this would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of our Members, Volunteers, and Sponsors – I sincerely thank you all.

We host a very impressive agriculture-based Fair that provides opportunities for our community to exhibit, share and educate our patrons. To promote agricultural education, we distributed over 11,000 elementary school tickets to local schools, as well as to schools in Hamilton, Dundas, Waterdown, Cambridge, Brantford, and St. George. Children had the opportunity to get up-close and personal with animals of all kinds and learn about their roles in our amazing Ag Alive tent. While educational, the tent offered some fun elements too including the family photo areas as well as the all-time favourite corn bin! I had the pleasure of walking through the tent with the family member of an Ohio-based judge, and she was so impressed with it. What a great job by this Committee of engaging attendees in Ag Education! To expand on the educational aspect this year, our Farm & Home building hosted a booth highlighting careers in agriculture and the food industry. Now more than ever, our youth need to be aware of the importance of agriculture in leading to a sustainable and secure future.

Every visitor who comes to our Fair is greeted by our Parking & Admissions Committee, Shuttle Committee, and countless Volunteers. These teams make sure that every attendee knows how to reach our fairgrounds, where to park, where to find gates, and on top of all this, they ensure everyone gets a friendly welcome! Thanks to all these Committees and their Volunteers for your warmth and kindness to our guests. It takes hundreds of hours prior to the Fair to coordinate volunteers, arrange fencing, lighting, and signage. Because of these Members and Volunteers, everyone starts off their Fair visit off on a positive note. Thank You!

After a difficult 2022, our avian friends made a return in 2023! It was great to have the poultry barn full this year. Our visitors love walking through this barn and seeing the wide range of birds and rabbits on display. Thank you to the Poultry, Pigeon, and Rabbit Committees for running such a great show all weekend long, and for making it interactive by allowing visitors of all ages the opportunity to feed some of the birds. It was so fun for kids of all ages!

Our livestock barns were also busy all weekend with exhibitors showing off their beef and dairy cattle, alpaca, sheep, and goats. Guests were excited to learn about these animals, and to understand how they are judged. The show rings were equally busy with equine shows of all types. Seeing the crowd they draw is always impressive, but even more impressive is seeing how much the patrons enjoyed the shows throughout the weekend. So much planning is required to put on these shows; thank you to all the Livestock Committees. While we have no official numbers yet, it's easy to see that exhibitor numbers were way up from 2022. This speaks to the quality of the shows each of the Committee offers. Congratulations!

Another great experience for our guests was visiting the six-horse hitch tent. Not many people get the chance to see such incredible horses up close, or to see the team get hitch ready, and then drive through the village. What a sight, and a true joy for the Ambassador and I to ride along this year! This was a highlight for me, as well as another outstanding example of how we enable rural and urban to connect during Fair. Thank you to everyone who supports this great weekend-long display.

School Fair and Rural & Urban exhibit numbers also increased greatly from 2022. It was amazing to walk through the Youth & Ag building and see it full of exhibits! I personally loved seeing kids searching for their exhibits to show them off to their families and friends, and eagerly looking to see their results. It brought back fond memories of myself as a child searching for my own judging results and subsequently, the joy of doing the same with my own children. Thank you to the School Fair and Rural & Urban Committees for supporting the exhibitors. What a great job building up our entries with school outreach, engaging our youth, and remembering our rural roots!

Our Farm & Home building had a stunning display of Homecraft exhibits. There were over 2,900 unique exhibits entered in Homecrafts this year. This is possible through the numerous Committees that run each section, and the additional Volunteers that help during set-up and judging days. What a powerhouse of Members and Volunteers that make Homecraft such a success. I have heard informally that many Fairs still had low exhibit numbers this year, so it's great to see that we have made such a huge leap forward since last year. I believe our Fair Prize Book assisted with this and I encourage each Committee to connect with the Office after their post-Fair meetings to provide any feedback or changes for 2024. Our goal is to have these books out even earlier in 2024.

With our Back in Fair Style theme, it was great to see our Fair contests so successful. There are numerous Committees and Volunteers that make each contest possible from karaoke, talent show, spelling bee, scavenger hunt, pet show, pedal tractor pull and pie eating. This year also saw the return of the baby show, yard displays, and giant pumpkins. In addition to being a great time, these contests provide opportunities for so many individuals to become part of the Fair each year and share in becoming part of our history!

We were fortunate to have numerous farm equipment displays this year which kids love to see up close, the fire safety trailer, and a great barn building demonstration. It takes a lot of negotiation and outreach to our local equipment companies to line up displays and secure loaner equipment to support our Fair both pre, during, and post. Thank you to everyone involved in making sure our Fair was well stocked with equipment and displays. We hope to have some antique tractors back next year. Please reach out if you have any connections with any interesting historical agricultural displays or demonstrations for 2024.

As our patrons enjoy their fair food, many love to walk around and see our various vendors and displays. There is a lot of behind the scenes work prior to vendors setting up. Thank you to everyone involved in bringing in such a wide variety of vendors to the craft building, as well as indoors and outdoors, and for helping set up the vendors and ensuring they have everything they need to operate all weekend long. It was great to welcome back our local service clubs, food bank, scouts, and girl guides. The opportunity to assist them in raising their profile and funds that go back into the community is one of the great traditions of our Fair. This year we tried something new by offering an opportunity for the Troy Women's Institute to hold the quilt raffle. I'm happy to report they sold out of tickets. Just another wonderful way for our Society to support our larger community.

Entertainment was amazing this year with something for everyone! We offered entertainment on the DA Campbell stage on Sunday, and as always, the building is so well managed to meet the needs of the contests and shows all weekend. Thank you! For our outdoor performers, the weather did not help much, but our entertainers were troopers who were committed to putting on a great show for everyone despite the conditions! There are no great shows without a great sound crew in place. This year our Sound Committee did an incredible job organizing all the stages, barns, and rings, and supporting the shows all weekend. Thank-you for an outstanding job!

Rockton is known for its demo derby, and it's a Fair favourite! The Derby Committee made sure we held three great nights of shows this year. Even though a contracted provider runs the shows, there are so many moving parts for the Committee to manage such as endless moving of blocks, cars, people, and the odd barrel. They do all of this with the safety of our crew and patrons in mind. Thank you to everyone who stays so late each night to wrap up this show and make sure our rings are ready for the morning.

Our Juniors are the future of our Society, and we are lucky to have an amazing Chair, Emma Goodale, who engages and leads so many juniors all Fair weekend. I was so impressed by the level of commitment to the Fair displayed by so many juniors this year. The future looks bright for the Society with so many dedicated Juniors on deck.

With so many Members and Volunteers working at the Fair, it is important they are kept fueled all weekend long. Our Hospitality Committee and their Volunteers did such a great job of taking care of Fair Volunteers over the weekend. There is nothing better than to hear the conversations as people get a chance to catch up with one another and enjoy a well-deserved break. Also, we had a group of Members and Volunteers that ensured everyone had amazing meals pre and post Fair too. Thank you for taking care of our stomachs during a busy Fair season!

And finally, I must mention the dozens of Members and Volunteers who support all Committees with the set-up and tear-down of the buildings and displays. It takes a lot of muscle and hard physical work to get the buildings and displays up and running. This work is behind the scenes, and so few get a chance to witness the countless hours that go into preparing the Fairgrounds. To everyone who helps so selflessly with the setup and subsequent tear down, thank you for your hard work, your amazing skill, and for the dedication and late nights put in to ensure the Fair happens without any problems.

The Society and the Rockton World's Fair have always had the support of local businesses and that was true again this year. Thank you to Allan Hawkins Electrical Service, Ayr Farmers Mutual Insurance Company, Big Bear Pumping Inc., Bobcat of Hamilton Ltd., Campbells Amusement, City of Hamilton/City Enrichment Fund, Dumfries Mutual Insurance, Galer Equipment Ltd., JSB Wealth Management - Josh Santa-Barbara, Ontario Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport, Passant Trucking, Peggy LaVigne RE/MAX Smart Realty Team, Premier Equipment Ltd., Settlers Supplies Inc., Troy Equine Services, Vine and Partners LLP, WPE Landscape Equipment, and Xterra Construction Inc. We appreciate your support, and love that you are part of our Fair!

To our General Manager, Sandra Caleta and office staff, Kathi Karpinski (who pulled double duty in the Ag Alive tent) and Amanda Ashford, congratulations on a successful first Fair. Your dedication and commitment to supporting all the Committees and moving parts of the Fair was great. And even more impressive is the office's focus on how to improve next year. The office was keeping notes all weekend on areas to strengthen. With that perspective and focus, things can only become stronger, smoother, and more successful across the Fair and Society.

I really hope I have not missed acknowledging any area of our Fair. It is amazing how the fairgrounds come alive with activity each year; however, it is the Members, Volunteers, and Sponsors that truly make up this amazing community we call the Rockton Agricultural Society. Together we offer a great Thanksgiving tradition. THANK YOU for everything you do to support our Fair!

Sincerely

Sandra Solonik
2023 President