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# Ottawa Valley Seed Growers hands out donations

The organizations which runs the area's farm show has changed its donations policy

BY TOM VAN DUSEN

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**K**emptville – With requests for donations growing, the Ottawa Valley Seed Growers Association has decided to tighten its purse strings.

The OVSGA is continuously approached by other agricultural and rural groups for a piece of the proceeds from its annual Ottawa Valley Farm Show. Among those who benefit are local fair boards and their provincial association, 4-H, agricultural colleges, research programs, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, the Women's Institute, and the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame.

In general, the association doesn't object to the requests because part of its self-imposed mandate is to give back to the agricultural community. But now directors have decided a formal policy should be implemented, determining who should get what.

Upon facing a pile of requests for support at their most recent regular meeting April 19, directors agreed that a draft policy should be ready for review and approval at their annual meeting set for July 24.

Over the years, the association has tucked away a tidy nest egg, money accumulated from its annual Ottawa Valley Farm Show held in March.

For more than 50 years, the venue was Lansdowne Park in Ottawa; next year, the show will relocate to the Capital Exhibition Centre now under construction opposite Ottawa International Airport where it'll be one of the first trade shows to occupy the full 150,000 square-ft. of display space.

In resolving to draw up a donation policy, directors felt it should reflect a priority for programs focused on agricultural awareness and youth.

"We have three local fairs asking for help today," OVSGA president Jim Arbuckle noted. "There are more than 30 fairs in our area. How far will it go?"

Director John Roosendaal suggested that, with more rural fairs moving away from their traditional roots, any money given to them should

be earmarked for agricultural awareness events. That theme was picked up by director Bob Dick who added that OVSGA donations should also be reserved for youth-related fair activities.

Vice-president Bruce Hudson cited Renfrew's successful "Farm Comes to Town" held earlier this month as an example of the type of event the association should be putting some money into. "Farm Comes to Town" has never requested help from the Seed Growers.

A pork producer, Hudson said he was impressed with how the event is designed to interactively increase awareness of farming among school



children through the participation of area producers.

Until the new policy kicks in, directors agreed to approve requests already on the table: The Russell, Chesterville and

Cobden fairs will receive \$300 each to assist with their 2011 editions.

A new organization dedicated to preserving agricultural machinery and other rural antiques which debuted at this year's farm show will get \$500, and Ontario's Outstanding Young Farmers will get \$300.

Two research projects into soybean and cereal production will get a total of \$10,000; the association will top up proceeds from its annual Prestigious Pedigreed Seed Sale and donate \$6,000 to CHEO; and regional 4-H will get \$5,000 for various projects.

With Ottawa's Central Can-

ada Exhibition put on hold for at least a year, \$750 which had been earmarked for 4-H support there will be transferred to the rural youth network's annual meeting. The 4-H program is one of the main recipients of OVSGA largesse, also benefiting from free space and booth decorating at the annual farm show.

Finally, directors set aside a \$300 request from the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame on grounds it already invests heavily in the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame, including sponsoring a mini version featuring Eastern Ontario inductees at Kemptville Campus of the University of Guelph.