

November 22, 2010

## **Southwest Agricultural Conference (SWAC) Provides First Leadership Donation of \$25,000 to Ridgetown Campus' Reek Building New East Wing Campaign**

Ridgetown: Celebrating the upcoming 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Southwest Agricultural Conference (SWAC), conference partners have stepped to the plate to be the very first donors to the campus' \$2.5 million campaign to construct a new east wing on the Reek Building.

"We're excited about the huge growth in agricultural diploma enrolment at Ridgetown and we see the real need for a new student services and recruitment centre, and our conference will also welcome the added classroom space," notes Jamie Littlejohn, SWAC Conference Co-chair and member of the Elgin Soil and Crop Improvement Association. "The young people studying at Ridgetown are our future producers and agribusiness leaders and we want to make a difference to them and to Ridgetown Campus as they celebrate their largest enrolment in history and their milestone 60<sup>th</sup> year as agriculture education providers."

Ridgetown Campus is one of three key partners in the Southwest Agricultural Conference organization along with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the six county Soil and Crop Improvement Associations. "It was a unanimous decision by the conference planning committee to make the investment in the campus, and this gift represents support from grassroots agricultural leaders who value the impact the campus and the conference make in our farming community," notes Adam Hayes, SWAC Conference Co-chair.

Architectural and engineering plans for the new facility have been progressing for over a year and the Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation is anxious to raise the \$2.5 million needed to begin construction. They plan to seek investments of \$1.0 million from community stakeholders and \$1.2 million from the province of Ontario. The Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario (ARIO) has already made a generous investment to initial architectural designs.

"I'm just delighted to see the first gift to the campaign come from the folks that manage our rich farm land and from a group of agricultural trend setters who strongly support post-secondary education and continuing education through their annual conference," says Dave Baute, Campaign Chair, Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation.

The 2011 Southwest Agricultural Conference event is scheduled for January 5 & 6, 2011. University of Guelph President, Dr. Alastair Summerlee, will be the feature speaker on Wednesday, January 5. For more information on the conference, go to [www.southwestagconference.ca](http://www.southwestagconference.ca).

### Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation Accepts \$25,000 Donation from Southwest Agricultural Conference (SWAC)



L-R: **Ken Monteith**, Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation, **Dave Williams**, Lambton Soil & Crop Improvement Association, **Henry Denotter**, Essex Soil and Crop Improvement Association, **Dr. Art Schaafsma**, Director, Ridgetown Campus, **Dave Baute**, Campaign Chair, Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation

*(Image # DSC\_1440)*

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