

# ANNOUNCEMENT

April 5, 2010

## University of Guelph, OAC and Ridgetown Campus Lose Dedicated Soybean Researcher, Gifted Administrator and Friend

After a graceful six-month battle with brain cancer, Dr. Gary Ablett, a Ridgetown Campus esteemed soybean researcher, engaging professor, and stellar administrator, passed away peacefully on Sunday, April 4, 2010.

“Gary’s outstanding leadership on both the Ridgetown and Guelph campuses helped advance agriculture in Ontario and around the world. He was a wonderful human being and we will all miss him tremendously,” says Alastair Summerlee, president of the University of Guelph.

Deeply respected by everyone who knew him, Gary began his research and teaching career at Ridgetown in 1979. He soon initiated a public soybean breeding program that would remarkably deliver more than 50 new soybean varieties for Ontario agriculture. Gary’s top priority to serve Ontario’s soybean producers never wavered. He developed varieties combining the high yields that farmers desired and the specialized traits that local and global customers demanded. Until 2008, Ablett’s newly released varieties often held names beginning with ‘RCAT’ recognizing the campus’ earlier history as the Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology.

“Ablett was a big picture thinker when it came to the world’s demands for soybeans. His interest and commitment supported both public and private industry growth. That was demonstrated time and time again as he worked cooperatively and cohesively with breeders, processors, distributors, farmers and regulators to help advance the Canadian soybean seed sector at all levels,” says Dave Sippel, President of the Canadian Seed Trade Association. “The number of high yielding, agronomically sound soybean varieties registered over the last number of years are a strong indication of Gary’s skill as a breeder.”

Gary was also an accomplished administrator leading the Ridgetown campus through the pivotal amalgamation into the University of Guelph in 1997, and continued his leadership service as director of Ridgetown Campus for the following ten years. A two-year secondment to Guelph campus, acting as chair of the University’s plant agriculture department, the second largest department of OAC, occurred from 2004 through 2006.

As a determined administrator, Gary truly believed that important projects often require a steadfast fortitude. His unwavering dedication to build needed athletic and education facilities to meet the demands of a growing student body culminated with the grand opening of the Rudy H. Brown Rural Development Centre at Ridgetown in November 2006. He celebrated the grand opening events with hundreds of alumni, donors, colleagues, and campus community friends who honoured him with a standing ovation during the celebrations.

In 2007, Gary was recognized for his achievements by his local rural community as 600 Chatham-Kent residents came together to honour him as Agriculturalist of the Year, an award traditionally reserved for producers and agri-business leaders.

In August 2009 Gary traveled to Beijing, China, one of thirty Canadian delegates, where he was co-chair and speaker at the World Soybean Conference scientific meetings.

“Best known for his diplomacy and exuberance, he was well known throughout the University community and admired by all who had the privilege to work with him. The Ontario Agriculture College (OAC) has lost a talented crop scientist, a celebrated research leader, and true friend of agriculture, says Dr. Rob Gordon, dean, OAC.

Gary was active in his Blenheim community as a member of the Blenheim Community Golf Club and a former Blenheim Kinsmen. He was an avid golfer and enjoyed many golf trips with close friends. He is survived by his wife Jane and two sons, Jeff and Greg.

*Image Attached:* Dr. Gary Ablett, Associate Professor and former Campus Director, University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus

### **Additional Information:**

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### **VISITATION INFORMATION:**

**The Ablett Family will be hosting visitation at the following times and location:**

Thursday, April 8, 2010 from 2:00 – 4:00 PM and 7:00 – 9:00 PM  
Blenheim Community Funeral Home, 60 Stanley Street, Blenheim, ON, N0P 1A0, (519) 676-4904  
[www.blenheimcommunityfuneralhome.com](http://www.blenheimcommunityfuneralhome.com)

### **MEMORIAL TRIBUTE SERVICE INFORMATION:**

The Ablett Family and friends will be hosting a memorial tribute service in celebration of Gary's life on Friday, April 9th, 2010 at 1:30 PM, Don Pestell Auditorium, Rudy H. Brown Rural Development Centre, Ridgetown Campus, 120 Main Street East, Ridgetown, ON N0P 2C0

### **MEMORIAL GIFT INFORMATION:**

In lieu of flowers, the Ablett family welcomes memorial gifts to either of the following two charities.

- **Ridgetown Campus Agri-Food Foundation**  
Contact: Liz Meidlinger, Communications and Advancement, Ridgetown Campus  
Phone: 519-674-1587 E-mail: [lmeidlin@ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca](mailto:lmeidlin@ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca)  
[www.ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca/alumni/giving\\_ways2give.cfm](http://www.ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca/alumni/giving_ways2give.cfm)
- OR
- **Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada**  
Contact: [www.braintumour.ca](http://www.braintumour.ca)

### **RIDGETOWN CAMPUS CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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