


Local

# Sending Shah off in style

 jnulliken / By Jacob Mulliken Messenger-Inquirer

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On Thursday, a procession of 70-plus cars led by the Daviess County Sheriff's Department roared past the home of Green River Area Development District Executive Director Jiten Shah.

In December, Shah announced that he would, after 46 years with GRADD, retire on April 30. While restrictions due to the COVID-19 outbreak have limited social gatherings, more than 70 members of the GRADD staff, and those from the GRADD counties that have worked alongside Shah, would not be deterred.

For the past two weeks, GRADD Executive Assistant and Communications Manager Kim Wells has been organizing and planning the drive-by retirement party.

Wells has been with the organization for 19 years and has been working directly with Shah for 15, she said.

"We sent out mass emails to everyone and I asked that they send Jiten cards," she said. "He has received hundreds from people that he has worked with from around the state. Working with him has been an absolute pleasure. When I say he is the best boss I have ever had, it is the truth. He has never made me feel I couldn't do something and has pushed me to be the best and wouldn't expect less. He has brought out a lot of skills I didn't know that I had and he has allowed me to flourish. I will miss him dearly."

Shah started at GRADD as an environmental engineer in 1973 and began his role as executive director in 1987.

Both Ohio County Judge-Executive David Johnston and Daviess County Judge-Executive Al Mattingly have worked closely with Shah over the years.

Mattingly, who was a part of Shah's send-off, says Shah has been the driving force behind GRADD's success.

"He has been good for area development districts throughout the state," he said. "He is very well-respected in the GRADD region and across the state. We will miss him and that institutional knowledge that comes with the grey hairs that have grown on the top of his head. We look forward to the new leadership with Joanna Shake. She has been there and has a good handle on what is needed. She will do a good job."

Johnston said has known Shah since 1982 and their relationship and mutual respect have grown over the decades.

"I am glad he will get to enjoy some time," he said. "He has definitely earned it. Jiten has left a big print and had defined GRADD over the years through his works and has set an example for the state."

For Shah, the day was bitter-sweet, but the outpour of love and admiration was a testament to a life well lived and community well served.

"It was the icing on the cake," he said. "I am trying to get used to the idea of retirement; the last 30 days working at home has helped. I think more and more that I am ready and the party put it all together that I deserve it and I am counting my blessings that I had the time I had with GRADD and how fortunate I am for my family. People from all over

came. Your measure of success is how many people show up to your retirement party or your funeral. When you have a role to play in the foundation and see 46 years come together, it is amazing. I have worked with an amazing team and I know GRADD under Joanna's leadership will continue to thrive and evolve, no matter what."

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