

WINE FOR ALL KINDS

1/27/08



ANDY MATTHEWS/THE NEWS

Workers put the finishing touches on a sign at a new Dairy Queen Grill & Chill in Dobson at Zephyr Road and Interstate 77. The restaurant, convenience store and wine outlet are part of a multi-million dollar commercial development by Ed and Charlie Shelton, co-owners of The Shelton Vineyards, which can be found by following another nearby sign.

Market Report

Dow Jones	▼	Down 218.35
S&P 500	▼	Down 25.47
NASDAQ	▼	Down 43.86

Business

Yadkin Valley wineries top Triad Business Journal's annual survey

ANDY MATTHEWS
EDITOR

As expected, more than half of the Piedmont Triad's largest wineries are based in the Yadkin Valley Area, according to a recent survey in *The Business Journal of The Greater Triad Area*.

Five of the top 10 are in Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties with Shelton Vineyards — based in the Twin Oaks community near Dobson and owned by Ed and Charlie Shelton — at the top of the list. Shelton Vineyards, a 400-acre estate with 200 acres of vineyards was established in 1999.

Shelton Vineyards produced 421 tons of grapes between September 2006 and September 2007. The vineyard also boasts a facility that makes handcrafted cheeses from goat and Jersey cow milk and the Harvest Grill. Shelton Vineyards, which has a

50,000-case production capacity, has 24 year-round employees.

The Sheltons sponsored the application for the official Yadkin Valley Appellation, a distinct wine growing region that encompasses 1.4 million acres in northwest North Carolina, spanning seven counties along the Yadkin River. The Sheltons also helped start a viticulture and enology program at Surry Community College.

The Sheltons bought the land where the vineyard now stands at an auction in 1994.

RagApple Lassie Vineyards, a Boonville-based vineyard, was ranked fourth on the list. The vineyard, founded in 2000, produced 121 tons of wine last year, according to the industry survey. Formerly a tobacco farm owned and operated by Frank and Lena Hobson on Rockford Road, RagApple Lassie has 35 acres of grapes. The vineyard, which has five

year-round employees, regularly hosts area fundraisers and outdoor concerts.

Old North State Winery, based in downtown Mount Airy, was ranked sixth in the industry survey. The winery, which produced 5,000 cases of wine within the last year, began as a cooperative in 2001. In 2006, just as the winery was facing foreclosure, Tom Webb, his son Ben, and Michael Thomas — all original co-op members, took over the winery's operations, assuming loans on the building and equipment.

Old North State Winery, which has eight year-round employees, also features a restaurant, Scuppernongs, which is next to its tasting room.

Buck Shoals Vineyard, based in Hamptonville in western Yadkin County, was ranked seventh on the industry list. Buck Shoals, which has four year-round employees, pro-

duces roughly 60 tons of wine a year. The owners, Terry and Joanne Crater, opened the vineyard in 2004. A new 15,000-square-foot winery has a 20,000-case capacity.

Raffaldini Vineyards, based in Ronda in eastern Wilkes County, was ranked 10th in the survey, producing 44 tons of wines within the last year. Begun in 2000, Raffaldini is owned by the Raffaldini family. After sharing a winery with Buck Shoals, Raffaldini began construction last year on Villa Raffaldini, a two-story tasting room and event facility. The vineyard has 12 year-round employees.

Hanover Park, based in Courtney in central Yadkin County, was 12th on the list. Owned and operated by Amy and Michael Helton, Hanover Park produces 2,400 cases a wine a year. The first bonded winery in Yadkin since Prohibition, the Heltons renovated a

late 19th-century farmhouse as part of the vineyard near Yadkinville. Hanover Park has three year-round employees.

Round Peak Vineyards, west of Mount Airy just beyond I-77, was 13th on the list, producing 2,100 cases of grape a year. Owned by George and Susan Little and Lee and Janet Martin, the winery was established in 2005 about six years after plans got underway for the vineyard on a 32-acre site on Round Peak Church Road. The vineyard has three year-round employees.

Windy Gap Vineyards, based in Ronda in eastern Wilkes, was listed 14th on the annual survey. Windy Gap, which opened in 2002, produces 1,900 cases of grapes a year. Owned by Allen and Sandra Hincer, Windy Gap's vineyard has grown to about seven acres with its own winery.

Black Wolf Vineyards, just north of Dobson, was 15th on the Triad wineries list. Owned

by Dana Theis, Black Wolf produces about 25 tons of grapes a year and is the site for the Wolf's Liar restaurant. The 55-acre site also has its own winery.

Laurel Gray Vineyards Inc., based in Hamptonville in western Yadkin County, was ranked 16th on the annual industry survey, producing an estimated 25 tons of grapes a year. Owned by Kim and Benny Myers, the vineyard opened in 2001. A renovated milking parlor serves as a tasting room.

Flint Hill Vineyards, based in East Bend in southeastern Yadkin County, was 19th on the winery list. Owned and operated by Tim and Brenda Doub, the vineyard produces an estimated 15 tons of grapes a year. The Doubs turned a family farm and a two-story farm house into a two-year-old vineyard that now has its own restaurant, Century Kitchen.

Nov. 2007 Southern Living

Take a spirited trip
through the vineyards
of the Yadkin Valley.

Carolina's



Wine Country

Fog settles over the sleepy river valley in early morning, creating a striking November scene. The last few clusters of bruised purple grapes cling to vines, a treat for the birds more than the winemakers. Sound like France or California? Think again. This is North Carolina's Yadkin Valley, home to some of the South's finest vines and most creative winemakers.

Take a journey through this blessed stretch between Lexington, North Carolina, and the Virginia state line, where the roots of two dozen boutique wineries reach deep into the rich soil. The French call the essence of their wine regions' soils and climates "terroir," but in these parts, we know it simply as good Tar Heel taste.

"The Yadkin Valley is like a treasure hunt," says Kim Myers of Laurel Gray Vineyards. "Each winery is as distinct as its owner's tastes." Some reside in plush châteaux with dozens of employees, while others are so small you meet the proprietors at the tastings. Welcoming first-timers and sophisticates alike, all the stops are hospitable.

To explore the Yadkin Valley, you need only a sense of adventure and a playful palate. Come with us as we sample, from the largest to the smallest. Note comments from our Foods and Travel staffs; we tasted an abundance to offer you our favorites.

The winemakers at Hanover Park in tiny Yadkinville feature Chambourcin, a French-American hybrid grape, aged in American oak barrels.

by ANNETTE THOMPSON
photography by ART MERIPOL

Childress Vineyards:

A Tuscan-style villa graces a hillside surrounded by neat rows of grapevines in Lexington. Owner Richard Childress (yes, of NASCAR fame) fell in love with California wines while racing there, and he became a vintner back home. It's a good place to start your spirited journey, especially if this is your first visit. Step up to the dark-wood bar, and choose from three tastings. From delectable sweets to a reserve merlot, talented winemaker Mark Friszolowski crafts something for everyone.

OUR PICKS: 2004 Merlot (\$17)—smooth, very food friendly; Pinnacle Meritage (\$15)—long finish, a nicely crafted wine, good with Stilton cheese or a big steak.

Shelton Vineyards:

At the north end of the valley in Dobson, Shelton Vineyards boasts a gorgeous setting, complete with a babbling brook coursing under fall trees. Brothers Charlie and Ed Shelton converted this 400-acre former dairy farm into a gravity-flow winery in 1999 (it uses the incline of a hillside to move the juice and wine). There's a restaurant on site

as well as a new Hampton Inn & Suites with a wine bar nearby at I-77.

OUR PICKS:

Salem Fork Blush (\$8)—very peachy and sweet; Yadkin Valley Reisling (\$12)—refreshing with just a hint of sweetness.

Westbend Vineyards:

As the oldest vineyard in the valley, Westbend, near Winston-Salem, started growing grapes in 1972 and helped smaller operations get their starts. Owner Lillian Kroutalis and winemaker Mark Terry continue to win awards. "We do custom-crush service for smaller wine producers," says Lillian. The rural setting, with a handsome patio and pavilion, invites you to linger after a tasting.

OUR PICKS: 2004 Merlot (\$15)—a nice red, very drinkable; 2004 Pinot Noir (\$16)—perfect with Thanksgiving flavors, a good crossover wine for white and red meats.

RayLen Vineyards and Winery:

RayLen's 38 acres of grapes produce excellent estate wines. The red blends are the most popular, with the Category 5, a full Bordeaux-style,

“The Yadkin Valley is like a treasure hunt,” says Kim Myers of Laurel Gray Vineyards. “Each winery is as distinct as its owner’s tastes.”

offering fine aging potential. Whites intrigue too, including the Yadkin Gold. The gift shop features furniture and accessories made from oak barrels at affordable prices.

OUR PICK: *Yadkin Gold 2004 (\$13)*—a tad sweet, would be nice over ice.



RagApple Lassie Vineyards:

The success of growing grapes enables Frank and Lenna Hobson to continue to plant corn, wheat, tobacco, and soybeans. Named for Frank’s pet Holstein, this vineyard features agrarian architecture. Stairs in a silo-lead down to the aging cellar, while guests stroll on a catwalk above the winemaking facility. An outdoor stage features concerts and folk

art fairs throughout the year.

OUR PICK: *2004 Chardonnay (\$15)*—a good balance of fruit and oak with a nice finish.

Raffaldini Vineyards:

Save the airline ticket to Italy, and visit Raffaldini in the Swan Creek area of the Yadkin Valley. You’ll meet a family that’s been making wine for more than 650 years. Their tasting room opens onto a sunny deck and gardens with a stunning view of the Yadkin River beyond.

OUR PICKS: *2005 Fiori (\$13)*—good with cold salads and spicy Asian foods; *2005 Chiara (\$13)*—sweet, tastes more like a blush than a traditional rosé.

Hanover Park Vineyard:

In a 1890s farmhouse in Yadkinville, two former art teachers live their dream. Amy and Michael Helton fell in love with winemaking on their 1996 honeymoon in France. Amy meets and greets, and Michael’s paintings hang on the walls while he crafts the wine. This is the kind of place where plants grow

out of bottles in sunlit windows, and shelves of balsamic vinaigrette and bread invite impromptu picnics.

OUR PICK: *Michael’s Blend Meritage 2002 (\$16)*—very different, fruity, would be nice with roasted meat.

Laurel Gray Vineyards:

Benny and Kim Myers welcome you to the Swan Creek area to taste wine in a former milking parlor that is surrounded by a relaxing porch. As you sip, gaze at the view of Scarlet Mountain and a pond with cattails and ducks. Catch, too, the last rose blossoms before the frost settles on Benny’s family’s farm, dating to the 1700s.

OUR PICK: *2005 Scarlet Mountain (\$17)*—well balanced and dark berry flavors.

Flint Hill Vineyards:

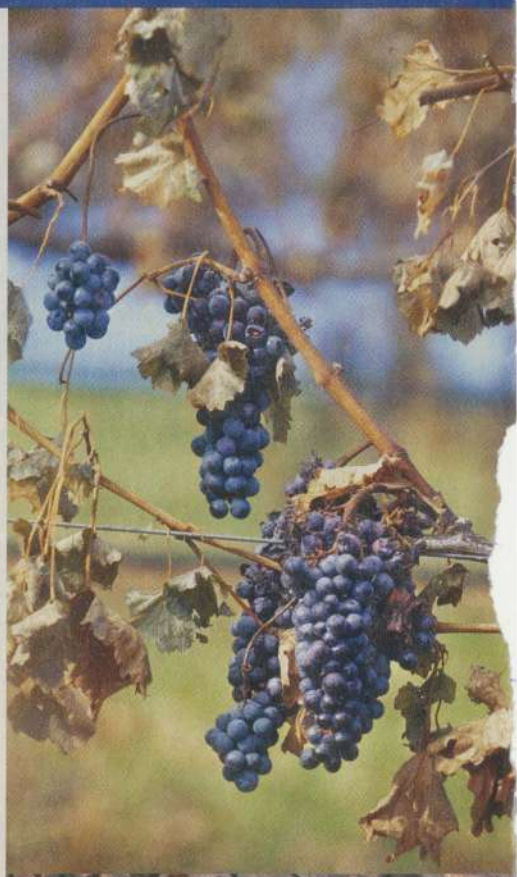
Owners Tim and Brenda Doub added a tasting room to Tim’s family’s farmhouse where Brenda cultivates the surrounding vineyards. “My husband grew up in this house,” she says. “His grand-

father was a distiller here. We grow grapes to keep our farm alive.” Sweet wine lovers adore their Old Yadkin. “My husband calls it a gossip wine. The more you drink, the more you gossip,” she says. At press time, the Doubs had just added a restaurant called the Century Kitchen. If it’s as good as their wines, we are in for a tasty meal. **OUR PICK:** *2005 Viognier (\$17)*—well balanced, a good alternate to Chardonnay.

Elkin Creek Vineyard:

Taste Mark Greene’s wines with dinner at his restaurant, The Kitchen (the best in the valley). If you just want to sample, drop by the basement tasting room. It’s the smallest winery, and Mark arguably occupies the smallest space. He sometimes sleeps in a teepee in a field nearby. Save time to explore his century-old mill too—one of the prettiest sights around.

OUR PICK: *2005 Chardonnay (\$15)*—has a taste of smoky oak, would cozy up to any bottle from California.



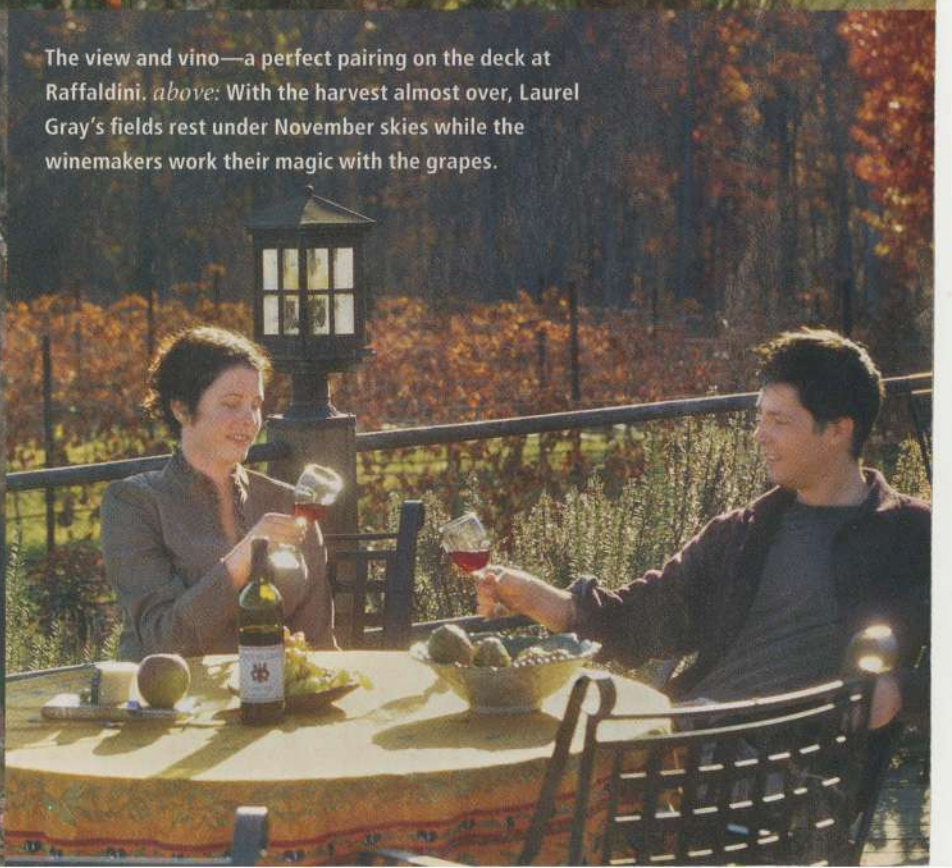
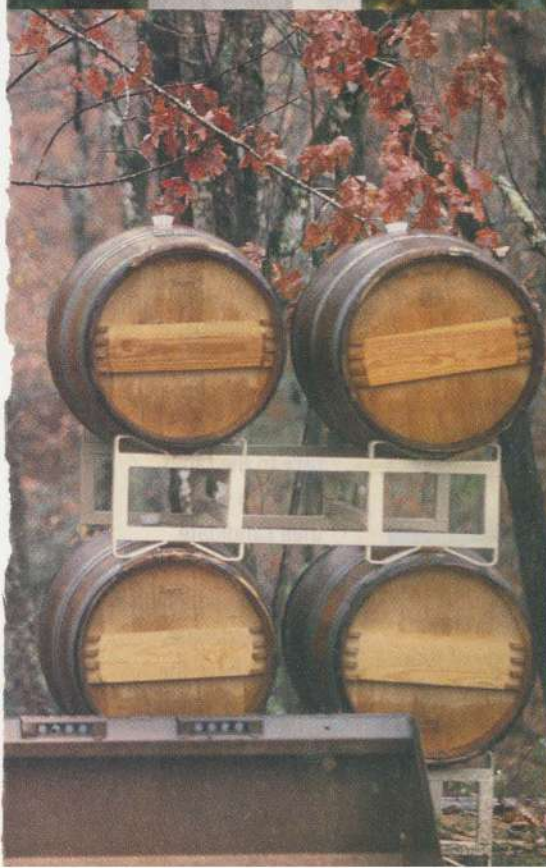
above: Childress boasts an old-world-style winery with a gift shop and bistro.

right: Oak barrels stacked outside the winery at Elkin Creek await this season’s wines.



Vino Vitae

- There are more than 20 wineries in the valley.
- Yadkin Valley growers concentrate on *vinifera* (traditional European grapes); a few raise native muscadines (for sweet wines).
- Yadkin Valley's appellation status is recognized by the federal government as an American Viticulture Area (AVA).
- Prices range \$7 to \$40. The average is \$14 per bottle.
- Larger wineries are open daily; smaller ones offer weekend tastings only. Check before you go.
- Passing through the Charlotte International Airport? Try flights of Yadkin wines at the tasting room in the main concourse.
- For contact information for the wineries mentioned here, visit southernliving.com/november2007 or www.visitnc.com/2008/wine.



The view and vino—a perfect pairing on the deck at Raffaldini. *above:* With the harvest almost over, Laurel Gray's fields rest under November skies while the winemakers work their magic with the grapes.

SCC approves plans for viticulture center

Laura Thompson
Staff Reporter

DOBSON — Current plans for the N.C. Viticulture and Enology Center at Surry Community College don't include a 1,000-plus-seat auditorium — yet — but college officials are excited about what they've seen of the project.

Representatives from Little Diversified and Associates, the architectural firm the college has worked with for about a year and a half on the center, presented their most recent building designs Monday to the board of trustees.

"I love it. I have always loved it," said board Chairman LaDonna McCarther after the

presentation. "I'm disappointed we didn't have the funds to do the entire thing at once."

Trustees decided earlier this year to divide construction on the \$15 million center into two phases rather than hold off on building until the entire sum could be raised.

Architects on presented designs for phase one, which the college can fund using the \$5 million it already has in state funds, bond money and private donations. The building will include offices, classrooms and a library, along with a 150- to 200-seat great hall and a bonded teaching winery.

Jim Williams, one of the architects working on the project,

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SCC, page 2



SCC:

Continued from page 1

told trustees the firm sees the center as "more than just a building to house a school."

"We see this as an extension of what this program really is," he said. "A place that could enrich people's lives — and not just students, but this community."

The college intends the center to be a hub of information and activities promoting the wine industry in North Carolina. It will house SCC's viticulture and enology program, but officials also hope it will host exhibitions, seminars and conferences on the industry.

Features of the 18,400-square-foot building plan range from purely functional — storage space for tables and chairs from the great hall and a two-story winery with a catwalk to reach tanks — to decorative — a transparent wall in the winery offering a view of tanks and barrels from Main Street.

Plans also include an outdoor lawn adjacent to the glass-sided great hall, a courtyard and

other landscaped areas included in the building's \$272-per-square-foot cost estimate.

"We feel pretty confident we'll be able to do this within the cost parameters that you've asked us to," Shannon Rydell of Little Diversified told the trustees.

McCarther said she liked the way the design reflected elements of the landscape, the wine-making process and "actual things we do here at the college that are included in the structure of the building."

Trustees passed a tentative approval for the building, which will be presented to the county board of commissioners. They also voted to accept an expected offer of two parcels of land near the front entrance of the college currently owned by the Surry Community College Foundation to build the center.

The building will be constructed using \$825,000 in special appropriations from the state, a \$1 million facilities grant from the N.C. Community College System, \$2.5 million in 2000 bond money and \$675,000 in private donations.

The college has not yet secured funding for phase two. That part of the project is anchored by a 1,200-seat auditori-

um, which would be the largest performance and seminar space in Surry County.

Frank Sells, in his last board meeting as president of the college, told trustees that although he had his heart set on seeing the whole project built at once, "I couldn't imagine myself being that pleased with something."

"I really do believe we can attract more state funding, if that's where our focus is. If we can get phase one done, phase two will happen."

Sells will retire as president at the end of the year. He will be replaced by Deborah Friedman, who attended Monday's meeting.

SCC's viticulture and enology program is one of the only degree programs in winemaking on the East Coast. Students tend grapes in the college's 5-acre vineyard and make wine on site, which is sold through local retailers. Three SCC wines — the 2006 Chardonnay, the 2006 Chardonnay and the 2006 Traminette — recently took gold, silver and bronze honors, respectively, at the N.C. State Fair's wine competition.

Contact Laura Thompson at lathompson@mtairynews.com, or at 719-1930.

9/18/07

Market Report

Dow Jones	▼	Down 39.10
S&P 500	▼	Down 7.60
NASDAQ	▼	Down 20.52

Business

Hundreds enjoy Grape Jam Festival

T.J. ROYAL
STAFF REPORTER

Dobson — Nearly 1,000 people attended Saturday's Black Wolf Vineyard's annual Grape Jam Festival, which featured wine, music and some "clowning around" for all ages.

Dana Theis, Black Wolf's owner, said this year's festival-goers enjoyed some unique culinary treats, including rattlesnake and rabbit stews and sausage made from elk and wild boar meat. One of the most popular foods was the "Dobson Cheese Snake" sandwich, which was made like a Philly cheesesteak but with rattlesnake meat. While the sandwich was so popular that it almost sold out, Theis said that typically

"you can't sell it any other time" of the year because people usually are not in such a "festive" mood.

Aside from the wine, the snake meat and the belly dancers from West Virginia, there were plenty of other attractions, including jugglers and clowns, that made Grape Jam a successful festival.

Joseph "Jay" Williams said his son's favorite attraction was the clown, "because (the clown) made his money" on the half-dozen balloons his son popped.

Black Wolf Vineyards and The Wolf's Lair Restaurant, which is just north of Dobson, off U.S. 601, at 283 Vineyard Lane, feature a tasting room and a restaurant on the 55-acre tract.



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JOURNAL PHOTOS BY JENNIFER ROTENIZER

Sean McRitchie, whose vineyard is in Thurmond, is making wine for the first time under his own label, McRitchie Wine Co.

A Fruitful Life

Winemaker's experience brought him to N.C.; new label is keeping him here

By Michael Hastings
JOURNAL FOOD EDITOR

THURMOND — Sean McRitchie is putting down roots in North Carolina.

At 44, he has more than 30 years of experience in the wine industry, and he is now making wine for the first time under his own label, McRitchie Wine Co.

He came to North Carolina from Oregon in 1998 to help start Shelton Vineyards in Surry County. As a vice president and general manager, he oversaw the planting of 180 acres of vineyards at Shelton, one of the state's largest wineries.

Though not formally trained, McRitchie has spent almost his entire life in vineyards, thanks in large part to his father, Bob McRitchie, a former winemaker who followed his son to North Carolina.

Bob McRitchie, who recently retired as a winemaking instructor at Surry County Community College, left a career as a biology professor to get into the wine business. He started in Napa Valley, and then helped Oregon establish its wine reputation, first at Sokol Blosser and then at Willamette Valley Vineyards.

When Sean McRitchie was just 13 in 1976, he started working his way up in the wine business.

"I remember a Saturday and it was pouring down rain," Bob McRitchie said. "We were digging a ditch for the wastewater to go underneath the road and into a holding tank. This was Sean's first job in the wine business."

Sean McRitchie said he dug a lot of ditches and did a lot of menial work before advancing to jobs managing the crushing of the grapes or the operations in winery cellars.

After he graduated from high school, he hit the road. "I traveled a bunch and always ended up working at cool wineries," he said. "I'd grown up doing it, and it got in my blood."



Working with his own grapes and those bought from other growers, McRitchie has made five wines. He is also making a carbonated, low-sugar hard cider.

About Sean McRitchie

- **AGE:** 44.
- **BIRTHPLACE:** Houston, Texas.
- **EDUCATION:** McMinnville High School, McMinnville, Ore., 1982. Classes at University of Oregon, 1983-84, and Portland State University, 1989.
- **EXPERIENCE:** More than 30 years working in vineyards in Germany, Australia and the United States, including Shelton Vineyards in Surry County.
- **FAMILY:** Wife, Patricia. Children: Aidan, 13; Ava, 11; Asher, 8.
- **QUOTE:** "I think the signature grape of North Carolina or Yadkin Valley is yet to be discovered, and that's part of the fun."

McRITCHIE

Continued From Page B1

After working at wineries in Germany and Australia, he ended up back on the West Coast at Domaine Chandon in Napa Valley, one of the top U.S. producers of sparkling wine. He spent five years there, before heading back to Oregon to work at Willamette Valley and other wineries in the 1990s.

Having watched Oregon wineries establish a world-class industry from scratch, he was intrigued when Charlie and Ed Shelton contacted him about a job in North Carolina.

After five years of helping Shelton establish itself as one of the largest wineries in the state, he was ready to move on.

He and his wife, Patricia, bought a 30-acre farm as an investment in Thurmond, in Wilkes County between Elkin and Sparta, while he was at Shelton.

After leaving Shelton, McRitchie began doing consulting work for such Yadkin Valley wineries as

Round Peak Vineyards and Brushy Mountain Winery. And he planted five acres of chardonnay on his farm in 2003.

The McRitchie Wine Co. (www.mcritchiwine.com) now has its winery up and running. The tasting room opened in May.

Working with his own grapes and those bought from other North Carolina growers, McRitchie has produced five wines: two chardonnays, a pinot gris, a Niagara wine and a red blend called Ring of Fire.

The winery produced 600 cases last year, and McRitchie expects to make 1,200 cases this year. He is also making hard cider, an idea that harkens back to his teenage years in Oregon.

"I used to walk home from my high school and stop by my friend's winery and ciderworks. Fred Arterberry was a very cool guy, smoked a pipe and told these great stories. I'd stop there and chug a bottle of cold, fresh hard cider, and he'd tell stories. I just remember having a good memory of that."

McRitchie is buying Brushy Mountain apples for his hard cider

while he waits for a young apple orchard on his farm to mature. His cider is carbonated, with low sugar levels.

He is getting ready to release his first merlot from purchased grapes. He will plant merlot, cabernet franc and petit-verdot vines in the spring.

He laughed when he said he is also thinking about planting some pinot noir, a notoriously difficult grape to produce and turn into fine wine. He said that he wants to try a little bit in sparkling wine — an interest sparked during his years at Domaine Chandon.

Besides the cider, McRitchie is already producing one other sparkling beverage, the Niagara wine, which he believes is the first sparkling Niagara in the state.

McRitchie could have moved back to Oregon after leaving Shelton, but he likes the idea of raising his three kids here, and he sees a lot of potential in North Carolina's growing wine industry.

"I see a lot of good grapes out there, and there are some good wines. I also see it becoming more

competitive, in a positive way, in the improvement in quality," he said.

"Growing up in Oregon, there were a lot of dog wines, and now they are pretty much gone. And I see the same thing happening here."

As a winemaker, McRitchie said, he strives to make "clean" wine.

"By that, I mean take the fruit that you have and let the fruit become the wine, instead of trying to manipulate it. I enjoy making something expressive of what the vineyard gave you," he said.

Patricia McRitchie said that her husband is very intuitive. Though he doesn't take an academic approach as his father does, she said, the two share a joy of working with their hands.

And, she said, Sean gets creativity from his mother, Maria McRitchie.

"He's very experimental," she said. "For a winemaker, it's good not to be bound by the rules."

■ *Michael Hastings can be reached at 727-7394 or at mhastings@wsjournal.com.*

Viticulture center talks coming

T.J. ROYAL
STAFF REPORTER

Surry Community College will meet with architects next week to discuss the first phase of the North Carolina Viticulture and Enology Center's construction in Dobson.

Representatives from the college and a committee with representatives from all over Surry County, will meet with the architectural firm handling the viticulture center project, Little-Diversified Architectural Consulting of Charlotte.

"The main thing in this meeting (is) to settle on what would constitute a first phase, the feasibility of that," SCC President Frank Sells said.

College officials opted to build the center in phases because funding for the project has only met a third of its original \$15-million estimated cost.

The original plans were to build a performing arts audio-

rium along with the wine center at one time, which could have taken between a year and a half and two years, Little-Diversified's Shannon Ryddel said.

That time will be "significantly reduced" to establish the first phase of the viticulture center because of the phased approach, Ryddel said.

Sells said the college has settled on a site for the center, a parcel of land next to the college where the Surry County Economic Development Partnership's offices are located.

Ryddel said Little-Diversified has a "tremendous amount of experience with school facilities. . . across the nation." One of the many structures the firm has built is Appalachian State University's living-learning center, which was completed in 2001, Ryddel said.

The firm's most recent constructions was the University of South Carolina's "west quad" building, a combination

dormitory and living-learning center.

Ryddel said the growing demand in educational settings for "green" buildings that only use renewable energy and are self-sustaining makes decisions about incorporating environmentally friendly ideas into construction "less of a choice, more of a mandate from the student population."

"Chancellors and (college) presidents are beginning to respond accordingly, and it's smart" to incorporate renewable energy resources into construction, Ryddel said, because of energy cost issues over the life of a building.

Sells said the college looks "in terms of what's efficient, practical" for its buildings, and that using environmentally friendly materials and renewable energy "will be part of the discussion" for the viticulture center.

Contact T.J. Royal at 719-1928.

MAN 7/22/07

Wineowner begins tasting room

T.J. ROYAL
STAFF REPORTER

DOBSON — Malcolm Hutton, an English transplant who has lived in North Carolina since 1985, began Hutton Vineyard in 2002 full of transplants of a different kind.

His first harvest yielded only 400 cases of wine, but construction recently began on a tasting room that will set Hutton's vineyard on its own among Surry County's winemakers.

On its own because, for the first time, the wine produced in 2007 will be Hutton's first with a state wine permit.

Supporting a farm for years without a crop moves people away from producing grapes, Hutton said. But he made it through this reality through help from local winemakers.

For 2005 and 2006, RagApple Lassie's Linda King and Old North State Winery's Tom and Ben Webb "custom crushed" Hutton's harvest, pro-

ducing his wine for him. King and the Webbs did this while Hutton obtained his vineyard's permit.

When Hutton told Frank Hobson, RagApple Lassie's owner, that his vineyard could be seen as competition, Hobson said otherwise and suggested they promote each other's vineyards. People are more inclined to visit wine-producing areas when they have various wines to sample in one trip, as opposed to just one vineyard's variety, Hutton said.

This open support also protects each vineyard's harvest, because each wine-producer knows they can tell others of potentially damaging diseases if they enter the area.

Hutton called the area's wine-producers a true community, where no one "hesitates to help" and have an "abundance of patience."

Hutton's wife, Heidi, manages the vineyard, but they both had to go through the growing pains that come with

starting a vineyard.

For the 2005 harvest, Hutton said that deer ate between more than four tons of grapes, which left enough for only 400 cases.

When Heidi Hutton started managing the vineyard, she had to call Hutton for help the first time she tried to run a tractor. With his wife crying over the phone, Hutton told her to use the tractor's clutch to make it move forward. Once Hutton and the tractor started moving, she said "I am a *real* farmer now."

From there, she only concentrated on moving forward, "evolving" her skills at managing the vineyard, Hutton said.

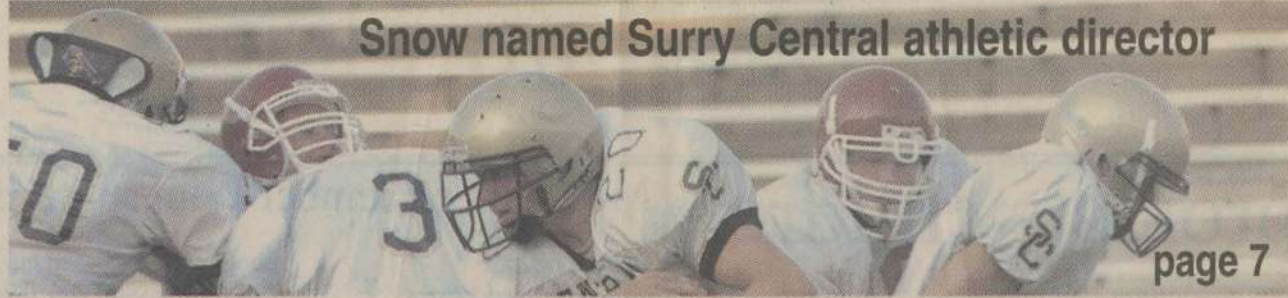
With some of the difficulty of starting a vineyard out of the way, Hutton Vineyard, and its 10 varieties of wine, is ready to make an impact in North Carolina's expanding crowd of winemakers.

Contact T.J. Royal at 719-1928.

MAN 8-8-07



Mostly Sunny
 High 91 Low 68



Snow named Surry Central athletic director

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The Mount Airy News

Saturday August 11, 2007

SCC, Harrell still hope for center funds

T.J. ROYAL
 STAFF REPORTER

Despite coming up \$7 million short in funding from the N.C. General Assembly for a proposed viticulture center at Surry Community College, a local state House representative said that he remains confident that the multi-million dollar facility will still be built.

"My number one goal is to make Dobson the home of the state's viticulture center," Rep. James Harrell III, D-Alleghany, said recently.

College officials learned recently that they received \$500,000 of the original \$7.5 million they requested for the North Carolina Center for Viti-

culture and Enology. SCC President Frank Sells said that planning will continue for the new building, even though the construction timetable will have to be delayed.

State funding for the viticulture center currently totals about \$2 million. The college hopes to procure half the center's \$15 million price tag from the state.

Sells said the center would "serve as a hub for the (wine) industry in our state, meaning a lot of things can happen there" in addition to housing the curriculum taught at Surry. The college and Surry County are part of the Yadkin Valley wine region, a 1.4 million acre area in northwestern North Carolina that stretches from Wilkes to Davidson County. The 2003

designation by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms allows winemakers to bottle wines with a label indicating that the wine came from the Yadkin Valley.

The college has capitalized on the budding viticulture industry by offering certificate and degree programs in viticulture and enology.

"Eventually we will have some good ideas about what we want to do," Sells said, referring to the proposed viticulture center. But with fall semester beginning, he added it could be late September before the school could talk with its architects about the scope of construction on the center.

Harrell, who introduced the funding legislation in May 2006 for the viticulture center, be-

lieves that if Surry partnered with a major research institute, such as Appalachian State University or N.C. State University, there would be a better opportunity for Surry to strengthen its wine program. That's because "a major research institute" is where the state likes to appropriate major spending for academic research, he said.

Because "(Surry's) program is so beneficial to the wine-making process" for North Carolina, Harrell said he wants the project to begin as soon as possible. "(Research and development) are so crucial to building our viticulture base" because it lowers risk to potential investors in Surry's wine industry, he said.



PATRICK GOLDING/ THE NEWS

A proposed \$15 million viticulture center at Surry Community College would showcase the area's growing number of vineyards.

a

vineyard

runs through it

How the Yadkin Valley is
working to become known
for its grapes

T

he next time you order a glass of wine at a restaurant, consider the source. North Carolina's wine industry is growing more popular, thanks in part to increased production in the Yadkin Valley area.

Currently North Carolina is ranked No. 5 in wine production in the U.S., following behind California, Oregon, Washington and New York. Recently the Yadkin Valley was recognized as an American Viticultural Area (AVA), a notation given by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, that allows producers and consumers to differentiate and authenticate wine grape growing areas.

"North Carolina used to be the biggest wine producing state before the Civil War," says John Byrd, owner and vice-president of Yadkin Valley Wine Tours. "If Sherman didn't get them, the federal government did when they came in for Prohibition."

Yadkin Valley Wines continued on page 6

Yadkin Valley Wines continued from page 4

While native grapes like muscadine and scuppernong have been used to make North Carolina wines since the 1600s, French viniferas have been a fairly recent addition. In 1972, Jack Kroustalis, owner of Westbend Vineyards in Lewisville, planted the first French vinifera in Yadkin Valley. Agricultural experts had said the Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc grapes would not grow in the Yadkin Valley, but Kroustalis aimed to prove them wrong.

“He started planting more aggressively in the '80s, and by 1986-87 he was harvesting wine grapes to sell to other wineries,” says Josh Butler, sales representative and events coordinator for Westbend Vineyards.

By 1988, Westbend became a legally bonded winery and the first Westbend wines were served to the public in 1990. “It was a hobby that turned into a great business,” Butler says.

Western North Carolina’s cli-

mate was originally thought to be one of the disadvantages of trying to grow viniferous grapes in the area. “As it turns out, grapes like struggles,” Butler says. “The more they struggle, the more they hold onto their juices.”

The biggest obstacle most growers face is making wine-lovers aware of the area. “It’s a grassroots effort,” says Wendy Davis, marketing director for Flint Hill Vineyards in East Bend. “We all have to work together as a team to make the area a tourist destination.”

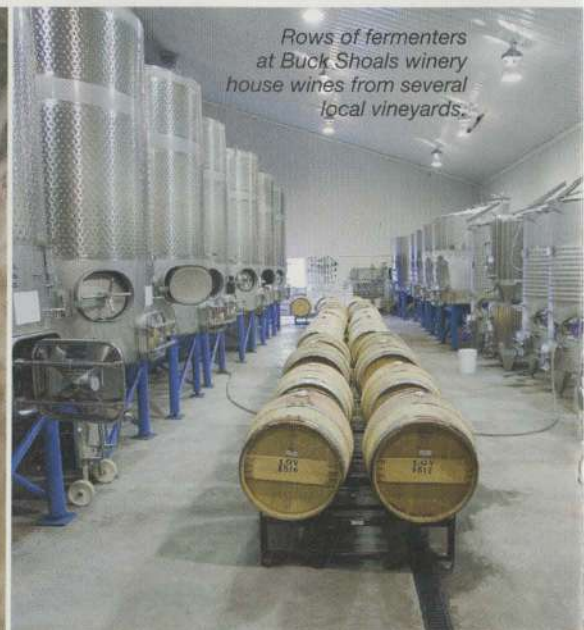
Farm Bureau member Kim Myers, owner of Laurel Gray Vineyards and president of the North Carolina Winegrower’s Association, agrees teamwork is the key.

“We always promote each other and don’t feel the need to compete,” Myers says. “We want to promote the industry and become a destination spot. The bed and breakfasts, the restaurants, we need more of them to keep people coming to the area and keep them here longer.”

Tourism in the area is picking up steam, though. In 2007 alone, Byrd says he saw 2,400 visitors



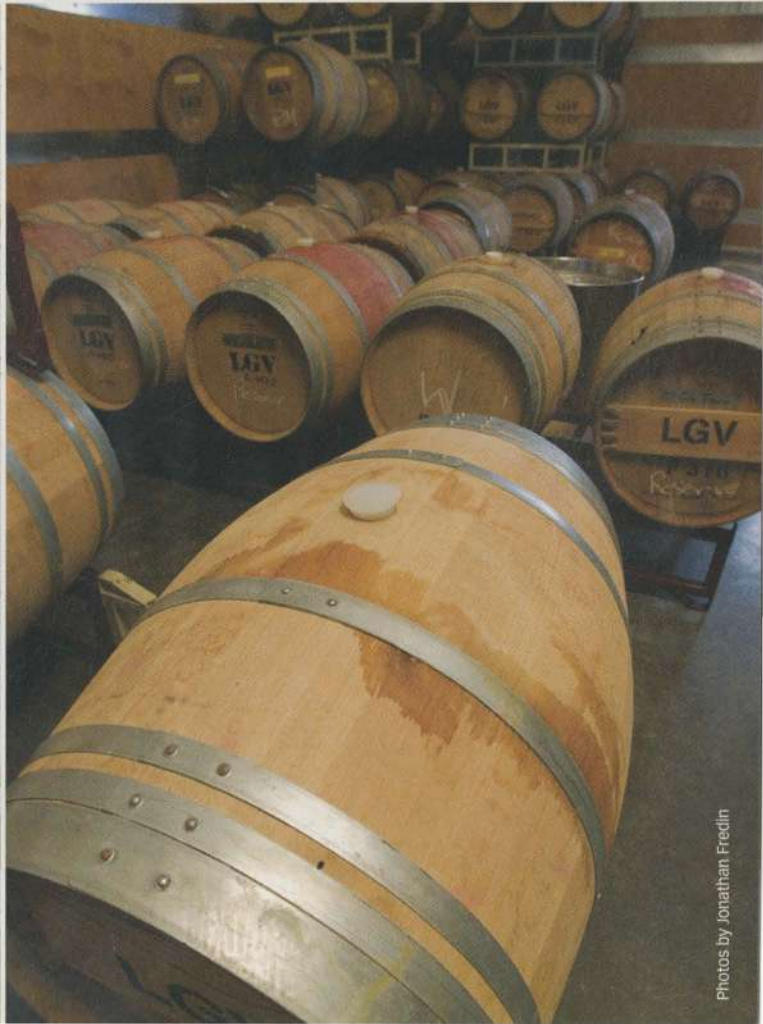
Workers prune to prepare vines for maximum grape production.



Rows of fermenters at Buck Shoals winery house wines from several local vineyards.



Josh Butler gives a sneak-peek at next season's red wine.





to his tours of the Yadkin Valley wine region. "Some of them even come through multiple times," Byrd says. "It's hard to see it all in just one visit."

In the past two years, Davis has even seen an increase in Californians coming to the area. "They heard about this area and they want to come see what it's all about. We don't distribute around the U.S., so if you want our wines, they'll be right here," she says.

Part of the difficulty in promoting Yadkin Valley wines is in breaking the stereotype. "People don't realize that we're more than just sweet wines out here," Farm Bureau member Joanne Crater, owner of Buck Shoals Vineyard in Hamptonville, says. "People need to come and try them to find out how good they really are."

"I think if you take a snapshot five to 10 years from now, North Carolina wines will be in the forefront," Butler says.

Myers believes the area also has the potential to become better known for its wines. "It's about Southern hospitality," she notes. "We have beautiful wines, and the people are just so nice." **FB**

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JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE

In the rolling countryside of Yadkin County, a longtime Quaker church has a new neighbor, Rag Apple Lassie Vineyards, just one sign of change in the county.

Shift in the Flow

Life is changing in Yadkin County – in ways that are affecting its local economy, culture

By Sherry Youngquist
JOURNAL REPORTER

YADKINVILLE

It was just six weeks ago that more than 2,500 people took to the streets of this small town and demanded that the Yadkin County Commissioners open their meetings with prayers that recognize Jesus.

Then an unexpected thing happened.

Nothing.

The commissioners kept their prayer policy the way it was.

It's just one more example of the changes sweeping through this conservative county.

The county's first liquor store will open later this year.

When school starts in the fall, parents and other adults will see signs telling them not to smoke, dip or chew on campus.

County commissioners are getting ready to raise taxes to replace a rundown jail and build the county's first middle schools.

Also, there are plans for a \$2.5 million project that would convert an old car dealership into the Yadkin Cultural Arts Center — a complex of classrooms, galleries and auditorium space.

Across the street from the courthouse — where residents late last year successfully



YADKIN

Continued From Page A1

pushed to hang "In God We Trust," — Anthony's Deli and Bakery has opened, selling cappuccinos and a caramel iced coffee called "turtle ice."

Some residents smile as they try to explain the transformation.

"I'm not saying I agree with everything, but I can see where we have to make changes," said Janet Baity, a sixth-grade teacher at Yadkinville Elementary School. "I think we need to do whatever we can to replace the tax base."

Cradled in the bends of its namesake river, Yadkin County has historically been the sort of place that didn't make waves and didn't try to grow. People farmed, or drove to jobs in Winston-Salem. They listened to what was taught in church. They elected leaders who would reject alcohol, and promote tobacco and religion — all while spending as few of their tax dollars as possible.

The big-box retailers are all elsewhere. So are most of the sit-down national restaurant chains.

Rural counties once reveled in their isolation, but in the new economy, no one is isolated, said Ferrell Guillory, the director of the program on public life at UNC Chapel Hill's Center for the Study of the American South. Yadkin has watched its top employer, Unifi Inc., struggle to find profits in the harsh world of global textile trade.

"Places like Yadkin County have suffered as the textile industry has moved offshore. It isn't isolated from larger and global trends. You can't run the county as if it's isolated anymore," said Guillory, who is a co-author of *SouthNow*, a publication that researches and analyzes trends in the region.

Yadkin County has about 37,400 people, and it's expected to add about 6,000 more residents by 2020. Nearby Winston-Salem is expected to drive most of that growth.

How Yadkin will prosper depends a lot on how it connects with suburbanites and exurbanites, Guillory said.

Many are young adults and young families. Some were raised here, went away to school and moved back. Others are just looking for a quieter life and lower taxes.

Longtime Yadkin residents say they are beginning to understand newcomers, who are used to such conveniences as liquor stores, a variety of restaurants, shops and things to do.

"Everyone likes the lifestyle out here, but they don't want to give those things up easily," said Les Davis, the director of the Yadkin Baptist Association in Yadk-



JOURNAL PHOTO BY DAVID ROLFE

Anthony Cannova has opened Anthony's Deli and Bakery on the courthouse square. Helping serve up cappuccino and other goodies are Melanie Baity (center) and Angel Cannova.

inville. "We're just going to have to find a balance."

As more people recognize this, Yadkin can build another way, county officials said.

For years, Yadkin has been unable to compete with surrounding counties for jobs. One reason: no railroad, the result of a decision about 100 years ago when local leaders rejected the idea.

"There's still no rail service. That's one whole category we can't even address.... Then we have 'what are your schools like?' And then 'why?'" said Kim Clark Phillips, the chairwoman of the Yadkin County Board of Commissioners. "We don't have middle schools. That is the standard. We don't attract the teachers who want to teach middle grades. We can't offer Algebra I in Yadkin County until the ninth grade. Things like that. Most of the schools don't offer a foreign language until high school."

Clark Phillips, a research associate at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, ran for commissioner three years ago. Her first years in office she was alone in pushing for change. Then, this past November, she was joined by three other newcomers — Tommy Garner, a beloved retired music teacher; Christopher Chad Wagoner, a pharmacist; and Joel Cornelius, a technical-service manager at Unifi.

They usually do not vote with longtime Commissioner Brady Wooten, who does not support building a new jail.

Clark Phillips describes the new board as progressive.

"We realize we have to," she said. "We

can no longer look at government in terms of one thing at a time. Doing the minimum thing doesn't guarantee your growth."

Nearly a year has passed since Yadkin officials were criticized when the temperature inside the county's 39-year-old jail rose to 100. Some inmates became sick, and a Superior Court judge told commissioners to move ahead with a new jail.

Commissioners are making plans to build a \$7.5 million jail, but inmates continue to be held in the current jail — a building that has faulty plumbing, contaminated water and no air-conditioning.

There are smaller things, too.

Commissioners found that the county was losing \$500,000 a year by not charging a fee at the landfill and are now proposing a charge of \$60 per household to cover the cost.

Also, commissioners learned that the fire marshal bought his own pager and his own camera.

County commissioners are considering raising the property tax rate by 8 cents, to 76 cents, to pay for those things they say should have been considered years ago — the \$7 million jail, the \$26.7 million project to build two middle schools and some basic equipment for county personnel.

The changes have not been without resistance.

Some residents urged commissioners to patch the current jail and move on. People also question why commissioners would raise taxes to build new schools when five years ago voters went to the polls for a \$20 million school-bond package and rejected the idea.

"They're progressive if you call it taking people's rights away," said Dianne Doub, of East Bend. "Schools, jails, it's too much."

Johnny Cranfill, the director of public works in Boonville, is retiring this month. He's not sure that some of the board's actions are really progress. "Well I got nothing wrong with not letting young'uns smoke, but a man is 57 years old and chews tobacco and wants to go to a football game, what's wrong with that?" Cranfill said.

It's too soon to say what happens the next time voters go to the polls to elect commissioners. Clark Phillips worries about a backlash.

John Willingham, the president and owner of Indera Mills in Yadkinville, said he likes the direction the board is taking. He bought a building on Main Street that was a car dealership and gave it to the arts council as the future home of the Yadkin Cultural Arts Center.

"Yadkin has been fairly backward for a lot of years," he said. "And really there has been a kind of leadership vacuum."

"There is a new attitude, and we're ready to go," Willingham said.

The arts council is one-fourth of the way to reaching its \$2.5 million capital campaign goal. Most of the donations have come from individuals.

"It's starting to happen," said Mike Orsillo, the council's executive director.

The project has moved the arts council from a small storefront with few offerings to a space that has the potential for live theater, classes, movies and gallery shows, he said.

At the same time, the town of Yadkinville is spending \$37,000 to create a master plan to make downtown more friendly to pedestrians — and more attractive. The town is considering changing some two-way streets to one way, and creating roundabouts and raised crosswalks.

The master plan would be a guide for the city for the next 10 to 20 years, said town manager Ken Larking.

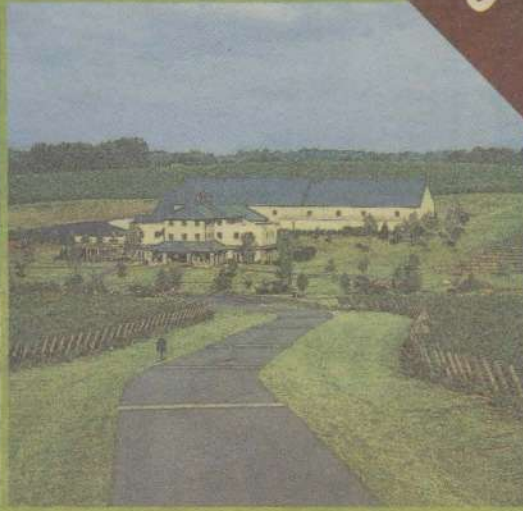
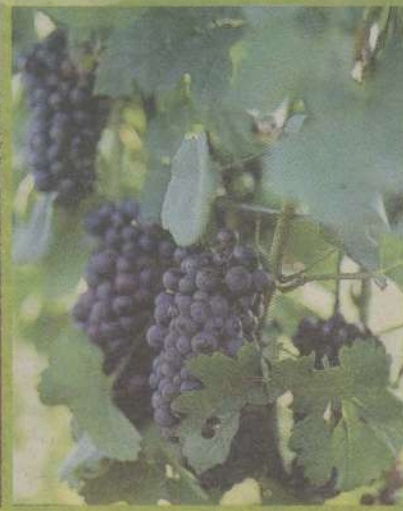
Altogether, the improvements could cost as much as \$1 million. Town officials say they will probably try to get grants from the N.C. Department of Transportation to help pay for some of the street improvements.

Officials hope that the master plan fits with what some are calling a dramatic shift in Yadkin.

"What you're seeing in Yadkin County is the gradual step-by-step elimination of the diminishing of the old isolation of rural counties, and counties that adapt are going to do better than those counties that don't adapt," Guillory said.

■ Sherry Youngquist can be reached in Mount Airy at 336-789-9338 or at syoungquist@wsjournal.com.

VOTE FOR
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CHARLOTTE P.25

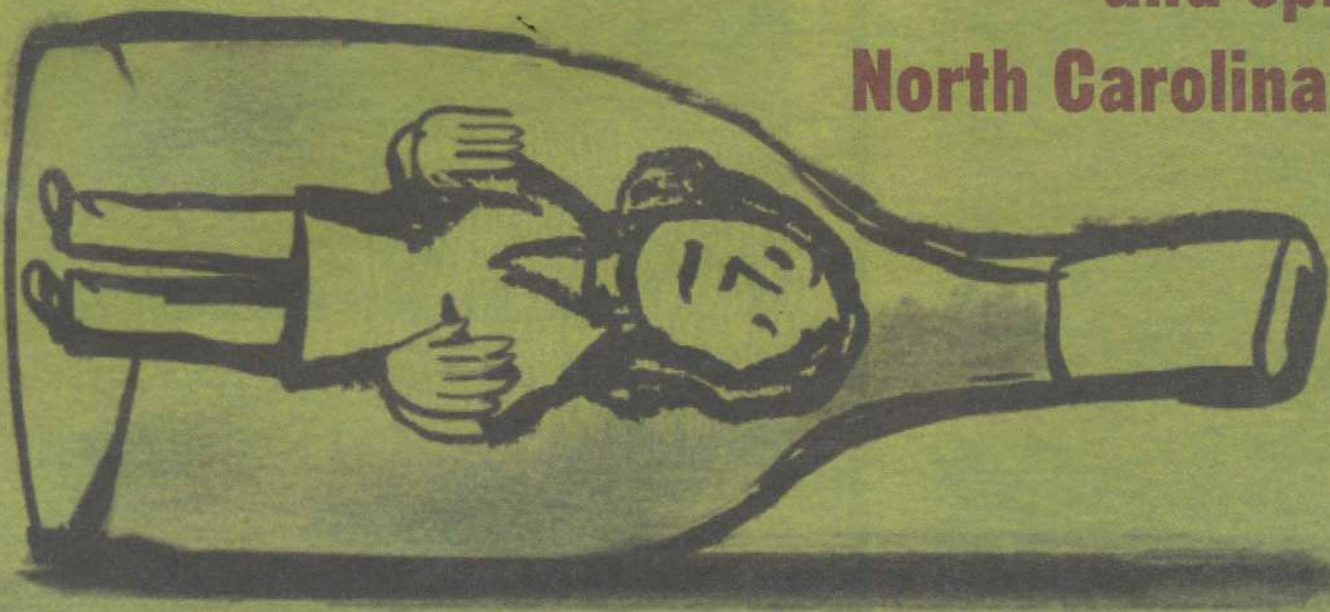


N.C. GOES SIDEWAYS

Swirling, sniffing, sipping
and spitting through
North Carolina wine country

BY TRICIA CHILDRESS

P. 28



fallout: Rosario Dawson invades Charlotte P.15

vibes: Rush rushes Verizon Amphitheatre P.74 **flicks:** Hollywood's most unlikely leading man P.33

TRAIL OF CHEERS

Swirling, sniffing, sipping and spitting through North Carolina wine country

■ BY TRICIA CHILDRESS

As lovers of vino surely know by now, wineries are popping up across the United States faster than whack-a-moles. North Carolina is no exception, but this isn't surprising. After all, North Carolina was the largest wine producing state prior to Prohibition. Not one of the largest — *THE* largest. It was also the first colony to cultivate grapes for wine.

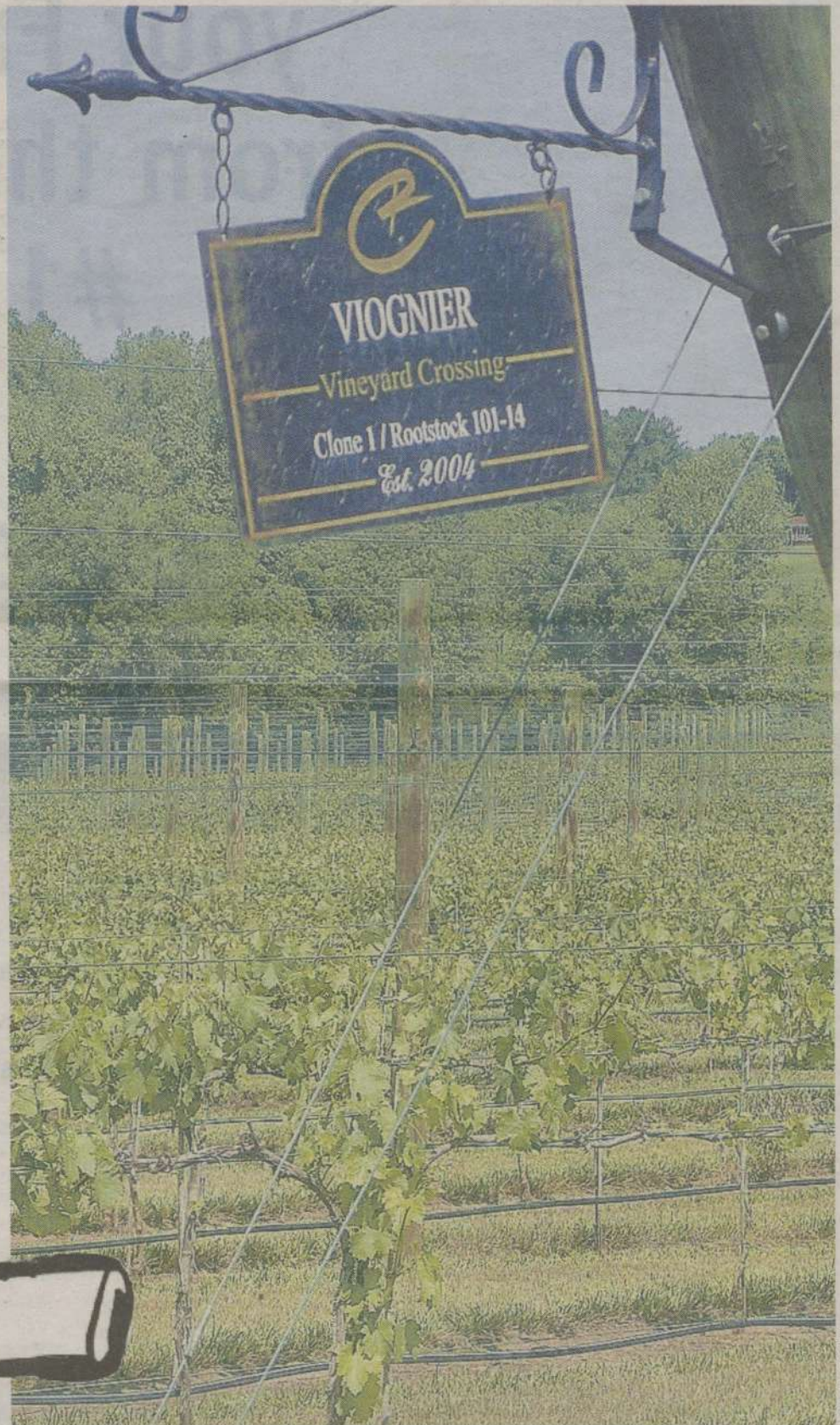
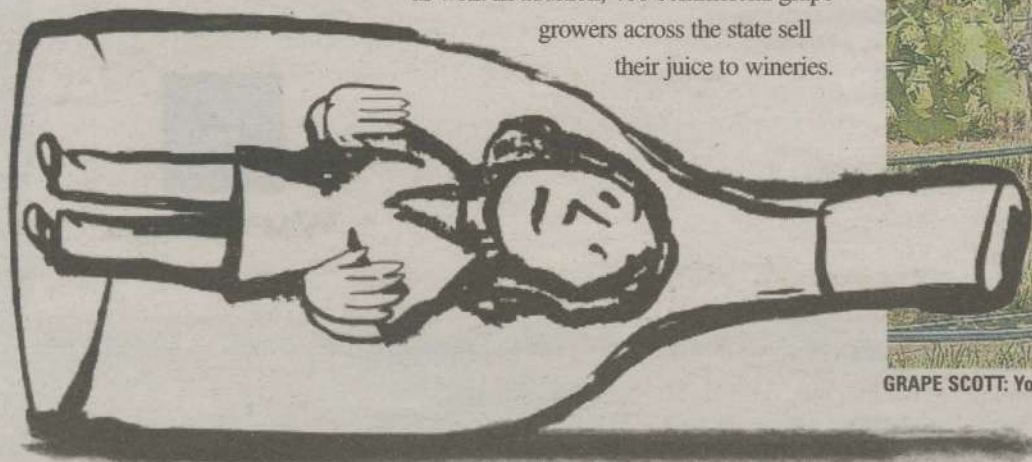
But by Prohibition's repeal, only one winery remained. By 1950, there were no wineries in North Carolina.

Today every state is getting into wine production, even Alaska. Currently, of the 5,110 wineries in the United States, 1,773 are located outside of California, Oregon, Washington and New York. And visiting these local wineries has become a multibillion-dollar industry.

Wine trails, those designated routes along which consumers sample an area's wine, are typically associated with older wine regions where the land has become so valuable that wineries and their vineyards are squeezed together, spandex style — with barely enough breathing room or travel distance between. Such is the case in Napa, Sonoma and much of the European wine growing regions. An aerial look of these agricultural regions reveals a patchwork of properties.

But North Carolina's first appellation, the Yadkin Valley, features elevations ranging from 700 to 1,300 feet and a long growing season. This valley is a 1.4 million-acre region that follows the contours of the Yadkin River through seven counties: Wilkes, Surry, Yadkin, Stokes, Forsyth, Davidson and Davie. Wineries here are not close together.

In the last 10 years, North Carolina wineries have opened with such speed that the N.C. Wine and Grape Council had to double check the number of open wineries. Currently there are 63 bonded wineries across the state. Of those, 50 are viniferous, although some of these make small quantities of Muscadine wine as well. In addition, 400 commercial grape growers across the state sell their juice to wineries.



GRAPE SCOTT: Young vines at Childress Vineyards

TRICIA CHILDRESS



SHELTON VINEYARDS



RICHARD CHILDRESS

BARRELS OF FUN: Westbend Vineyards

In the 1970s, as California leapt to international attention, Jack Koustalis established the 40-acre Westbend Vineyards in Lewisville. Against the advice of agricultural authorities, he planted viniferous grapes: chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, Riesling, gamay, merlot and sauvignon blanc. But statewide recognition to Carolina wines only came after the Biltmore Estate Winery in Asheville released their first estate-grown wines in 1985.

The largest boost to the infant wine industry came in 1999 when many wineries were established in what is now the Yadkin Valley AVA. The most remarkably beautiful is Shelton Vineyards in Dobson. Shelton was established by Charlie and Ed Shelton, brothers who made their money in construction but were from the Dobson area and had witnessed the decline of tobacco farming.

They saw wine as a way to diversify farming and open new industries such as tourism. They opened their 33,000-square-foot facility with a state-of-the-art gravity flow method, similar to the system used by such notable wineries as Opus One in Napa and Domaine Drouhin in Oregon.

The Sheltons are responsible for much of the development of the Carolina wine industry. They pushed to have the Yadkin Valley named an appellation. They helped change North Carolina's wine shipping laws (so North Carolinians can have wine shipped in and the Sheltons can send their wines out of state), and they provided funding for the Surry Community College's viticulture program, the only one on the East Coast to have an onsite vineyard. SCC's two-year viticulture and enology program has recently been joined with a four-year program at Appalachian State University.

At the other end of the Yadkin Valley, Richard Childress (no relation to the author), owner of Richard Childress Racing Enterprises, a 19-time championship team owner whose stable once included the legendary Dale Earnhardt, helped North Carolina wines gain regional popularity. In 2004 he opened Childress Vineyards in Lexington and soon thereafter a host of NASCAR fans, not known for swilling wine, descended on the tasting room.

Today North Carolina ranks 12th in United States in wine production with annual sales of \$25 million and is 10th in grape production.

The burgeoning wine industry is spurring other wine-related businesses. Many of the North Carolinian wineries — Shelton, Childress, Hanover Park and Westbend — reported using some Hungarian oak barrels as well as American and French oak. Why Hungarian? Three years ago, a native Hungarian, Balint Gaspar, and three partners formed Stave Worldwide, a wine barrel company located in Mocksville, N.C., that sells Hungarian barrels (as well as American and French oak barrels).

Gaspar says the taste profile of Hungarian oak is very similar to French since they are the same subspecies of oak. Contributing to the popularity of his barrels is the price — Hungarian oak barrels run 20 to 30 percent less than French. Gaspar says, "A lot of the new [North Carolina] wineries have large debts to pay off and are more receptive to trying Hungarian oak. For centuries,

Hungarian oak was a cost-effective alternative to French, but with Communism, Hungarian oak barrels [were] forgotten."

Gaspar believes that although the North Carolina wine industry is still in its infancy, it shows great promise. He noted that he's had barrel tastings of "incredible wines" and that the 2005 vintage may be the one to "put North Carolina wines in the national spotlight."

This spring's winter blast that damaged so much of the white wine vines may have a silver lining. Gaspar noted that the loss of juice may separate the hobbyist from those truly dedicated and in the long run will have beneficial effects on the whole Carolina wine industry. He alleged what many believe: One bad North Carolina wine can prejudice a customer from all North Carolina wines.

One Sunday in May, I tasted several dozen North Carolina wines, and, honestly, many of these tasted of flavored water — nothing more. Here and there was a sparkle: a fleshed out cabernet franc or a developed chardonnay. But to judge North Carolina wines at this stage is something akin to comparing a professor to a two-year old. Not many of the wines I tasted would satisfy a persnickety wine connoisseur. One of the best possibilities for North Carolina wines, in all likelihood, may not be a classic French varietal. After all, the unlikely Norton grape now calls Missouri home.

If you're interested in hitting the trail and trying out N.C. wines for yourself, here are three "rules of the road":

1.) Like Napa, the tastings along this Yadkin Valley route are not free. The charge ranges from \$5 to \$15 and include a wine glass. Unlike Napa, the route is not littered with upscale gourmet delis or restaurants. In fact, you may drive for a considerable distance between vineyards without passing any food outlet. Two vineyards, Childress and Shelton, have full-scale restaurants on site and also have provisions to go.

2.) Spit or swallow? If you are in for a day of tasting, spitting is preferable. Not only is the drive long between wineries, but your taste buds will be on sensory overload. Unfortunately most of the wineries I visited had only open buckets, not the more
SEE WINE P.30

TRAIL OF CHEERS

WINE FROM P.29

discrete covered spittoon that hides the several inches of collective spittle. To be fair, though, I was the only spitter along the trail. The other visitors in the tasting rooms seemed to be swallowing all the wines they tasted.

3.) Even though the United States is hell-bent on youth and all its easy glamour, the truth about wine is the older the vines the better the wines. Only age can give vines the complexity of character that aficionados look for in a glass. Want a richly textured wine with spice-box nuances and a dark core fruit? Try wines from a 40-year-old vine. Want a protean wine that changes from bottle to glass to lips? Try a 60-year-old vine. Vineyards in North Carolina are young, just slender slivers coming out of the earth. In contrast, some of the grenache vines in Australia are 150 years old, resembling wizened hands protruding from a rocky hillside. N.C. wines have a long way (actually time) to go.



THE HOUSE THAT WINE BUILT: Shelton Vineyards

key since, as Giese noted, they are winter hardy. But for now, sweet wines are what keep many vineyards alive in North Carolina. Giese says, "The Australians had to sweeten Yellowtail before they exported it to the U.S." He laughs and adds, "Customers talk dry, but buy sweet."

With that in mind, I set off on a day trek through the countryside of the Yadkin Valley to sip and spit Tar Heel wine.

Childress Vineyards, Lexington: Lexington is the epicenter for Piedmont-styled Carolina barbecue, yet right in the shadows of Lexington No. 1 are viniferous grapes. Lexington is now pork and cork country. The striking 35,000-square-foot Childress facility is visible from the highway and is easily found via signage. Heavy carved oak doors reveal a Tuscan-inspired interior. An elegant portico — often the setting for wedding photographs — and a large patio overlook newly planted vineyards and the entertainment area. Do people ask for barbecue while in the winery? You bet.

Childress' dark wood tasting room is a mix of NASCAR and wine. Tastings cost \$9, \$10, \$12 or \$15 depending on the quality of wines. The \$15 Signature Tasting includes the 2005 Viognier, 2004 Chardonnay, 2004 Reserve Chardonnay, 2004 Signature Chardonnay, 2004 Cabernet Franc, 2004 Syrah, 2004 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, 2003 Signature Merlot and the Polar, a sweet wine. During the tasting, the pourer's scripted description was designed to appeal to needy novice wine drinker: "This is a medium-bodied red jammed with black cherry and clove. This wine goes well with chocolate," then she reached under the counter and produced a bowl of Toll House sized chocolate chips. Mark Friszolowski is the winemaker and general manager at Childress Vineyards. He has been making wine since 1986 in New York at Pindar Vineyards and its sister winery, Duck Walk Vineyards. Friszolowski is one of those talented winemakers patiently working with young grapes.

Childress Vineyards, 1000 Childress Vineyards Road, Lexington. www.childressvineyards.com.

Westbend Vineyards, Lewisville: The purple grape signage on HWY 421 indicates the turn onto Shallowford Road for Westbend, a winery that looks more like some of the unpretentious wineries in Sonoma with vineyards approaching a small rural road and a small grey building set behind a covered picnic area. This tasting room has a long bar at the back counter and for five bucks you can taste five wines of your choice. We tried the 2005 Viognier, 2005 Yadkin Fume, Barrel Fermented 2004 Chardonnay, a 2004 Pinot Noir of lackluster color, 2005 Cabernet Franc, a 2006 Chamboucin, and the 2004 Vintner's Signature a blend of cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, and merlot. The only wine of note here was the barrel fermented chardonnay, which stylistically approached a Sonoma Chardonnay.

Westbend Vineyards, 5394 Williams Road, Lewisville. www.westbendvineyards.com.

Hanover Park Vineyard, Yadkinville: Not far from Westbend is Courtney Huntsville Road, a rural diversion filled with farms, goats and an old country store painted Carolina blue. A bit beyond is a white farmhouse built in 1897 on land which once produced tobacco, but is now planted with viniferous grapes. On hand in a small tasting room of Hanover Park Vineyard, the smallest winery I visited, is owner Amy Helton who talks at length about her husband Michael's wines. Both are teachers turned vintners. Last year they released about 3,000 cases of cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, chambourcin, chardonnay and viognier. They also sell sweet wines and locally made goat cheese.

Hanover Park Vineyard, 1927 Courtney-Huntsville Road. www.hanoverparkwines.com.

RagApple Lassie Vineyards, Boonville: Boonville is a spit of a town at the intersection of two unremarkable rural roads. Yet suddenly grapevines line the road. Behind the vines is a large barn within which is a tasting room and

merchandise for RagApple Lassie Vineyards, named for farmer and winery owner Frank Hobson's championship 4-H show calf. Pierre Dalmas, a student in the SCC enology program, directed the tasting. With his help, this tasting was by far one of the more informative since he could field questions about varietals, barreling, vineyard conditions — and the cow. The Taste Everything (\$8) included the 2005 Pinot Gris, a 2005 Viognier, 2004 Chardonnay, merlot, cabernet sauvignon and a syrah; a "First Blush" blend of traminette, marsanne, semillon and malbec and some sweet wines. If this winery wants to get serious about its wine, though, it'll need to lose the cow on the label.

RagApple Lassie Vineyards 3724 RagApple Lassie Lane, Boonville. www.ragapplelassie.com.

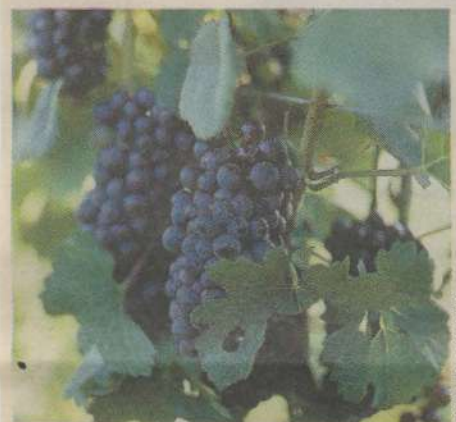
Shelton Vineyards, Dobson: In the midst of the rolling terrain is a picture perfect vineyard. End of row stones reveal the varietals planted including cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc, sangiovese and viognier. Paths allow visitors to wander through the vineyards to a lake. In addition to a well-staffed tasting room is a separate restaurant, The Harvest Grill, which opened two years ago. Last year the Sheltons brought in Chef Paul S. Lange, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., who has made a lasting impression with his desserts and jamming combread crab cake. The same wine tasting is available in the restaurant as the tasting room.

Shelton Vineyards, 286 Cabernet Lane, Dobson. www.sheltonvineyards.com.

Round Peak Vineyards: The last stop of the day was perhaps the most beautiful. Near Mount Airy (as in Andy's Mayberry) in the Blue Ridge with views of Round Peak is the almost zen-like, serene, 32-acre Round Peak winery. In its modern tasting room is Susan Little who owns the winery with her husband George and friends Lee and Janet Martin. Their story is typical: They visited Napa and decided to open a winery back home. Their wines are made through the expert hands of wine consultant Sean McRitchie who cut his teeth in the Oregon wine business (and whose his dad was the winemaker at Sokol Blosser and taught at SCC). McRitchie came to North Carolina to open Shelton Vineyards, but now consults for several area wineries as well as opening a winery of his own: McRitchie Winery & Orchard in Thurmond. Round Peak has several wines that show depth and promise including their sangiovese. Little said the couples have spent time in Italy learning the taste profiles of Italian varietals. Currently they produce sangiovese and nebbiolo grapes as well as some French varietals. Little also reported that McRitchie talked them into producing a sweet wine. She was almost apologetic as I told her I would skip the sweet wine tasting. She then added, matter of factly, "You'd be surprised how many folks from Ohio come in here off I-77 wanting a sweet wine."

Round Peak Vineyards, 765 Round Peak Church Road, Mount Airy. www.roundpeak.com.

TRICIA.CHILDRESS@CREATIVELOAFING.COM



SHELTON VINEYARDS

What is most noticeable, though, is the lack of a signature element. This challenge is intimately familiar to Gill Giese, the resident instructor for viticulture at SCC. "We don't have signature wine — yet. But then we have not looked at it in a systematic way. All the winemakers are on their own searching, hoping they will find it," he says. To help farmers, SCC has led the way with a phenology study, which may act as the foundation for the soon-to-launch North Carolina State University longitudinal study. This will determine which of the 5,000 grape varietals will work best in varying soil in the wine regions. The results of this study will be available to farmers eight to 10 years thereafter. Remembering that it takes five to eight years for a good quality harvest after the initial planting means that a generation may pass before the wineries in North Carolina develop a winning combination like pinot noir in the Willamette or sauvignon blanc from New Zealand.

For now, individual vineyard managers and owners will determine what varietal is best for the vineyard's mesoclimate (a vineyard's unique climate). And with a little luck and intuition, the right combination will make itself known.

Molly Kelley teaches enology at SCC. She is optimistic about some of the hybrid varietals they have planted on campus. "We had a tasting with our traminette for the new students; they were blown away with it," says Kelley. "This wine has a rose petal nose and fruity." And hybrids may be

More than Grapes



Van Coe is taking his time, slowly building Stony Knoll Vineyards from family land.

Surry vintner diversifies ... but wine comes first

By Michael Hastings
JOURNAL FOOD EDITOR

Van Coe was excited about starting Stony Knoll Vineyards a few years ago for two reasons.

He wanted not only to make wine but also to put the family's idle farmland to use. After all, it had been 20 years since the last tobacco had been planted.

Just six years after planting his first grapes, Coe now knows that wineries are about more than farming or even winemaking.

"To tell you the truth, this place has become a wedding mecca," he said.

Coe has a string of weddings scheduled through July at Stony

Knoll Vineyards, which is in the Stony Knoll community near Rockford in Surry County.

The winery, which will have a booth at Saturday's Yadkin Valley Wine Festival in Elkin, is in the heart of the Yadkin Valley, and it does indeed have a knoll that rises above the vineyards.

"A lot of people want to get married up there," Coe said, pointing out the views of the Brushy and Blue Ridge mountains in the distance.

Stony Knoll also has a large tasting room that can handle 50 to 60 people.

"We've had people set up in front (of the tasting room), facing this way or that. We've had people get married all over the property."

Just like other N.C. winery owners who offer live music on weekends,

Coe has learned that entertainment and tourism are important parts of the business.

And Coe now plans to add inn-keeping to his diverse duties. He just finished restoration of the farm's log cabin, built around the time of the Civil War.

Photos of the cabin before restoration show a building that looks as if it only needs a good push to take it down. Now, it's a beautifully restored cabin with such modern conveniences as air-conditioning and a Jacuzzi.

"We have a lot of people who come here from other states. They're from Florida, South Carolina, Ohio. They want a place to stay overnight," Coe said.

Stony Knoll and the cabin are

See WINERY, Page E3



The wine-tasting room at Stony Knoll Vineyards holds 50 to 60 people.



Stony Knoll hopes to turn this renovated log cabin into a guest lodge.



The interior of the cabin features a homey living room with a stone fireplace.

JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE

LIVING

WINERY

Continued From Page E1

on the family farm passed down by generations of the family of his wife, Kathy. The Coes knew that they wanted to restore it at some point and had written to a builder, Aubrey Thomas, who specializes in historic restoration.

When Thomas showed up one day in January and said he could start work right away, the Coes told him to go ahead — without having any idea of what they would do with it.

"Our No. 1 reason was historical preservation," Coe said. "My wife's great-grandmother lived there and farmed the fields here. We even named our sweet wine, Ardella Blanc, after her."

The idea of a wine lodge took shape during reconstruction. Coe's daughter Patricia, who runs the tasting room, would tell people about the cabin and invite them to go have a look. "She would send them over there when the place was a third or half done, and they wanted to give her money for it right then and there," Coe said.

Thomas finished the cabin in April. Right now, the cabin is approved only for residential use. Coe is working to get historic certification from the State Historic Preservation Office that would allow him to use the building for lodging without altering it to make it handicapped-accessible.

Unfortunately, Coe said, improving the accessibility would substantially diminish the historic value of the building. "I would love for it to be handicapped-accessible," he said. "But what I'm trying to do is preserve the originality and authenticity of the structure."

Jeff Hall, a building inspector for Surry County, said that once he receives a letter from the preservation office saying that alterations for handicapped accessibility would be detrimental to the building's historic value, he expects to issue a certificate of occupancy for commercial use.

It's uncertain how long that might take, but Coe believes that the building will get the historic certification and approval for commercial use.

Assuming he does, he plans to rent the lodge for \$195 a night.

The cabin can sleep four people. It has a restored fireplace and a kitchen addition built with stones from the Coes' farm.

Last but not least is the front-porch view of the vineyards across the street.

"We didn't know what we

If you go



JOURNAL MAP BY NICHOLAS WEIR

• **STONY KNOLL VINEYARDS:** 1143 Stony Knoll Road, Dobson, NC 27107. Despite the Dobson mailing address, the winery is in the Stony Knoll community near Rockford.

• **HOURS:** The tasting room is open from noon to 6 p.m. Saturdays, from 2 to 6 p.m. Sundays and by appointment.

• **WINES:** Stony Knoll produces Chardonnay, Viognier, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chambourcin and Ardella Blanc, a sweet white wine. Wines are priced from \$10.95 to \$16. Wines are sold at Total Wine & More as well as at the winery.

• **DIRECTIONS:** From Winston-Salem, take U.S. 52 North about 25 miles. Take Exit 134 (N.C. 268). Turn left at end of ramp and go about 10 miles on N.C. 268 to Copeland School Road. Turn left on Copeland School Road and go about 1 mile. Turn right on Stony Knoll Road. Go about 1.5 miles and bear left (at Rockford Road and the South Surry Volunteer Fire Department), then take an immediate right to continue on Stony Knoll Road. The winery is about 1 mile ahead on the left.

• **MORE INFORMATION:** Call (336) 374-5752 or visit www.stonyknollvineyards.com.

• **FESTIVAL:** Stony Knoll is one of about 20 Yadkin Valley wineries that will be pouring wines from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. **Saturday** at the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival in Elkin. Tickets are \$16 in advance or \$20 at the gate. For tickets or more information, call 336-526-1111 or visit www.yvww.com.

COMPILED BY MICHAEL HASTINGS

were going to do with the building," Coe said. "But it's like need is the mother of invention."

Though Coe acknowledges the many peripheral needs of winery customers, he remains focused on the reason he started a winery.

Back in the 1980s, Coe noticed some grape vines popping up in the area and thought that might be a way to put the farmland back to work after many years of lying fallow.

"When Surry County Community College started its viticulture program, that was the brain trust to leverage my dreams," he said.

Coe, who works fulltime running Homeland Mortgage in Dobson, took classes at Surry for three years. His brother-in-law Lynn Crouse, a chief engineer for Hanes Dye & Finishing, took classes for four years.

They planted 5¼ acres in April 2001. They had their first harvest in 2002 and made their first wines at a nearby winery in 2003. In addition to the vines

on the Stony Knoll property, Coe leases four acres just down the road.

They opened their own winery and tasting room in 2004. Coe manages the vineyard, and Crouse is the winemaker. Coe said he now spends about 40 hours a week at the winery, but hopes to hire a winery manager as sales increase.

Stony Knoll currently works with chardonnay, viognier, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, merlot, chambourcin and Niagra. Niagra is the one native American grape that is planted; it is used in the sweet Ardella Blanc.

The other grapes are all from the *vitis vinifera* species native to Europe. As of now, Stony Knoll is making all varietal wines with these grapes, though Coe is interested in producing a Bordeaux-style red blend, as many other Yadkin Valley wineries have done.

Coe said that chardonnay and cabernet franc do particularly well in his area. Syrah

is one of Stony Knoll's most popular wines. The 2004 syrah sold out, and Stony Knoll just released the 2005 syrah.

The 2005 syrah is a bit light in body, but has aromas of blueberry and blackberry and hints of pepper and spice.

The 2005 barrel-fermented chardonnay has restrained fruit and a lingering, oaky finish.

Coe offered a sample of the 2006 chardonnay, which has not been bottled, that has richer fruit flavors and a more complex taste, a sign that the vines are beginning to mature.

Coe is also excited about a late-harvest wine — actually two wines — that combine his interest in making serious wine as well as diversifying the winery's attractions.

To make the late-harvest wines, Stony Knoll left chardonnay and cabernet franc grapes on the vine longer than usual to get the most flavor out of them. Then the grapes were frozen in a freezer in blocks of 125 gallons each.

Later, the blocks were taken out to thaw. As each block melted, the densest material with the most concentrated flavor was collected and the rest was discarded.

The resulting grapes, once fermented, produced sweet and very rich wines.

Coe researched to find a special bottle for these late-harvest wines, which have not been bottled and probably won't be released until this fall. He found a two-cork, 500-milliliter bottle of handcrafted European glass. It's essentially a bottle within a bottle.

Into the smaller compartment, which has a cork coming out the side of the larger bottle, he will put 100 milliliters of late-harvest cabernet franc. Into the larger compartment, he'll put 400 milliliters of the late-harvest chardonnay.

Stony Knoll probably will have only 16 cases (192 bottles) of this wine to sell. Because of its concentrated flavors and expensive packaging, Coe plans to appeal to a high-end market that would be willing to pay \$100 a bottle.

"This is something special," he said, "and it's for people who are in a moment — when they're getting married or they've just gotten a big promotion."

Coe has a lot more land that he could plant with grapes. He also situated his winery so that he easily could expand into a second building and more than quadruple capacity.

Right now, though, he's happy with the 1,087 cases that Stony Knoll made last year — a small amount for even a small family-run winery. He said that Stony Knoll probably will make about 1,000 cases this year —

though the winery will have to contend with some losses from an April frost that damaged primary shoots on some vines.

"We don't want to push the volume," Coe said. "If we push the volume, we won't set up the cornerstones for the future. I'm talking about quality. I'm talking about premium grape delivery in the vineyard."

"We've got some of that now, but only because we've taken our time."

Coe said that his business has become somewhat diverse with tourism and events, but that he's committed to making wine first and foremost.


"This is just a normal progression. The lodging, rentals — you can do a lot of different things with a winery. But the first item on the income statement is going to be the wine."

"The wine is going to be the draw."




Hampton Inn & Suites Shelton Vineyards
Open House

Wednesday, May 16, 2007 • 11:00 am - 2:00 pm • I-77 Exit 93 Dobson, N.C.



North Carolina Wines



North Carolina's vineyards have weathered many economic storms in their 400-year history, and today they're again flourishing. The state boasts 63 wineries with more than 5,700 associated jobs and a total economic impact of well over \$800 million.

According to a national survey conducted this year by the Travel Industry Association, North Carolina is the third-most-visited state for wine tourism. And, one visit is all it takes to put you up close and personal with the rich sensory experience of winemaking.

"The experience is really intimate. It's not like going to a winery in California," says Margo Knight Metzger, executive director of the NC Wine & Grape Council. "You're likely to be given a guided tour by the owner or winemaker—it's really a family business."

Think of North Carolina wines and you probably think of Biltmore Estate. That's understandable: today, Biltmore is the country's most visited winery, with more than a million annual guests. And most North Carolinians know about the Scuppernong grape, a variety of Muscadine. But did you know the Scuppernong was the nation's first cultivated wine grape, and was discovered in 1524 near present-day Wilmington by Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazano?

North Carolina opened its first commercial vineyard in 1835 and by 1840 led the nation's wine production. The Civil War devastated the industry, but during the national depression of the 1890s, state farmers grew grapes as a tool of economic resurgence. In 1900, North Carolina wines won medals at the Paris Exposition; four

With a long and proud tradition, North Carolina's wineries now rank high in national production and tourism.

SAVOR MORE WITH OUR DELICIOUS WINES



Make Biltmore Wines your house wine. Our award-winning red, white, rosé, and sparkling wines complement everything from a casual picnic to Sunday dinner. *Find your favorites at area grocers, wine shops, and online at biltmore.com*

BILTMORE[™]
Wines

years later Virginia Dare wines topped national sales.

In the 1920s Prohibition again decimated North Carolina's vineyards. But by the 1950s a planting boom was underway to meet out-of-state grape demand. Like the resilient Scuppernong, North Carolina's wine industry keeps coming back strong, turning challenge into opportunity.

Today the state's many varietals include a Vermentino, one of only three such American whites. And because wine is now often consumed for its heart-healthy benefits, Scuppernong grapes are noted for having up to 40 times the concentration of resveratrol, a potent antioxidant, than that found in other red and white grapes.

Want to know more? See the wine council's Web site at www.ncwine.org.

BILTMORE WINERY

The most visited winery in the United States—with nearly one million guests each year—is located at beautiful Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina. In addition to exploring the largest privately owned home in America and its extensive landscaped gardens, guests can enjoy tours of the winery and taste its award-winning wines.

Biltmore's first vineyards were established in 1971, and today they comprise 94 acres on the west side of the estate, where Chardonnay, Riesling, Viognier, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot varietals are grown. Biltmore's Winery opened to guests in the renovated dairy in 1985. In this 90,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility, 40 varietals and unique blends of red, white, rose, and sparkling wines are handcrafted by winemakers Bernard Delille and Sharon Fenchak. The winery operation, including the vineyards, is a natural extension of Biltmore's ongoing agricultural program, and it honors George W. Vanderbilt's vision of a self-sustaining, working estate.

To date, Biltmore's award-winning wines have received more than 500 medals from prestigious national and international wine competitions, and they're available throughout the East Coast wherever fine wines are sold. Learn more online at biltmore.com.



BILTMORE WINERY SHOP

wine festivals

MAY

Salute! The NC Wine Festival

Saturday, May 12

Downtown, Winston Salem, NC
salutencwine.com | 336.354.1500

JULY

River House Winefest on the New River

Saturday, July 14

riverhouseenc.com | 336.982.2109

OCTOBER

Great Grapes!™ Wine & Music Festival

Saturday, October 6

Symphony Park, Charlotte, NC
uncorkthefun.com | 800.830.3976

Yadkin Valley Grape Festival

Saturday, October 20

Yadkinville, NC

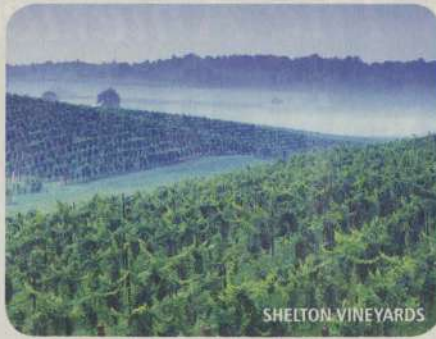
yvzf.com | 336.679.2200

Visit www.ncwine.org for more information about North Carolina wines.



YADKIN VALLEY WINE TASTING BAR AT THE CHARLOTTE DOUGLAS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Wines of the Yadkin Valley are getting great reviews at the Yadkin Valley Wine Tasting Bar, located at the connector to concourse D & E. The bar provides a quiet place for travelers to relax and enjoy a glass of wine, or sample several of the daily features. In addition, wine can be packaged to take home or sent as gifts. The Tasting Bar offers free shipping on all cases of wine and shipping discounts on most other shipments.



YADKIN VALLEY WINEGROWERS ASSOCIATION

The fertile soils of the Yadkin Valley, located in the foothills of Piedmont North Carolina, are producing magnificent *Vinifera* grapes. And, this area has become the home of many wineries that are leading the efforts of the emerging wine business in the state. Wineries in the region are producing award-winning varietals and blends that are receiving rave reviews from consumers.

The Yadkin Valley Winegrowers Association consists of eight wineries located in the federally recognized Yadkin Valley

American Viticultural Area (AVA).

These wineries include:

Hanover Park in Yadkinville; RagApple Lassie in Boonville; RayLen in Mocksville; Round Peak in Mt. Airy; Shelton, Stony Knoll, and Surry Community College in Dobson; and Westbend in Lewisville. Each of these wineries is easily accessible from the intersection of Interstate 77 and Interstate 40 near Statesville.

Bolstered by the efforts of the association and the highway advertising program of the North Carolina Wine and Grape Council, tourism at these wineries is increasing by leaps and bounds. Visitors can follow the highway signs to the various wineries. In addition to the outstanding wines produced by these wineries, they also offer tours and tastings, and most offer outdoor musical entertainment at scheduled times during the spring and summer.



Enjoy Your Time at the Airport with a Glass of Wine from the

YADKIN VALLEY!



Visit the

Yadkin Valley Wine Tasting Bar

Charlotte Douglas Airport, Concourse D/E Connector

• Ask about free shipping •

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336-463-2875 / hanoverparkwines.com
- **RagApple Lassie Vineyards**
866-RAGAPPLE / ragapplelassie.com
- **RayLen Vineyards**
336-998-3100 / raylenvineyards.com
- **Round Peak Vineyards**
336-352-5595 / roundpeak.com
- **Shelton Vineyards**
336-366-4724 / sheltonvineyards.com
- **Stony Knoll Vineyards**
336-374-5752 / stonyknollvineyards.com
- **Surry Community College Winery**
336-386-3269 / surry.edu/grapes
- **Westbend Vineyards**
866--901-5032 / westbendvineyards.com

YADKIN VALLEY WINEGROWERS ASSOCIATION
yadkinvalleywineries.com

Contact each winery for special events and entertainment schedules

Truffles could compete with grapes in N.C.

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

EAST BEND — It's as fragrant, in a totally different way, as the scent of cured tobacco lingering in a log barn or the aroma of a fine wine in a crystal glass, and, at up to \$850 a pound wholesale, rivals both in its ability to support a farm.

But even Jack Ponticelli, one of the local pioneers in truffle farming, would admit that the resemblance would end there. Truffles, a delicate mushroom, are grown below the ground on specially inoculated tree roots. They lack the green promise of tobacco or the glow of a ripe grape, instead looking more like a dingy lump of coal or perhaps something Hallie, his truffle-hunting dog, would leave behind.

"The aroma of one truffle can infuse a whole room," he said, admitting that, at the same time, they don't look like much.

"This is a new industry in the United States," said Ponticelli, who after three years of cultivating his farm lands may see his first crop this year. "This is the first time I've ever been on the ground floor of something in my life."

Five years ago, Ponticelli and his son, Aron, and partner Franklin Garland, who has been raising truffles in North Carolina for nearly 30 years, formed Piedmont Valley Truffles to encourage truffle development in the state and nationwide.

Ponticelli said Garland, who raises truffles in Hillsborough, was a true pioneer in the truffle industry, bringing the first stock to North Carolina shortly after European mycologists first discovered how truffles could be successfully cultivated.

"They've only been cultivated for less than 30 years," he said. "Before that, all truffles were grown wild, but development and wars in Europe had destroyed the forests where they grew. After the method for cultivation was developed, Italy used truffle forests to revitalize areas that were having economic difficulties."

Ponticelli said he was living in New Jersey and working for Firefly Balloons as a sales representative when he became interested in truffles. With a degree in agriculture, he volunteered for a committee working with farmers to look for alternative crops for the area. The mo-

tions between the hot air balloonists and the farmers, but instead he found a crop that, while not ideally suited to New Jersey, fascinated him.

"I got on the Internet, and this was 15 years ago when no one realized what its impact would be, and I found the Northern Italian Truffle Institute. I downloaded everything they had on-line," he said. "Then I had to have it translated from Italian to English, but it had detailed information about growing truffles. I found that the East Coast of the United States and the area of Italy best suited for truffles are very similar in temperature, rainfall and overall climate. Basically, anywhere grapes will grow, you can grow truffles."

He was especially enamored by the Black Périgord Truffle — also known as Black Diamond, Black Winter and Tartufo, among other names. "It will grow in New Jersey," he said. "The problem is you can't harvest it there because the ground is frozen. December through March is the harvest season."

He said because he was running a sales route through North Carolina, he knew the ground wasn't frozen here during those months. He also kept searching the Internet until he found Garland in Hillsborough and, on a visit to the state with his daughter who was looking at colleges in North Carolina, showed up on Garland's doorstep to talk truffles.

Ponticelli said he had been corresponding with Garland and, at the same time, working on a long-range plan to move to North Carolina. "As part of my plan, I persuaded my daughters to go to Southern schools," he said. "That made it easier to get Debbie (his wife) to move."

In the midst of those efforts to relocate, he said he injured his back and was unable to walk for four months. "That gave me time to redecide what I wanted to do with my life. I'd been talking about truffles and made everybody crazy. It was always 'Jack and his truffles.'"

That changed when he was able to get his son, Aron, who has an MBA, to go over the numbers with him. "He got on the band wagon," he said. "He wanted to do it as a business. I told him I'd work with him 10 years, then I was going to re-



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News
Jack Ponticelli and Hallie, his truffle-hunting Labrador retriever mix, check for the scent of truffles near one of the trees on his Yadkin County farm. He and his son, Aron, are partners on a second, larger truffle farm near Dobson.

The Ponticellis began looking for a place to pursue their dream, working steadily out from Statesville, where Jack planned to work part-time. They eventually found a small tract of land near East Bend where they began setting out

apartment upstairs as their first residence. They also found a 75-acre tract near Dobson and put in another 25 acres of trees. Ponticelli said the Surry County farm is the partnership venture with his son, while the Yadkin County farm is just his hobby and where he'll still be able to farm once he "retires."

"We don't like to talk about exactly where the farm is near Dobson," he said. "In a lot of areas they're having problems with people stealing the truffles."

Why? The Périgord Black, he said, brings as much as \$850 a pound wholesale, although that's for the very highest quality and farmers can't expect to typically get that much. At the same time, he said, the yield will reach 30 to 120 pounds an acre, after 10 years. "We use an average of 75 pounds an acre, but that's still bringing in 10 times as much as grapes and it's not as labor intensive."

It can also be a longer wait, and chancier. Inoculated trees, which Garland sells, bring more than \$20 per tree, but Ponticelli said farmers may not find any evidence of the young truffles for three years. During that time the soil pH must be monitored and controlled and the trees tended with the right moisture and other needs met.

"For three years, we didn't even do any testing to see if the truffle organism was alive," he said. "We lived off faith. We finally tested last year and initially didn't find anything." He said washing a root revealed that the organism was more vis-



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News
Jack Ponticelli and Hallie look for truffles.

ible when wet, and a second test found the small organism on the roots. The fungus grows in a symbiotic relationship with the trees, he explained, with both relying on the other for nutrients. They will grown on cer-

tain types of oaks and filbert or hazelnut trees, and in Europe on willows, although winds here tend to uproot those trees. During the early days after planting, the organism is fragile, he said, and it takes a while to get established on the roots and reach the stage where there are any truffles to harvest.

"The hazelnut will begin producing at three to four years," he said, "and the oak at eight to 10." Still, he plans on having an oak forest, eventually, because the hazelnuts produce only 20 years while the oaks will produce for 50 or more.

The trees are planted in close rows so they can be watered and cultivated, and pruning keeps them from crowding one another out. The close planting allows the spores from the fungus to spread and grow more easily. As the trees age, he said, he'll transplant the hazelnuts out and leave only the oak forest.

But, while he could have been looking for his first harvest this year, the late freeze has stressed the trees and he said he's in the same boat as many other farmers. "We may have truffles this year, and we may not," he said.

To find the truffles and avoid disturbing tree roots that may not have truffles to harvest, he has Hallie, a Labrador retriever/border collie mix, and Rusty, a Labradoodle (cross between Labrador and poodle), who have both been trained to sniff out truffles just like a narcotics dog will locate illegal drugs. He also has the last five of a litter of pups produced last year by the pair, and said at least three of them give indications they will be truffle dogs as well.

If the trees produce a crop this year, Ponticelli and his dogs will be harvesting the truffles, while his son will handle marketing.

"Sixty percent of what we grow will be wholesale and 40 percent retail to start with," he said. "We've been making contacts for the last four years and have people who say they'll buy all we can produce."

"Even if all the farmers getting out of tobacco got involved, it would still be lucrative," he added. "Surveys have shown there is 200 tons of demand worldwide, so the demand is still there and farms are only producing 20 tons."

With cultivation, he said, production has spread from France, Italy and Garland's farm to a number of other nations including Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Austria and New Zealand, among others, and it continues to grow. He said he hopes to be part of helping the industry grow in North Carolina through his partnership and his continuing work with Garland, who now operates a nursery selling the inoculated trees.

"I want to help other farmers in the area get started," he said. "Because I'm here, I'm seeing quite a few people get interested and I get a kick out of helping people get into this."

He said Garland had been awarded a grant to help expand the availability of trees and that his son is working on developing a coop to help market the crop. "There's a growing market in the U.S. in big cities," he said, "and as the quality of restaurants improves, that demand is going to grow."

On the Internet:
www.garlandtruffles.com
www.nctruffles.com

You can reach Angela Schmoll at aschmoll@mtairynews.com.

Lodge to open at Stony Knoll

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — A vacant log cabin that has been part of the Coe farm since before it came into the family more than 100 years ago will soon see new life as the Wine Lodge for Stony Knoll Vineyard, according to vineyard co-owner Van Coe.

The Wine Lodge at Stony Knoll will be open to the public June 1, Coe said, although it already is booked as part of several weddings in May.

"We believe the cabin was built around the Civil War period," said Coe, who owns the vineyard with his wife, Kathy. Her branch of the Coe family, ancestors Joseph D. and Lazerna Coe, bought the farm in 1896 and moved into the cabin.

Coe said the main portion of the cabin consisted of a central living area and a bedroom area upstairs. A separate, detached area behind held the

kitchen, which he said was common because of the risk of fire from the need to constantly keep a blaze in the stove to prepare meals. That frame structure was later attached to the main cabin, and a window at the back of the cabin structure shows evidence of the original division, he said.

The idea for the wine lodge came from visitors expressing an interest in staying at a vineyard while touring Yadkin Valley wineries, Coe said.

The cabin already stood on the hill across from the Stony Knoll Vineyard, but it was vacant and dilapidated when work began. Images on the vineyard Web site show the weathered boards covering the logs, the wind-blown tin roof and the crumbling frame structure at the rear.

"We wanted to preserve it," said Coe, who said they had managed to secure Aubrey Thomas to handle the project.

See LODGE, page 2A



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

Van Coe sits on the front porch of the Wine Lodge at Stony Knoll Vineyard, which is actually a work in progress. The historic lodge will be available for rentals in conjunction with local vineyard visits beginning June 1, Coe said. Coe and his family own both the vineyard and the lodge, which overlooks the vineyard.

LODGE: Set to open at vineyard



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

The old and new seem to blend at the rear of the lodge, where a modern heat pump provides heat and air to the historic structure and the board door is part of the original lodge.

Continued from page 1A

The project involved taking the frame siding off the logs and tearing down the frame structure at the rear, Coe said. "We took the back portion off and reconstructed it with rocks from the farm. We didn't have to move the logs in front, just refinish the chinking. We're even using the original doors, although we've got to put inside doors to create a seal."

In addition to replacing the frame kitchen addition with a field rock structure, Coe said workers also completely disassembled the rock chimney on the cabin, spreading it out across the side yard. "They took it down stone by stone," he said, "and put in firebricks and a flue-liner and rebuilt it."

Beneath the cabin, where the original cellar area had deteriorated, Coe said they had excavated the area and put in masonry and a door structure like the one originally at the cabin.

"We're thinking about put-

ting a wine cellar in here," he said. "Then when people stay, they could put up a bottle of wine and have it age until they return. We replaced the cellar doors, but it's still the same door system that it had in the 1860s."

In addition to the preserved front and back doors, Coe said the floor upstairs is the original, although it was removed and replaced after the supporting structure was reinforced. Doors inside the cabin had been in storage since they were bought at an auction where an old home was being torn down. Any new wood added to the structure has been treated to resemble the original finish.

In addition to restoring and preserving the cabin, Coe said the project also has brought in the modern amenities.

The stone addition at the rear will house not only a kitchen, with the old window offering direct access to the living area, but a luxury bath with a two-person Jacuzzi. Plumbing and wiring have

been upgraded and a central heating and air system added, along with a security system. The fireplace will likely feature gas logs as a safer, cleaner alternative to wood, and Coe said he plans for a modern entertainment system — flat screen televisions — both upstairs and down. The décor will include antiques.

Coe said the cabin already is booked during May, although they're still undecided on the rates, and will be available beginning in June. "We'll have different rates for weekdays and weekends and during peak seasons — June through September — and holidays. We're probably looking at \$145 to \$195," he said, "although I've had some people tell me it could be a lot more."

For more information, visit Stony Knoll Vineyards at www.stonyknollvineyards.com and click on Wine Lodge.

You can reach Angela Schmoll at aschmoll@mtairynews.com.

Surry County Schools to go tobacco-free

By LAURA THOMPSON
Staff Writer

DOBSON — As of July 1, students, staff and visitors at Surry County schools wanting to light up will have to take it off campus.

The Surry County School Board voted Tuesday night to adopt a 100 percent tobacco-free policy that will prohibit use of any tobacco product by any person on campus at any time.

Board Chairman Earlie Coe said after the meeting that the board had considered such a policy for years, but "kept putting it off because tobacco was Surry County's livelihood at one time."

Several board members said during the meeting that they had been concerned about adopting a tobacco-free policy because of the county's long history of tobacco farming. Vice Chairman Brian Gates said

he'd had reservations about adopting the policy, but the move seemed particularly appropriate in light of additional drug-related policies recently adopted by the board.

"Rolling out this drug and alcohol policy, I just don't see how we can turn a blind eye to tobacco when nicotine is as addictive as it is," he said before the vote.

Board member Michele Hunter added that the board is

"not trying to discount the past, but we're trying to do the best thing for our children."

A group of students from East Surry High School addressed the board earlier in the evening in support of the policy. They cited several statistics regarding the negative health effects of tobacco and the effect of tobacco-free policies on reducing tobacco use.

The final version of the tobacco-free policy, Policy

5026/7250, was on the agenda to be approved after press time.

The school board also heard a presentation from finance officer Wanda Mitchell on the proposed increases and decreases in the system's budget for the 2007-2008 school year.

The budget proposal, which was approved by the board, asks the county government for an additional \$1.26 million in

See **SCHOOLS, 2A**

Vineyards burned by the cold

Secondary buds could offer hope

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — Van Coe walked through his family's vineyard Tuesday afternoon looking for signs of life among the withered leaves on the vines — leaves destroyed by the weekend chill that sent the tender sprouts into a deadly deep freeze.

What he found on many of the vines at Stony Knoll Vineyard south of Dobson gave him reason to hope.

"These are secondary buds," he said, using a pen to push aside the crisp, dead shoots. "They weren't trying to grow and they weren't hurt by the cold. They should come out now and take the place of the dead buds."

Record cold this weekend couldn't be fought, and grapes were one of the vulnerable crops to suffer.

"We had no frost," said George Denka, president of Shelton Vineyards, located

southwest of Dobson off Twin Oaks Road — the state's largest estate winery, where wind turbines and propane tanks were braced for the chill last week. "The wind machines did their job," he said. "But they could not protect against a hard freeze. It was 21 degrees Saturday night and there's not much you can do to protect against that."

"With 200 acres of vines you can't sprinkle or wrap them, and even if you could I'm not sure that would have saved them," he said.

Coe said he didn't even turn on heaters located in his much smaller vineyard. "It was so cold we didn't turn the burners on and waste the fuel. We knew nothing was going to help."

At Shelton's, Denka estimated that as much as 90 percent of the early varieties were lost to the freeze.

"We had pretty severe damage, but it will be a few days



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

A row of native American Niagara grapes shows the heavy damage sustained by that variety of vines at Stony Knoll Vineyard near Dobson Tuesday afternoon.

before we know exactly how much. There will be significant loss of early budding varieties, but some of the later ones weren't hurt so bad."

Coe said Stony Knoll lost the buds on 50 percent of the vines — those that had already undergone "bud break."

"We lost those shoots, but we're going to get secondary growth where we lost it."

By Tuesday evening, he could already see the signs of life returning. Small green leaves were coming out on many of the vines that had not had bud break prior to the record cold that hit the area.

Coe was glad to see his syrah vines just beginning to bud and unharmed by the cold. "We sell out of this every year," he said. "This is good."

His native American vines, Niagara, fared the worst, having sprouted several inches and with the sprouts dry and dead in the warm Tuesday sun. "There's still some buds here," he said, "but it will be a while before we can tell how much."

At Shelton's, Denka said workers spent Tuesday gathering 100 buds and spurs to be sent to a laboratory for examination. "We'll have a count on 100 to see how many are dead and how many are alive, and that will give us an idea of what we're looking at."

"We had record highs before the record lows and that tricked the vines," said Denka.

"They sprouted and got ready to go."

The losses varied from vineyard to vineyard, depending on the varieties of vines and the elevation of the land, according to Coe. "Some were hit a lot harder than we were."

"We'll know better in a few weeks when we see what comes out," he said, looking at this year's potential.

Even then, the full extent of the damage may not be known for more than a year, according to Denka.

"We won't know until next year if the vines themselves are damaged," said Denka. "I don't think there will be enough crop this year. We won't know until next year's crop when we see if the vines can handle it. There's no obvious tissue damage, but it will be a year before we know."

"I've heard from farmers in this area that you can expect to lose a crop every 10 years," he said. "I guess this was it."

You can reach Angela Schmoll at aschmoll@mtairynews.com.



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

Brown, shriveled leaves mark the frozen buds on vines at Stony Knoll Vineyard Tuesday afternoon. Less obvious are the secondary buds, still sheathed in their winter protection, which owner Van Coe hopes will begin to come out in the coming weeks to replace the damaged buds.

YADKIN VALLEY DISH

DINING & WINE NOTES

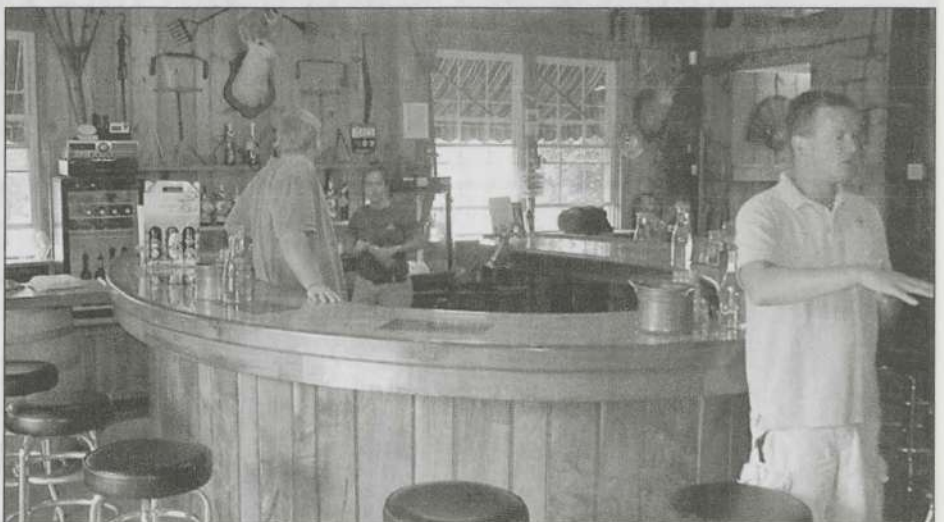
Surry Community College is responding to local winery owners and restauranteers by offering a class on hospitality. The importance of frontline customer service staff equates to the total success of their operations.

The class begins in the spring semester and will run January 16 to May 8. The key emphasis will be customer service, the foundation for success in any business. Participants will learn how wine is made, from the vines at Surry Community College's own vineyard to the bottling process. Local wines of the Yadkin Valley Appellation will be studied as well as national and international wines. Included will be the study of pairing wine and foods.

Marketing the product will instruct on making the sale—being able to articulate what makes your company's wine interesting and unique.

Knowing and marketing the Yadkin Valley area itself is vital. Students will learn what attractions and activities are available for tourists and also how to give directions to these sites.

For more information contact
Director of Occupational
Programs Wayne Matthews, Surry
Community College
Yadkin Center
at 336-679-4600, ext. 5226 or
matthewsw@surry.edu



Photos from tasting rooms during a visit to the Watkins Glen, New York area by Surry Community College representatives along with area government and chamber officials as they researched how to help properly train locals to better welcome and serve the growing number of visitors to the Yadkin Valley.

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Board OKs new winery

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — The Surry County Planning Board Monday night granted its approval to a new winery and tasting rooms in the southern portion of the county near Rockford.

"It's a beautiful location," said Planning Board Chairman Wayne Draughn. "I think a winery will be an addition to the property itself. The vineyard is not new and a lot of it is producing already."

Planning Director Chris Knopf said the request from Hutton Vineyards was for a conditional use permit to build a winery and two

tasting rooms at the vineyard a mile north of Rockford Village. Malcom and Heidi Hutton own the property and live on one of the two parcels included in the request.

The winery and one tasting room would be included on one of the parcels, according to Knopf, in a two-story facility with room for a restaurant to be added at a future time. A festival area was also included in the request with a capacity of 280 people and access from Pershing Lane. The project would also include a separate bottling and wine storage building.

"We already have the vines now," said

See WINERY, page 3

"It's a beautiful location. I think a winery will be an addition to the property itself. The vineyard is not new and a lot of it is producing already."

Wayne Draughn,
Planning Board
chairman

1/9/07

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all the pale suburban types at their spic-'n'-span tables. But we couldn't quite put our finger on it. Till Carolyn, my late wife, leaned across the table and whispered, "Have you ever seen so many white folks in your life?"

Yes, that was it. I'd once felt the same strange absence in Minneapolis.

And that's what I like about the South. Now you be sure to write again, y' hear?

Inky Wretch

Paul Greenberg is the Pulitzer prize-winning editorial page editor of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. His e-mail address is pgreenberg@arkansasonline.com.

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RUM

Local wines win at fairs

By **BROOK R. CORWIN**
STAFF REPORTER

To taste some of the state's most acclaimed wines, one could have made a trip to the recent North Carolina State Fair Wine Competition in Raleigh.

But if you live here, a short car ride will suffice.

Grassy Creek Vineyard in State Road and Buck Shoals Vineyard in Hamptonville were among the top winners at the 2006 state fair contest, held earlier this month. Along with perennial award-winner Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, they lead a group of local vineyards that had strong showings in wine competitions at both the state fair and the Dixie Classic Fair in Winston-Salem.

Taking gold medals at the state fair competition were Grassy Creek's 2005 Merlot, Buck Shoals' 2005 Viognier and two of Shelton's sweet wines bottled under the Salem Fork Label — Blush and Snow Hill White. The

competition drew 244 entries from 37 wineries, with 21 vintages taking home golds.

Among those receiving at least one of the 62 silver medals were Grassy Creek (for its Sweet Guernsey Red), Shelton (2005 Sauvignon Blanc, 2004 Family Reserve Claret, Madison Lee Red and Madison Lee White), Black Wolf Vineyards of Dobson (Moonlight White and Wolfsbane Rosé), RagApple Lassie Vineyards of Boonville (First Blush, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2004 Chardonnay and Evening Sunset), Raffaldini Vineyards of Hamptonville (Vermentino and Pinot Grigio), Flint Hill Vineyards of East Bend (Chardonnay and Viognier) and Laurel Gray Vineyards of Hamptonville (Viognier).

Childress Vineyards of Lexington took home the Best of Show for its Syrah and also received the most medals with 19.

For winners such as Jim

See Wine, back page



TRIBUNE/Brook R. Corwin

Snip it

Ann, Louise and Matthew Mayberry cut the ribbon Saturday for the grand opening of Brushy Mountain Winery, which they co-own along with sons, Richard and Ted. The winery debuted four vintages, all made on site using grapes from Yadkin Valley vineyards.

Wines

Continued from front page

Douthit, winemaker and co-owner of Grassy Creek, the recognition is a bit of a surprise but also an affirmation of the quality already exhibited by local fruit.

"I didn't really expect the Merlot to get a gold, but we hoped it would get something," Douthit said Saturday. "We had a pretty good growing season (in 2005). So I was thinking it would be a good wine, but you never know."

Terry Crater, co-owner of Buck Shoals, also cited ideal growing conditions in 2005 for the success of his gold medal winner, the Viognier.

"We thought we had one of the best wines in the state, and we wanted to see if we could prove it in competition," Crater said Sunday.

Buck Shoals also took a gold in the Viognier category of the 2006 Mid-Atlantic Southeastern Wine Competition at this month's Dixie Classic Fair. Its Vito's Pride won silver in the Red Italian Style category and also won bronzes at the state fair and at the 2006 Eastern International Wine Competition held in New York.

All in all, Buck Shoals took home five combined awards at the two North Carolina competitions, the same amount as neighboring vineyards Raffaldini and Laurel Gray. The three vineyards have petitioned the federal government for the Swan Creek region to be designated as its own American Viticultural Area, a distinction that would recognize the unique climate and soil conditions found there.

Right now Swan Creek is part of the much larger Yadkin Valley AVA.

"The awards give some credence to the fact that the vineyards in the Swan Creek Valley are in a unique position in terms of the quality of the fruit we grow," Crater said.

Those vineyards all use vines that are just starting to reach maturity, having been planted at least five years ago. Mature vines bore the grapes used for many of the award-winning vintages at the two North Carolina fairs. Shelton, with vines that date back to 1999, topped all local vineyards with 30 combined medals at the two competitions. RayLen Vineyards of Davie County, another veteran winemaking operation, received the Best in Show award at the Dixie Classic Fair.

But some younger vineyards made a strong showing as well. Allison Oaks Vineyards in Yadkinville entered its first two vintages — Orchard White and Proprietor's Blend — and each won medals at both fairs.

Flint Hill Vineyards, in just its second year of producing wines, won awards at both fairs for its Chardonnay and Viognier.

Douthit said overcoming the disadvantage of younger vines means maximizing the best equipment in the winery. He knew the Merlot grapes had a chance to turn into something special, so Grassy Creek aged that wine in its newest oak barrels, making up for the lack of depth sometimes found in young vintages.

"People coming through the winery have really liked it," he said. "Using the newer barrels, the oak flavor was more intense."

The Merlot grapes just harvested this year have the same sugar counts as last year's and even better acid levels, so Douthit expects next year's release to reach or exceed the same level of quality.

Crater said each year of winemaking brings improvements with aging vines and more experience in tending them. So the benchmarks set now should only go up.

"It's been our promise that every year as the vines get older, the wines get a little better," Crater said.

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shields for hours before fatally shooting one girl and killing himself.

truly free until we're free of the choke hold the NRA has on national anti-gun legislation.

CHEERS: A wine industry worth toasting

By Pierre D. Dalmás
GUEST COLUMNIST

In the 1920s, my great-grandfather, an immigrant from Italy, began growing grapes and making wine in North Carolina. It was not easy. He suffered the loss of his entire vineyard to blight. He learned to be creative making wine from American varieties such as Concord. He endured prohibition using his religious her-

MY VIEW itage to continue his winemaking. He never gave up. His sons continued the tradition, creating the state's ninth commercial winery in his dairy barn. Today he would be amazed at the revolution in North Carolina wine and impressed with the advancements that have made it possible to grow European varieties here. Still, he would not be surprised to see growers so frustrated that they are contemplating plowing over their vineyards. To those growers he would say, "Don't be foolish, instead be patient. Wine and grapes are all about time."

The recent collapse of a wine co-op has left some winegrowers in a bind and has brought out the critics in force. To hear some talk, you would think the collapse of the entire North Carolina wine industry is at hand. I believe the industry is alive and well and right on course. Whenever I hear critics start their rhetoric, I think of the late Jack Kroustalis of Westbend Winery. Critics said that he could not grow European grapes and make these wines in North Carolina. I raise my glass to the man who proved them wrong and started this revolution.

I think that North Carolina winegrowers have tremendous opportunity in this new industry. Consider what Gill Geise, the head of the viticulture program at Surry Community College, has said: "Today growers have advanced chemicals to prevent and manage the host of diseases that attack wine grapes.



JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

In addition, training and trellising systems have advanced and canopy management techniques (leaf pulling, shoot positioning, cluster thinning) allow manipulation of the canopy to control microclimate that can reduce disease pressure and create higher yields per acre. A typical well

cared for vineyard can be productive for 40 years. What East Coast winegrowers (North Carolina included) have, more than established growers in California, is access to a large market for wine.

A new winery comes on line almost every month in N.C., so the market for grapes here is expanding.

Some critics argue that North Carolina wines are overpriced. If you compare apples to oranges, like a California Cabernet to a North Carolina Cabernet, then certainly they appear overpriced. It is simply an economic fact that right now you cannot produce a North Carolina wine as inexpensively as wines made in other regions. No winery can sell at a loss. At my grandfather's old winery, they can produce wines from New York grapes for half the cost of grapes from North Carolina. At Biltmore Winery, despite the cost of shipping, the use of California grapes still makes it more competitive.

According to Geise, "N.C. growers will find a way to be more cost effective. It took the Australians about 40 years to become a dominant player in the global wine market, and that is with substantial governmental support in both research and marketing."

It is not hard to find success in the industry. A few years ago, you could not find a

North Carolina wine in the grocery store, and now there are entire sections dedicated to wines from this state.

There are incredible new developments in education, research and marketing thanks to the efforts of Surry Community College, N.C. State University and Appalachian State University. Laurel Gray Vineyards will break ground on a new winery facility this spring. Raffaldini Vineyards is breaking ground on a 7,000-square-foot state-of-the-art tasting room. Biltmore Winery, the most visited winery in America, continues its expansion into new markets across the nation. The most profitable part of the Biltmore Estate is now its winery. The N.C. Grape Council estimates that vineyards and wineries in North Carolina have an economic impact of \$79 million.

It is a positive thing that North Carolina wine growers and wineries are carrying on the tradition and values of the small family farm. Their efforts supplement family income and help build stable, sustainable communities, especially in light of so many recent layoffs in textiles, furniture and other industries. It is easy for us all to support the state's fastest growing industry. Visit the wineries. Try their wines. Buy the North Carolina wines you like. I believe that, given enough time, North Carolina can return to the status it held before prohibition as one of the top producers of grapes and wine in the country. I'll drink to that.

■ Pierre D. Dalmás is a student of viticulture and enology at Surry Community College and lives in Dobson.

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WSJ 10-7-06

Five by five well alive no vampires in sight

By Pierre D. Dalmas
GUEST COLUMNIST

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JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

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Five by five, well, alive, no vampires in sight

From Sandy Allen of Sarasota, Fla.: "Where does the term '5x5' come from, as in: 'How are you doing?' 'Oh, I'm 5x5.'"

In writing, the phrase is usually rendered "five by five." In radio communications, one of the fives is a rating of the strength of a signal.



situations. But in writing, I've seen that the word *that* is sometimes not used.

That can be left out of short, simple sentences

more complex sentences, *that* can be desirable and sometimes essential.

Allen sent these comments about being and talking Southern: "Many people, especially from the South, are afraid that people will judge them based on how they talk. I

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ter opened here in August, expanding services in Yadkin and Surry counties for patients needing life skills training and an understanding ear.

Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services of Yadkin County is currently serving 12 clients at its Yadkin Valley Clubhouse on North State Street. Agency officials hope to double that number.

It is an expansion of existing psychosocial rehabilitation programs operated in

treatment group based in Raleigh.

MHANC operates 19 such PSR centers across the state and contracts with Crossroads Behavioral Healthcare, which manages state dollars for mental health services in Surry, Yadkin and Iredell counties.

People in northern Yadkin had previously traveled to Mount Airy for the same program, the organization's re-

See Center, Page 3

Small vineyards joining forces

By **BROOK R. CORWIN**
Staff Reporter

HAMPTONVILLE — Between erratic weather patterns, relentless pests and a changing sales market, the owners of nearby Laurel Gray Vineyards and the new Shadow Springs Vineyard have plenty of dicey variables in their pursuit of making quality wine.

But next year, they can cross a big one off the list.

The two husband-and-wife teams are jointly financing and managing a new winery scheduled to open in time for the 2007 harvest season. The venture guarantees that production increases at other wineries won't limit what Laurel Gray and Shadow Springs can do with their fruit, and it may very well offer the same freedom for other small vineyard owners in

See Vineyards, back page

Yadkin Ripple 10-12-06

Vineyards

Continued from front page

the area.

"You have total control and direction," Kim Myers, co-owner of Laurel Gray, said Tuesday of owning a winery. "You're not worrying, 'are they going to have room for me.'"

Myers and her husband Benny, along with Shadow Springs co-owners Chuck and Jamey Johnson, are partners in the new Yadkin Valley Wine Company.

The new venture will own the winery's equipment, hire employees and contract with growers, including Laurel Gray and Shadow Springs. Laurel Gray will own the property, as the winery is being constructed in between its two vineyards.

The 9,100-square-foot building will match the red and white barn design of Laurel Gray's tasting room. Plans are to landscape the site to put in space for picnic tables and special events.

The building's exterior will be constructed offsite and delivered in December. During the spring, interior work will install a state-of-the-art lab and grape crushing equipment along with space for offices and storage

of aging wines. Come August, the entire facility should be ready to handle the grapes being harvested that fall.

The 2007 harvest will mark a turning point for both vineyards. New vines planted earlier this year at Laurel Gray should start bearing some fruit, effectively doubling the size of the vineyards.

Shadow Springs will conduct its very first harvest from vines planted last year and this year. It will bottle its first wines at the new winery and plans to open a tasting room to sell them in 2008.

Knowing that 2007 would be a crucial year, the couples first started talking about constructing their own winery about 18 months ago. The partnership originally included another established vineyard, but in March all parties realized that their cumulative production needs were too great for just one winery to handle.

Capacity is a crucial component to the project, Chuck Johnson said, since the local wine industry is gaining notice and both vineyards don't want to limit themselves for future growth.

"We wanted to build extra capacity just in case," Chuck Johnson said Tuesday. "We

don't know yet how much we can sell."

When the winery opens next year, only half of its 8-10,000 case capacity will be needed for Laurel Gray and Shadow Springs wines. The project's partners are looking to contract with the right mix of small vineyard owners needing a winery for their grapes.

"We've been on that side of things," Myers said of Laurel Gray. "We know how difficult it is to find the right relationship with a winery. We know how difficult it is to move."

Since Laurel Gray planted its first vines in 2001, it has had wines made at Hanover Park Vineyard, RagApple Lassie Vineyards and Raffaldini Vineyards. Each time, Myers said, a shortage in capacity has forced Laurel Gray to look elsewhere.

"We've built a good customer base," she said. "We've grown to the point where it was time to do our own thing."

The winery will arrive at a time when more and more local vineyards are in search of a destination for their grapes. The recent demise of the Old North State cooperative in Mount Airy put dozens of small growers looking. At the same time, many new growers are test-

ing the waters by planting vines but aren't ready to make the sizable capital investment of a winery until they know they can sell their finished product.

Part of the reason for having a separate management entity for the winery is so wines made there using grapes from outside growers aren't mistaken for Laurel Gray or Shadow Springs vintages.

"It makes it less confusing and allows vineyards to retain ownership of their wines," Myers said.

By contracting the winery's services to other local growers, Johnson hopes to give back some of the help and guidance he received when he purchased his vineyard just a couple of years ago.

A retired executive in the transportation industry, Johnson and his family moved to eastern Davie County from Nebraska about three years ago. He and his wife scouted about 25 different vineyard sites all over the Yadkin Valley appellation before settling on their Crater Road location for its soil characteristics, natural beauty and nearby access to U.S. 421.

Throughout the process, the Myerses and other growers offered their advice and

support, surprising the veteran of corporate competition.

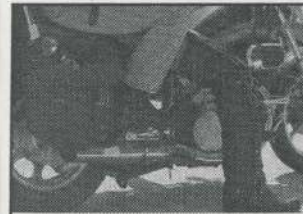
"When we came here, everyone was very open and helpful," Johnson said. "I was shocked, but now I understand it. The more wineries are here, the more ability everyone has to draw visitors to this area."

Shadow Springs will become the fifth member of the Vineyards of Swan Creek, a group of nearby operations that do joint promotional work. Just as the new winery is scheduled to open, those five vineyards are hoping to have the Hamptonville and southeast Wilkes area designated as

its own appellation. The designation is made to regions that have unique soil and/or weather conditions, making it easier for growers to distinguish their product to consumers.

It's just another development making the future wide open for Laurel Gray and Shadow Springs. The vineyard owners are glad they'll soon have the tools to move their operations in almost any direction.

"There's a lot of investment in those vines, and it's a big loss when you don't have anywhere to go with your grapes," Johnson said. "This way we can control our own destiny."



Benefit Motorcycle Ride

For the Buelin Family
Lola, Rex & Carolyn Buelin (Crabb)

Saturday, October 14th
\$15 Single Rider/\$20 Double

Registration Time: 11 am-12 pm — Ride Leaves at 12 pm

From the Lone Hickory Fire Department

After the ride you will be served a dinner of your choice:

1/2 Chicken Plate or Poor Man's Supper Plate

All proceeds will go to help the Buelin Family with medical expenses due to cancer.



Wendy Byerly Wood/The Mount Airy News

Vance Marion, vineyard manager at SCC Vineyards, sprays pesticides on grape-filled vines covered with netting Friday afternoon. Marion has to suit up complete with head gear and oxygen to avoid inhaling the fungicide that will keep the vines from rotting and the insecticide that will keep the bees and flies away until time for the grapes to be picked.

Grape harvesting begins at SCC

By WENDY BYERLY WOOD

Staff Writer

DOBSON — Harvesting for some of the area's grapes is already done, but, for others, they hang on the vines at local vineyards trying to avoid rot and insect attacks until being picked within the next few weeks.

Vance Marion, vineyard manager at Surry Community College Vineyards, which are tucked away behind Surry Central High School's ball fields and the college's automotive areas, said that recent rains shouldn't bother the crop too much since the water didn't pile up like it was originally expected to do.

"I think down east they got a few inches," Marion said Friday as he prepared to spray unpicked grapes with fungicide, which keeps the vines from rotting, and insecticide, to keep the bees and flies off.

Most of the vines that still hold ripening grapes are covered in white netting as an added layer of protection.

"We picked chardonnay (last) Wednesday, and it was real pretty and premier. Across the board, all the grapes are looking good," Marion said. "We are going to pick again next Wednesday." Three varieties will be picked, two of which are chardonnay and tempranillo.

"We've got 15 varieties on 3.25 acres," he said, "so we pick more than one at a time."

Marion is fairly new to the wine industry, as are many in the area. After spending 26 years at Proctor-Silex, he lost his job

See SCC, page 2A



Wendy Byerly Wood/The Mount Airy News

A sign warns visitors to the SCC Vineyards that pesticides cover grape-filled vines Friday afternoon. The fungicide that will keep the vines from rotting and the insecticide will keep bees and flies away.

"We picked chardonnay (last) Wednesday, and it was real pretty and premier. Across the board, all the grapes are looking good ... We've got 15 varieties on 3.25 acres, so we pick more than one at a time."

Vance Marion,
vineyard manager

OPEN DOOR

A Publication of the North Carolina Community College System

Fall 2006 • Vol. 9, No. 3

Golden LEAF helps community colleges

By Peggy Beach, System Office, Public Affairs

Golden LEAF has certainly proven golden for North Carolina's community colleges.

The Golden LEAF Foundation, a nonprofit corporation created in 1999, manages one-half of the funds coming to North Carolina from the master settlement agreement with cigarette manufacturers. The foundation is helping the long-term economic climate of the state through grants and investments in education. In a 2005 report to the State Board of Community Colleges, H. Martin Lancaster, president, North Carolina Community College System, praised Golden LEAF for its "generous support" to the System Office and to the community colleges. Since its first grant announcements in 2000, Golden LEAF



Students in the landscape gardening program at Johnston Community College work in the college's garden. The college was able to purchase better soil for the students to work in because of a Golden LEAF grant.

has invested almost \$26 million in about 50 projects directly related to community colleges. About 30 of North

Carolina's 58 colleges and the System Office have received the funds or are major partners in large joint projects. While some have statewide impact, many are concentrated in the east, where tobacco has been the main crop, and in the poorest counties in the west. By far the largest Golden LEAF investments in community colleges are the \$8.7 million given to begin Bionetwork and \$12 million for BTEC.

Bionetwork is a statewide initiative that connects community colleges across North Carolina, providing specialized training, curricula and equipment, to develop a world-class workforce for the biotechnology,

pharmaceutical and life sciences industries. BTEC is the Biomufacturing Training and

See LEAF page 8

Duke Energy grants "power" manufacturing training

Two years ago, Duke Energy began its Community and Technical College Grant Program with plans to fund up to \$3 million a year in grants in North Carolina through June 30, 2009. At that time, H. Martin Lancaster, President of the North Carolina Community System, said, "Duke Power's commitment to North Carolina's community colleges is truly historic. Certainly this new program represents one of the largest investments in our statewide system by a company, and the potential impact on our state's economy is tremendous." That potential has already turned into results, more quickly and on a much bigger scale than the program's founders had anticipated. To date, 13

community colleges have received more than \$2.6 million in grants for 16 projects. A conservative estimate of the number of manufacturing jobs created by employers participating in the funded projects is more than a thousand, with at least 2800 existing jobs retained thanks to improved productivity. Examples of funded programs include integrated systems technology training at **Central Piedmont Community College**; BioWorks training for Gaia Herbs at **Blue Ridge Community College**; and an ambitious job retention program for electronics assembler Solectron run by **Vance-Granville Community College**. One of the biggest success stories comes from one of the system's smallest colleges, **Tri-**

County Community College. Under the leadership of Norman Oglesby, college president and Terrie M. Kelly, vice president for institutional advancement, Tri-County worked with industry to identify machinists' training as a critical need for the region's manufacturers. Oglesby and Kelly pursued a Duke grant to help support training for a "machined product cluster" in its service area. In the first two years of the program, the training has served Sioux Tools (a division of Snap-On Tools), Team Industries, and Moog Components Group. Companies in the machining cluster have invested in the program. Student employees train in each plant,

See Duke page 9

Education Center, located on the Centennial Campus of North Carolina State University. The biotech industry is growing by an estimated 3,000 jobs annually, of which 2,000 require education and training at the community college level.

"Many of these people training for the biotech industry are in mostly rural parts of North Carolina and have depended on tobacco or the tobacco industry for their livelihood," said Lancaster. "They are in critical need of new opportunities... We thank Golden LEAF for having the confidence in us to make an investment whose benefits will be felt all over North Carolina."

Golden LEAF has proven to be a boon for other community college projects as well.

One of the foundation's earliest grants was to **Surry Community College** for \$130,000 for programs in viticulture and enology, the essentials in wine-making. Now a few years later, the region that includes Yadkin, Surry, Forsyth, Davie and Davidson counties is becoming nationally known as the Yadkin Valley Wine Region. The region has 20 wineries that employ hundreds of people and draw thousands of tourists each year.

Johnston Community College received a \$75,000 grant and a \$100,000 grant to help develop its landscape gardening program. Lin Frye, director of the landscape design program and the arboretum at Johnston Community College, said the grants enabled the program to help more students.

"Oh, it's a godsend," she said. "Before we had six or eight students and now we have 29 students."

Frye said the college was able to purchase updated equipment and materials for the program. "The soil we had at the arboretum was terrible," she said. "With the grants from Golden LEAF, we were able to get consumable materials for grading and soil so that the students could plant crops. We were also able to repair the drainage at the arboretum."

As part of the grant, students in the program have also had the opportunity to meet with the "Green Industry Panel," a group of industry representatives from all over North Carolina. "The panel members talk to the students about trends in the industry," said Frye. "Students have learned what their degree can actually be used for

and how their interests can apply." Frye said that students who work in the "green industry" can work at a number of places including golf courses, garden centers, zoos, greenhouses, nurseries, malls, flower shops, and arboretums. Workers in the "green industry" can also be sod producers, estate gardeners, fruit and vegetable growers and groundskeepers.

College of The Albemarle received \$300,000 from Golden LEAF for a boat building professional training program. "We have built a training facility and we are holding training classes," said Lynne Bunch, president of the college.

Bunch said that some of the area boat builders have laid off employees in the last year. However, the college is working with the Northeastern North Carolina Regional Economic Development Commission to attract more boat builders to the region. "Boat building is an important industry here, and our training facility will help bring more builders here," she said. The college's service area includes the counties of Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Pasquotank, and Perquimans.

Rob Holsten, dean of continuing education and sustainability at **Wilson Technical Community College**, said a \$210,000 grant from Golden LEAF is enabling the college to train workers at the Bridgestone Firestone in Wilson County.

"The company has invested in new computerized equipment," said Holsten. "All the employees both old and new have to be trained on the new equipment." Holsten said that eventually 1,000 employees will receive safety training as well as computer training.

"The program is working very well so far," he said. "We have enjoyed working with Golden LEAF and with Bridgestone Firestone."

Western Piedmont Community College received a Golden LEAF grant of \$157,500 to develop an injection molding training program for Leviton Manufacturing, a plastics company with a plant in Burke County.

"Leviton makes all kinds of plastic items including wall switches and receptacles," said Melissa Garrett, director of grant development at the college and administrator of the grant.

Garrett said that the bulk of the grant went to purchase equipment including a water cooler and tower. "We have started teaching classes in plastics safety and we are developing other classes as well," she said. Students in the classes include new and existing

employees of Leviton, said Garrett.

Golden LEAF grants have also spurred private and other public organizations to fund many worthwhile projects at their local community colleges.

Claudia Ward-Eller, director of the Homegrown Teaching Scholars program at **Catawba Valley Community College**, said that a number of organizations came forth to sponsor the program after the Golden LEAF planning and implementation grants ran out. "The Unifour Foundation and several of the local Rotary Clubs are big supporters of us," she said. "Also all three school systems in Catawba County and the Alexander County Schools are on board."

Students in the program, who are residents of either Catawba or Alexander County, study at Catawba Valley and then finish their four-year teaching degree at a four-year institution of their choice. Ward-Eller said the program has been very successful and now has 65 candidates. The first students will graduate in May 2007 and begin their teaching careers in either Catawba or Alexander County. "They have to teach four out of the first seven years of their career in one of the counties," said Ward-Eller. The students, whose average age is 35, have a grade point average of 3.48. "They are only required to have a 2.75, so we have very good students in this program," she said.

Ward-Eller is effusive in her praise for Golden LEAF. "Without Golden LEAF, this program could not have gotten off the ground," she said.

Students at many community colleges have been able to continue their education because of Golden LEAF scholarships, administered by the System Office.

Karen Yerby, associate director of student development services, System Office, said that each community college gets money for 15 students. "The colleges select the students," she said. "Curriculum students can get up to \$750 and continuing education students can get \$250."

Yerby said that the money is unrestricted. Students use it for books, gas, uniforms, and more. "I get cards from students all the time who say that they were able to stay in school because of the money," she said. "It is a good program. We are grateful to Golden LEAF. This scholarship money has been a lifesaver for many of our students."

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THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

SERVING THE GREATER TRIAD

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 47

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JULY 28 - AUGUST 3, 2006 \$1.50

Liberty thinking big at new

By **MATT HARRINGTON**

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

GREENSBORO — Liberty Property Trust, known in the Triad for building and managing midsize warehouses, is planning to become a player in the big-building industrial market with the development of a new park called Bull Ridge Industrial Park.

The commercial developer and publicly

traded real estate investment trust has purchased 54 acres off Pleasant Ridge Road in Greensboro with plans to build two industrial warehouses totaling 340,000 square feet each.

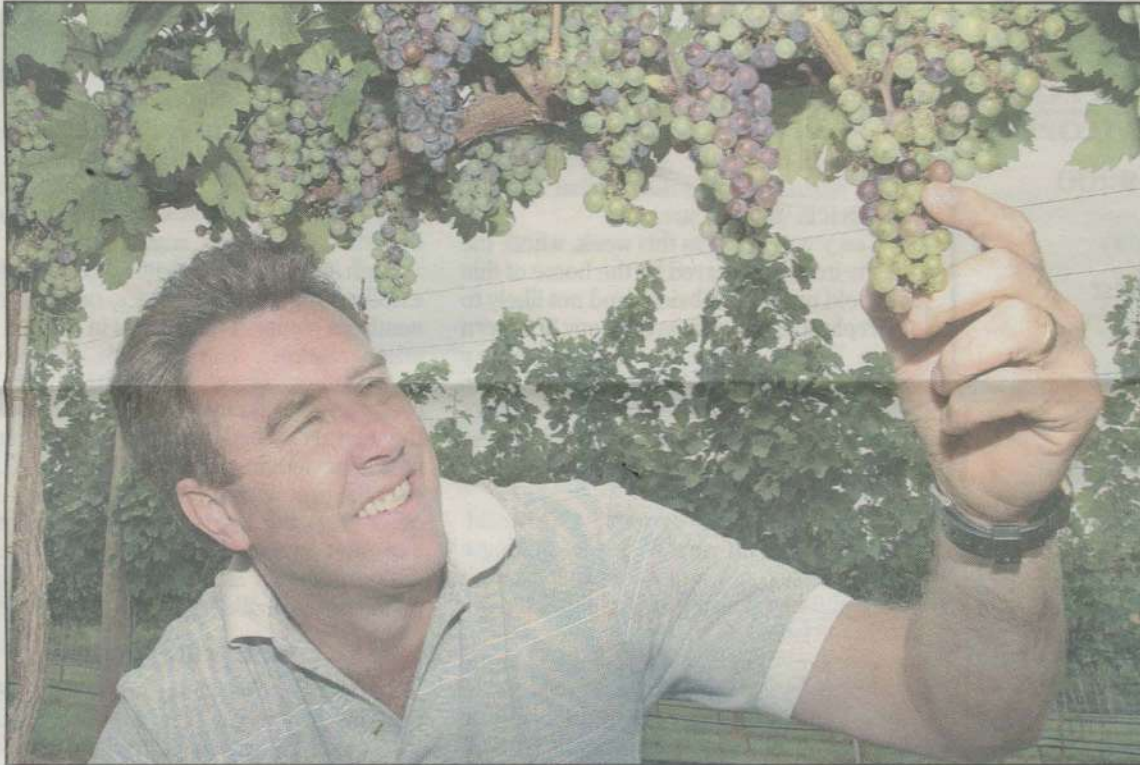
Based on construction-cost estimates of \$40 per square foot for warehouse space, the two buildings together would cost \$27.2 million, not including the purchase price of

the land or other

The decision comes as broker larger spaces has few years with the Winston-Salem air-cargo sorting

F

Growing up



JULIE KNIGHT/THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Mark Friszolowski, winemaker and general manager at Childress Vineyards in Lexington, is pleased with how the grapes are coming along this year. Over time, the state's reputation for wine has ripened.

N.C. wine industry showing signs of maturity

By **MICHELLE CATER RASH**

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Nearly a decade after the re-birth of the North Carolina wine industry began, there are signs that it may be starting to move past its infancy.

One appellation, or nationally-designated wine-growing region, has already been formed in the state. Two more are in the appli-

cation process.

And the state is starting to see an increase in the number of custom-crush facilities, or businesses that take grapes grown elsewhere and turn them into wine.

Perhaps most importantly, many of the early wineries are starting to see their vines become more mature and estab-

lished, helping to guarantee a consistently high quality in the wine produced from those grapes.

A vine must be between three and five years old before it produces fruit of a high enough quality to be turned into wine and several more years before

PLEASE SEE VINEYARDS, PAGE 35

FROM THE FRONT

VINEYARDS: *The North Carolina wine industry ranked as the 10th most productive in the U.S. last year***From page 1**

the grapes produce consistently good wine.

While it's taken many other wine regions across the nation 30 years or more to be truly established and gain a reputation, experts say North Carolina is well on its way, especially with the growth the industry has seen in the last few years.

A century ago, North Carolina produced more wine than any other state in the nation. But Prohibition killed the industry, with few wineries opening following its repeal. The wine industry began to re-emerge about 10 years ago, but has only begun to flourish within the last few years.

In mid-2003, North Carolina had 27 wineries. The state now has 56, with as many as five more expected to open by year's end, said Margo Knight, the head of the N.C. Wine and Grape Council. In the 12-county Triad, there are 22 wineries, including four in Alamance County, two in Guilford and one Forsyth. Three years ago, there were only eight. The largest and most successful by far are Shelton Vineyards in Surry County and Childress Vineyards in Davidson County, both of which sell their wines beyond

North Carolina.

Aided by such growth and production, the state last year ranked 10th nationwide in the amount of wine produced, generating more than 600,000 gallons with an estimated value of \$34 million.

One of the most telling signs the area is maturing, Knight says, is North Carolina's inclusion a few weeks in a *USA Today* story on four of the nation's top emerging wine areas.

"National press like that didn't happen four or five years ago," she said. "People didn't recognize what was going on here."

Signature wine

While the industry is showing steady progress, insiders agree there is a long way to go. Perhaps the next big step is for the state to develop a signature wine or two to help boost its reputation.

"Every distinct wine region in the world has a type of grape and a type of wine they are known for," said Patricia McRitchie, a wine consultant based in Elkin.

Many agree the muscadine, a grape that grows naturally in eastern North Carolina — and hardly anywhere else — would be a great choice for North Carolina's signature wine because it is unique

to the state.

Because of the state's diverse climate, however, muscadines do not grow as well in the western part of the state so another signature wine may emerge for that part of the state.

Some, however, think it's too soon for the state to narrow its options to just a few kinds of grapes. They say customers will ultimately decide which wine they most enjoy.

"What we need to do is to develop a reputation for overall good wine and then see what develops," said Mark Friszolowski, the wine maker at Childress Vineyards in Lexington and the president of the N.C. Winegrower's Association. "It's taken Burgandy (a famous wine region in France) hundreds of years to figure out that pinot noir was the right grape for them."

More research

To help North Carolina find the right grape a bit sooner than Burgandy did, several North Carolina colleges and universities are investing in grape and wine research.

Surry Community College has had a viticulture and enology program for several years now to help train people to grow grapes and make wine.

But both Appalachian State University and N.C. State University have recently implemented wine and grape research programs.

N.C. State has added two doctorate-level extension agents to focus full-time on wine and grape-growing research throughout the state. One agent will focus primarily on the muscadine; the other agent will deal primarily with vinifera grapes, or grapes like chardonnay and pinot noir.

Appalachian State's Enology Group has received \$1.3 million in grants from the Golden Leaf Foundation and the Small Business Administration to fund the creation of both a mobile and a fixed lab to study the relationship between the grapes, the climate and the quality of the wine produced.

Grant Holder, director of the Appalachian State program, said the hope is that the research at both universities will help growers and wine producers better select which grapes are most suitable for the various climates of North Carolina. It should also help reduce some trial and error among grape growers and wine makers as the industry develops.

Reach **MICHELLE CATER RASH** at (336) 370-2918 or mrash@bizjournals.com.

Friday, July 14, 2006

Flowers need the right vase

Here's how to pick, choose, 6D



Destinations & Diversions

grilled chicken and grilled vegetables for dinner: \$35

(no grilled anything on the dessert menu: priceless)



there are some things money can't buy. for everything else there's MasterCard.

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By Mike Wyatt, The Greenbrier

Cold war digs: The massive structure 250 miles from Washington, D.C., was built to shelter Congress.

TRAVEL

Bunker mentality returns to The Greenbrier resort

One of West Virginia's most popular attractions, the secret bunker underneath The Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., reopens for guest tours Monday after a two-year renovation. Designed to house Congress in case of nuclear attack, the massive underground structure includes 18 dormitories intended to accommodate 1,100 people, a self-contained power plant, television production area, audio-recording booths and medical facilities. Built from 1958 to 1961 — an expansion of the resort's meeting facilities was the cover story — it remained a secret for more than 30 years, only to be exposed by *The Washington Post* in 1992.

Tours will be limited to guests of the resort until Aug. 20, when public tours resume (on Sundays and Wednesdays). Information: 800-624-6070; greenbrier.com.

— Gene Sloan



www.livingstones.fr

They rock: Comfy Livingstones look like oversized pebbles. Retail price: from \$73 to \$6,166.

AT HOME

Sitting between a rock and a soft place

When it comes to finding decorating inspiration, designers have left no stone unturned. Really. Witness Livingstones, eco-styled and (eco-friendly) versions of the beanbag that bring the outdoors in. Wool and polysilicone fiber are transformed into pebbles and boulders, minus the hardness and rough edges. The resulting rocks, which made their U.S. premiere at the recent International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York and arrive in stores later this month, provide "modular, practical and poetic" floor seating, according to the publicity material. They range from the size of a throw pillow to that of a sofa (\$73-\$6,166).

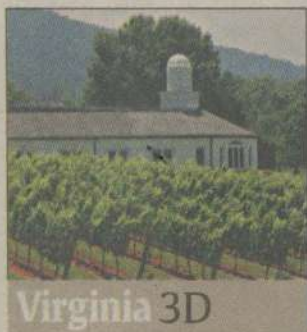
Those who lounge on Livingstones "remember the view they have at the beach," says their French creator, Stephanie Marin, a clothing designer whose palette tends toward gray. The Livingstone experience is meant to be whimsical, emotional, cozy — "very surreal."

— Olivia Barker

BEST BARGAIN WINES

America's new wave of wine lovers no longer trek just to the West Coast to vacation in the vineyards. Nestled among the Appalachian foothills, the desert mesas west of the Rockies and the Great Lakes area are wine communities that showcase the bounty and hospitality of the regions. USA TODAY's **Jerry Shriver** visits five states where well-made wines, unpretentious tasting rooms and gorgeous scenery draw thousands of tourists.

Tucked-away Wine getaways



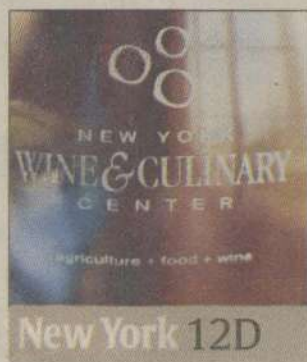
Virginia 3D



N. Carolina 9D



Colorado 9D



New York 12D



By Eileen Blass, USA TODAY

Vineyards, wineries are pouring it on

By Jerry Shriver USA TODAY

Raise a full glass this weekend to toast the 40th birthday of Robert Mondavi's landmark winery in the Napa Valley, where the founder has preached the gospel of American winemaking and California wine-country tourism to a once-skeptical world.

But save a few cheers for the folks in the rest of the

nation who have adapted the seeds of Mondavi's vision and sown them deep and wide in their own backyard. In a majority of states nationwide, entrepreneurs are planting vineyards, building wineries and opening tourist-friendly tasting rooms at a pace that's unprecedented since the end of Prohibition. As a result, they're ushering in a new era of grass-roots wine appreciation that finally is erasing the stigmas of mystery and elitism.

Cover story

In places where the winery wave is strongest, it's aiding sagging local economies, spurring leisure travel and expanding the scope of America's palate. (Haven't tried a Norton from Missouri, a North Carolina Viognier or an Ohio Riesling?)

A taste in Ohio: Debbie Loescher, 40, of Canton enjoys samples at Ferrante Winery & Ristorante in Harpersfield Township.

Please see COVER STORY next page ▶

Cover story 5 wine getaways

North Carolina

In NASCAR country, winemaking puts the pedal to the metal



Photos by Michael A. Schwarz, USA TODAY

A new course: Richard Childress autographs wine in barrel room at winery bearing his name.

By Jerry Shriver
USA TODAY

LEXINGTON — North Carolina's wine revival was puttering along nicely when Richard Childress arrived on the scene a few years ago. And as befits a NASCAR mogul, he has sent the movement into overdrive.

After earning a fortune as a stock-car driver and racing team owner, Childress decided to indulge another passion by founding a winery and 72-acre vineyard estate on the edge of the Yadkin Valley. The area in the Appalachian foothills had emerged as a focal point of the state's reinvigorated wine industry, which has seen the number of wineries more than double this decade to about 55. Sixteen operate in the valley.

"I looked at some wineries in California and the Finger Lakes area (of New York), then I said, 'Why not North Carolina?'" says Childress, who was born in nearby Winston-Salem. "It has lost its No. 1 cash crop of tobacco, we can play a role in helping the economy, and it's great to be able to walk through vineyards close to my race shop."

When he opened the doors to his 35,000-square-foot, \$8 million Richard Childress Vineyards complex in fall 2004, it became a mecca for NASCAR fans, for wine fans and for a growing number of people who reside in both camps. The luxurious Tuscan-style hospitality center drew an estimated 50,000 visitors last year. That number likely will swell when a hotel/shopping complex near the winery is completed and the \$107 million NASCAR Hall of Fame opens in Charlotte in 2009.

Already the wines are roaring out the door. Winemaker Mark Friszolowski produced about 15,000 cases for the inaugural vintage and nearly doubled that amount for 2005. Chardonnay is the most-planted grape variety, but Viognier and Pinot Gris have won the most critical acclaim. "They're the natural grapes to grow in this climate," he says.

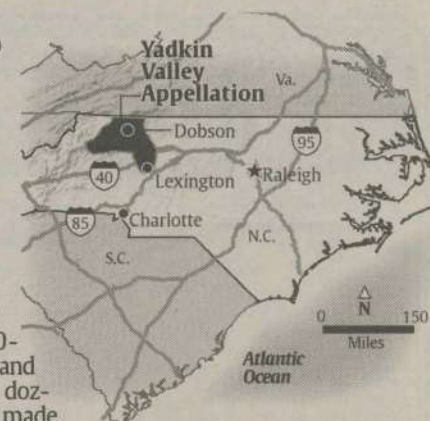
Syrah and Cabernet Franc also show promise, he says.

While Childress' operation dominates the southern end of the Yadkin Valley, another showcase, Shelton Vineyards of Dobson, has anchored the north since brothers Charlie and Ed Shelton founded it in 1999. The 383-acre property is the largest winery estate in North Carolina and features 200 acres of vineyards, a 33,000-square-foot winery, a restaurant and a gleaming tasting room serving a dozen types of wines, most of them made from classic European varieties.

More typical are smaller, more rustic operations such as Westbend in Lewisville, which pioneered winemaking in the valley in 1990. RayLen is built on a converted dairy farm near Mocksville, and 4-year-old RagApple Lassie, which is named after a calf that won the North Carolina State Fair, draws about 500 visitors a week during the summer to a converted tobacco farm near Boonville. All feature casual tasting rooms, a growing number of medal-winning bottles on the shelves and deep connections to local agriculture.

"With the demise of tobacco, going to grapes was our plan B," says Lenna Hobson, RagApple co-owner with her husband, Frank. His family has owned the property for 99 years, and "we had to be profitable so the land wouldn't become a housing tract, so this is not a hobby. It's meat and potatoes."

Two other hugely popular wineries also are helping the state slowly regain its stature as a top national producer, which it held until Prohibition. The winery at the famous Biltmore Estate in Asheville draws more than 600,000 visitors a year and makes more than 20 varieties (though some grapes come from out of state). Duplin in Rose Hill bills itself as the largest Muscadine grape winery in the world, producing more than 175,000 cases a year.



If you go ...

State wineries: About 55, up from 21 in 2000

Acres of vines: About 1,500

Popular grapes: Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chambourcin, Chardonnay, Merlot, Muscadine, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Scuppernon, Seyval Blanc, Vidal Blanc, Viognier. Also fruit wines and ports.

Key area to visit: Yadkin Valley American Viticultural Area, west of Winston-Salem

Vintage lodging: Rockford Inn B&B, Dobson; 800-561-6652; rockfordbedandbreakfast.com

Other notable areas: Currituck County, Outer Banks; mountain region, near Asheville and Hickory; sand hill/coastal region, north of Wilmington

Fun festival: Great Grapes, Oct. 7, Charlotte; uncorkthefun.com

Information: www.ncwine.org

What to drink where:

Wine	Price	Winery
2005 Barrel Select Viognier	\$15	Childress Vineyards Lexington
2004 Yadkin Gold	\$13	RayLen Vineyards Mocksville
2004 Estate Grown Syrah	\$16	RagApple Lassie Vineyard Boonville
2005 Sauvignon Blanc	\$12	Shelton Vineyards Dobson
2003 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay	\$16	Westbend Vineyards Lewisville



Hospitality center: Childress opened the Tuscan-style facility in 2004.

The Mount Airy News

Community Spotlight: Dobson



Black Wolf was site of county's first vineyard

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — When Dana Theis started looking for retirement property in North Carolina in 1991, he never expected to be operating a vineyard, yet just nine years later he was creating his own label at the county's first wine vineyard just north of Dobson.

Black Wolf Vineyard was already home to some 3,000 grape vines when Theis brought the property, but the transition to an operational winery and restaurant with wine tasting and a gift shop was a slow one.

Creating his own label was, in fact, a solution to the problem of too many grapes when he couldn't market all of his crop in 1999.

"One year Chatham Hill couldn't take all my crop," said Theis, who had gradually invested more in the vineyard with new vines and a part-time vineyard manager. "I gave them a deal that I'd give them all the grapes if they'd make the wine and give me half back with my own label. As a result, in 2000 I had all this wine in cold storage in Cary and I couldn't sell it because I did not have a winery."

From there, the plan was hatched to build a restaurant to market the wines, and later a winery so that the grapes could be processed on site.

None of that was anticipated, however, when Theis first came to North Carolina from Connecticut in 1983, transferred with his retail consultant job.

He lived first in Guilford County and then in Randolph County, where, in addition to pursuing his career, he bred wolves with huskies and sold them through "Soldier of Fortune" magazine. He said he met some very "interesting" characters during that endeavor, and also found the inspiration for the name he later gave to his vineyard.

"In early 1991, I was looking for some retirement property and saw a photo of this property," said Theis. "There was nothing here at that time except the shed you pass on your way in. There was no electricity, no water, and most of the land was leased for soybean and tobacco crops."

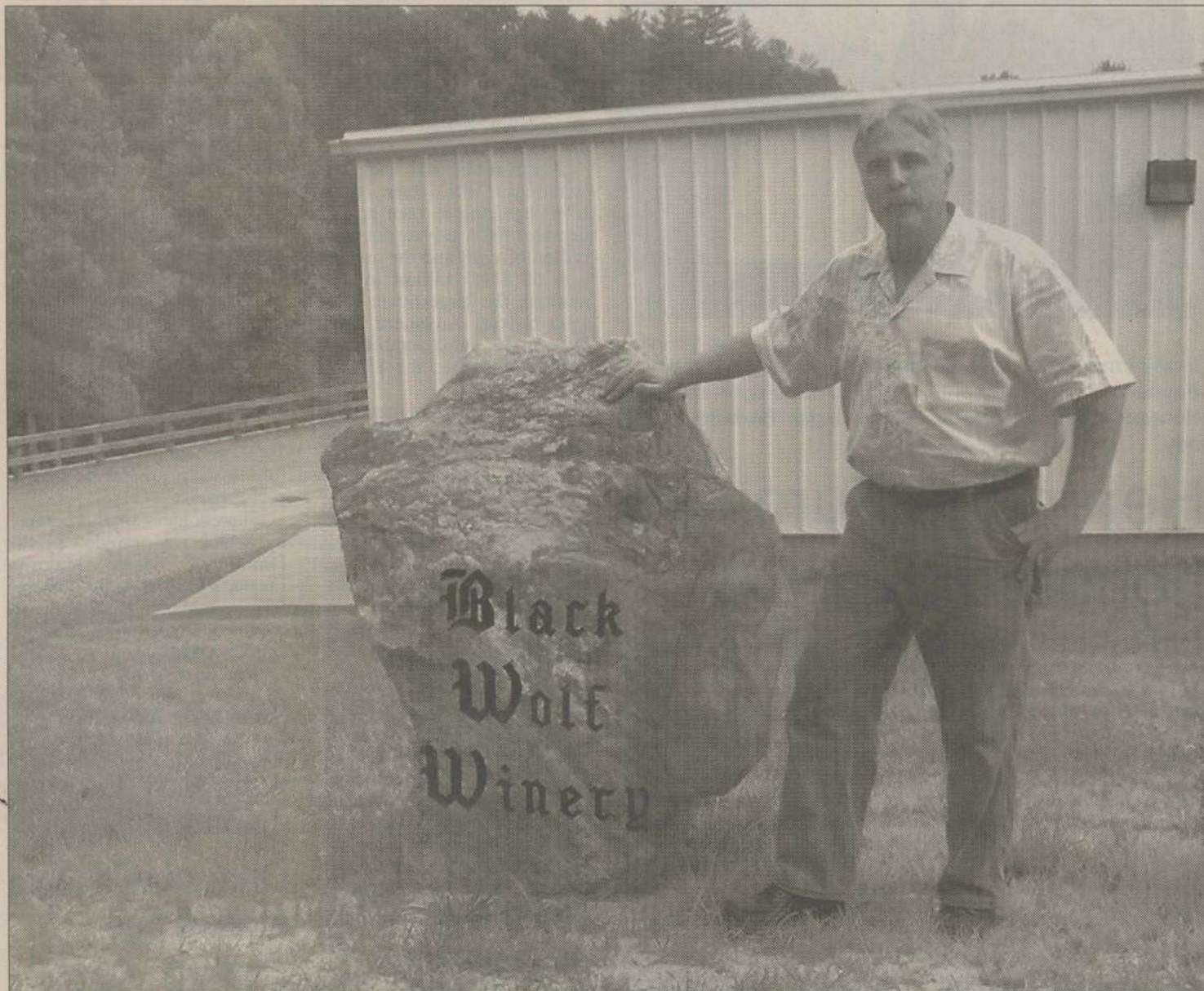
"The farm was owned by a retired dentist, Stanley Boyd, and he had planted 3,000 vines on the property of three types of grapes and used to make wine in his cellar and give it to his friends."

Theis said when he purchased the property in July, "rather than plow the vines under, I visited some other vineyards to learn a little about the operation. Dr. Boyd introduced me to Gilbert Nixon, who was a tobacco farmer that he thought could help me maintain the vines. I still lived in Randolph County and came up one or two times a month, so I hired Gilbert Nixon to take care of the vines with his farm equipment. After the first harvest in 1991, I gave some of the grapes to Boyd and sold the rest to wineries like West Bend, Biltmore and Chatham Hill."

The following year Nixon's son, Terry, joined the workforce. "He was getting out of tobacco, so I bought his equipment as well," said Theis. "I knew nothing about it, but the Nixons knew farming and how to get things done." Terry Nixon became a full-time employee and the following year his son, Jared, joined the operation.

An additional 3,000 Cabernet Sauvignon vines were added in the spring of 1992, along with a part-time vineyard manager who oversaw the operations by weekend visits.

"That worked a few years," said Theis. "We sold the harvest to various wineries each year until the year Chatham Hill



Black Wolf Vineyard owner Dana Theis poses by a marker outside the winery at the vineyard just north of Dobson off U.S. 601.

Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

couldn't take them all.

That set Theis up for the construction of his restaurant, which was complete and opened May 2, 2001, finally creating a market for his wines. "From then, I could sell them," he said. "I had a wine shop and

a restaurant.

"The restaurant was a project because we don't have the walk-in business like you'd have in a city. The local bankers were looking at it as a local project, and I never looked at it as that. I knew my customers would come from big cities. The locals come here for lunch, but the weekends are the mainstay of the business. It was hard to get established because nobody knew where we were at, so we did a lot of advertising."

He said he also learned that he needed more than a good menu to draw people in. "You can't just have good food and bring people in. I had to put in entertainment as well. I started out with Friday nights and that we went so we continued it on Saturday nights. We have live music from 7 to 10 p.m. and that brings in people from all over the state."

The name, he said, came from his experience breeding wolves. A pair of his animals, who died of old age within six months of each other, are mounted and adorn the entryway of the restaurant.

"In 2003, I decided to build a winery, but the harvest was in before it was complete, so we did a custom crush at Raffaldini Vineyard and Winery. I hired a winemaker and had her produce my wine there in our tanks in 2004. Construction was complete in 2005 in time for harvest and we had to move all our

equipment back up here and set it up."

He said last year's crop was made by his new winemaker, Joyce Rigby, who also designed the winery, and he's been very pleased with the product so far.

"At present, we wholesale the wine through Total Wine and More in most major North Carolina cities and specialty stores," he said. "Ninety percent goes through our restaurant."

In addition to the restaurant, Theis holds an annual Grape Jam Wine and Music Festival to

draw people to the vineyard. In addition to a day of live music, he offers tent camping and has some craft vendors on hand as well.

"It's like a big house party," said Theis. "People start coming on Friday and camp by the river, then we have music all day on Saturday. Even after the festival is over, we have live music in the restaurant."

This year's event will be held Sept. 16 with live music from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the Avett Brothers as the headlining band.



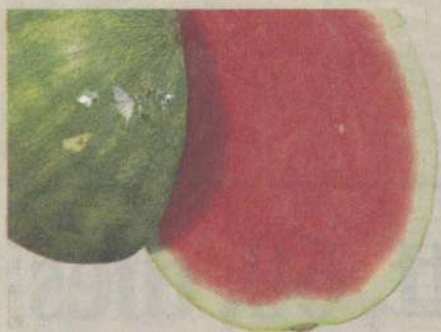
Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

The wines of Black Wolf Vineyard have amassed a healthy collection of awards and medals since Dana Theis began the label with grapes from the county's oldest wine vineyard.



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

A piece of a meteor is built into the wall at the "secret garden" at Black Wolf Vineyard. The floral garden also features a fountain and an area to sit and enjoy the outdoors.



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Co-op winery suffers hiccup

*Growers group sells
to avoid foreclosure*

By Sherry Youngquist

JOURNAL REPORTER

MOUNT AIRY

Northwest North Carolina's first winegrowers cooperative soon will be no more, organizers say, and the group's winery is being sold to avoid foreclosure.

"They ran out of working capital. The startup costs were much more than originally planned," said Mickey Cochran, a loan program officer with the N.C. Agricultural Finance Authority.

"The money just gave out. They were unable to carve out their niche. It was a notable experiment," Cochran said.

The \$1.2 million project began less than three years ago as a way to create a market for small vineyards and a tourist attraction for downtown Mount Airy.

The Old North State Winegrowers Cooperative blames a drop in grape prices and competition with wines from other states and countries.

See WINERY, Page A6

FROM PAGE ONE

WINERY

Continued From Page A1

"You can make the best product in the world, but if you can't produce the sales to generate the cash flow, it's going to be tough," said Tom Webb, a co-op grower who, along with his son — organic grower Ben Webb — and grower Mike Thomas, is in the process of buying the Old North State Winery.

The arrangement, which allows the three growers to buy the winery's building and equipment, is virtually a done deal subject to few regulatory items, Cochran said. The new owners would keep the name and pursue some of the founders' original ideas. Terms of the sale were not disclosed yesterday.

Ben Webb, who has been overseeing sales at the winery for more than a week, will take over as general manager.

About 50 growers, who have been licensed as the Old North State Winegrowers Cooperative since 2001, have lost their individual investments as part of a deal to surrender the co-op's collateral, which mostly consisted of wine.

The agricultural-finance au-

thority will contract with the winery's new owners to sell the wine and use the proceeds to retire some of the debt.

Some growers have said they lost \$30,000, others as much as \$70,000.

"I want people to know," said Mariena Shore, who owns Sanders Ridge Vineyards in Boonville with her husband, Neil, and estimates that she lost \$35,000.

"We were the largest vineyard in there," said Shore, whose vineyard is about 15 acres. "We certainly had the most to lose.... We are very bitter. Fortunately we had a very high-quality fruit, and we were able to market to other wineries in this area."

The growers formed the co-op as a market for their fruit with the idea that together they could better compete with such larger wineries as Shelton Vineyards.

The Old North State Winery opened in September 2003 and began crushing grapes that fall. Growers said they knew that their fruit became the property of the winery once they took it to the Old North State Winery. Sometimes payment for the fruit came much later, but there was always an understanding that the growers would be paid.

Gray Draughn was the win-

ery's general manager until he was fired last fall. Shore said that Draughn was very strict about the quality of grapes he would accept from growers.

"I have to question the wisdom of firing the general manager and not having someone else in place," Shore said. "Even before that happened, we knew we were at the brink of making it or not making it. We all knew we may not get our money for our fruit for a while, but we never dreamed that we would not get it all."

From the beginning, the Old North State Winegrowers Foundation Inc. owned the building at 308 N. Main St. and operated as a nonprofit educational foundation with a mission to provide training programs for growers. The Old North State Winegrowers Cooperative leased the building from the foundation.

In 2002, the USDA Rural Development awarded the groups a \$99,000 grant to use for the renovation of the building. The Appalachian Regional Commission provided a \$200,000 grant at the same time.

A \$280,000 grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation was used to buy equipment for crushing, storing and fermenting the grapes.

The winery's new owners are buying that equipment and the renovated building, Cochran said.

There has been no discussion as to whether the foundation and co-op might have to give back the grant monies.

"Granting agencies when they make grants like that they expect, of course, that the purpose of the grant will be carried out, but they recognize that there are certain risks when starting up such things," he said.

"I don't think they will have to give back the money."

The Old North State Winery's

new owners say they are ready to move on.

They see their approach as an incubator program for small-vineyard owners. The winery will still process grapes for former co-op members, and it will start a wine school and a custom-crush program.

"We have a different type of custom-crush program," Ben Webb said. "We will take grape growers and help them make the wine and take the wine and sell it. It's their product.

"You bring your grapes here, and we will show you how to do everything. We will try to make

it a four- to five-year program," he said. "A grape grower could come for several years until they feel comfortable operating their own winery."

Tom Webb said he stepped forward with the others because he felt he could put energy into it and make it work.

"This is an important building for downtown Mount Airy, and it is an important project for farmers," he said. "It's too important to this region."

■ Sherry Youngquist can be reached in Mount Airy at 336-789-9338 or at syoungquist@wsjournal.com

Dobson wineries featured in 'Our State' day trip guide

DOBSON — Two Dobson wineries, Shelton Vineyards and Black Wolf Vineyards, have been featured in the summer issue of "day trips," a side publication of Our State magazine.

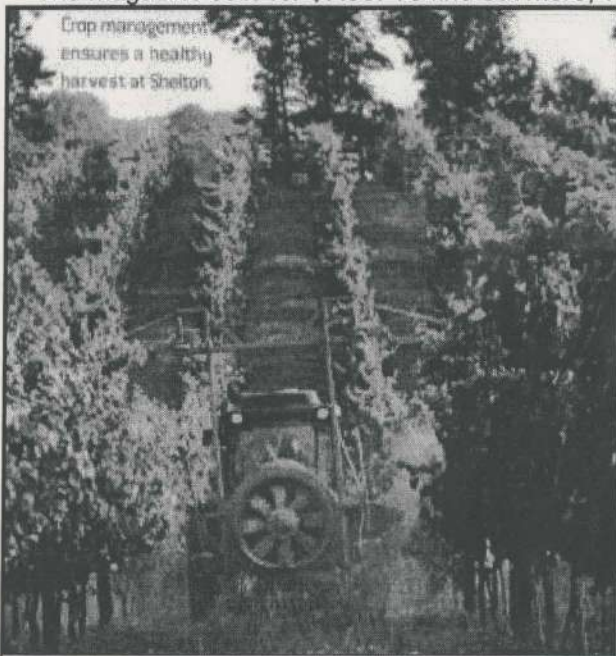
The article, which was written by Nan Chase, features several of the wineries in the Yadkin Valley including Hanover Park Vineyard in Yadkinville, RagApple Lassie Vineyards in Boonville, Raylen Vineyards in Mocksville, Westbend Vineyards in Lewisville and Windy Gap Vineyards in Ronda.

The magazine features 20 single-focused North Carolina destinations that are within a day's driving distance, with each destination being categorized as either cultural, adventurous, natural, historic or relaxing.

"The unique categorization method assists readers in planning a getaway that caters to their personalities and whims," said Elizabeth Hudson, editor of "day trips," in a press release. "We wanted to consider moods, not just geography."

The 100-page magazine was written by regular "Our State" contributors and includes special suggestions to help spice up any of the trips, including dining tips (in "What's for Lunch?" features, in which The Wolf's Lair in Dobson is included).

The magazine sells for \$7.95. To find out more, visit www.ourstate.com.



Interested in Viticulture?

By Gill Giese
Surry Community College

Wine and grape production (and consumption) is undergoing a renaissance throughout the US, and North Carolina is no exception. The state has over 1,500 acres planted in bunch grape (non-muscadine) vineyards. There are over 40 bonded wineries (up from about 25 in 1999) in the state that produced wine valued at an estimated value of \$37 million in 2004.

A single acre of winegrapes can produce as much as \$30,000 worth of wine. But, it is very unlikely that every acre will be that productive. Winegrapes do offer one alternative to help offset the state's loss of tobacco acreage and revenue. In 1999, Surry Community College established a viticulture and enology program (grape growing and wine-making) to serve the state's wine and grape industry and enhance economic opportunity for North Carolinians.

At Surry Community College, students from throughout North Carolina and surrounding states benefit from "hands-on" training, study and industry "networking" opportunities. Graduates and entrepreneurs (who take classes to gain immediately useful information) go on to own, operate and work in the state's new vineyards, wineries and related businesses; such as retail, consulting, vineyard maintenance and industry supply services.

Surry County is home to one of the largest plantings of vinifera (traditional European winegrapes) on the east coast, located within the recently des-

ignated Yadkin Valley American Viticultural Area (AVA). Initial program funding was from private sources. Additional funding came from a F.I.P.S.E. grant (Department of Education) and the Golden Leaf Foundation (2003, 2004).

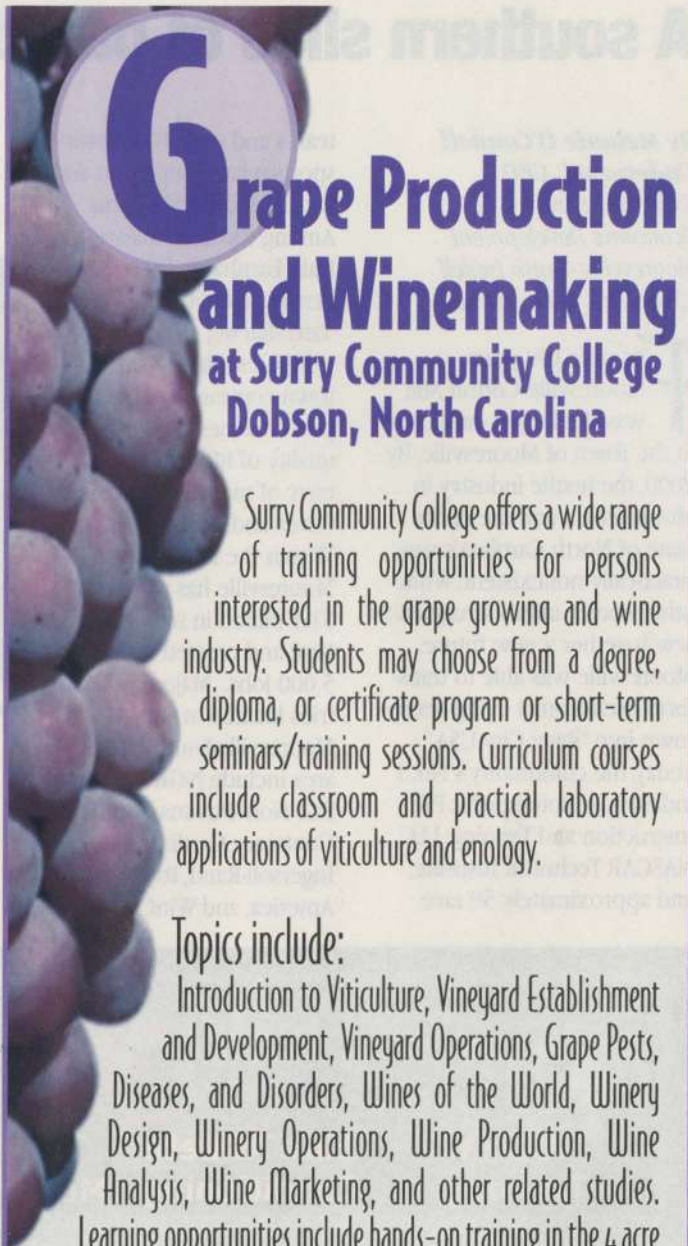
Golden Leaf funding supported a very successful internship program which allowed students to apply their new knowledge and skills while providing vineyard and winery owners with much needed skilled labor.

The school's facilities include a 4.5 acre vineyard, a bonded winery (2,500 gallon capacity), crush pad, bottling line, laboratory/classroom and barrel room for aging wine. A viticulture field lab/shop building was completed in 2004. Recently, the North Carolina Legislature appropriated funding to provide for initial planning for a state viticulture and enology center to be located on the Surry Community College campus.

Two fulltime instructors lead classes in Viticulture (Gill Giese) and Enology (Dr. Bob McRitchie). Over 500 students have been served since the program's inception and 50 students are currently enrolled. Curriculum options include: two-year degree (A.S.), a diploma or certificate. Continuing education classes include new grower orientation, production techniques and principles, and economics.

more info

336-386-3461
www.surry.edu



Grape Production and Winemaking at Surry Community College Dobson, North Carolina

Surry Community College offers a wide range of training opportunities for persons interested in the grape growing and wine industry. Students may choose from a degree, diploma, or certificate program or short-term seminars/training sessions. Curriculum courses include classroom and practical laboratory applications of viticulture and enology.

Topics include:

Introduction to Viticulture, Vineyard Establishment and Development, Vineyard Operations, Grape Pests, Diseases, and Disorders, Wines of the World, Winery Design, Winery Operations, Wine Production, Wine Analysis, Wine Marketing, and other related studies.

Learning opportunities include hands-on training in the 4 acre vineyard and bonded winery located on the campus, internships with industry, field trips, and seminars featuring industry experts. On-line classes are available.

For more information:

Viticulture: Gill Giese

gieseg@surry.edu or 336-386-3461

Enology: Dr. Bob McRitchie,

mccritchier@surry.edu or 36-386-3408

Visit our website:

<http://www.surry.edu/grapes/>

Uncorked

Volume 6

Issue 1

Spring 2006

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Meet Our Winemaker

Murphy began her career in wine over ten years ago at a small winery in the southern Willamette Valley. Hired on as crush help, she fell in love with the work despite the long hours in the cold and wet of an Oregon fall.

From those early experiences, Murphy quickly moved onward and upward. After less than a month at Hinman Vineyards, her third winery, she was promoted to Cellar Master. The next two years were spent learning to see the big picture from grape to bottle in a large facility. From there, after a brief stint in Texas, Murphy moved into the Enologist position at Clos LaChance Wines in the Central Coast appellation of California.

Murphy's next move was to take the winemaking position at Cloninger Cellars in the Salinas Valley where she produced high end pinot noir & chardonnay from the Santa Lucia Highlands. When Cloninger Cellars closed its doors in 2003, Murphy was drawn back to the Pacific Northwest. Friends had been wooing her with stories of the optimum growing con-

ditions and the explosion in the industry in Washington's eastern slopes. After a visit in May of 2003, she joined the wine-making team at Dunham Cellars in Walla Walla where she pursued her passion for bold Syrah and big Bordeaux-style blends.

Murphy's wines have received numerous awards and acclaim by top wine publications. Among her most notable awards was a top 30 ranking by the Wine Enthusiast in their top 100 wines of the year. Murphy's pioneering spirit ultimately brought her to the Yadkin Valley where she took over as winemaker of Shelton Vineyards. She has continued to produce wines of distinction while upholding the excellent tradition established at Shelton Vineyards. ☘



Shelton Vineyards New Releases

The following wines have been released since our last issue of *Uncorked*:

2005 Yadkin Valley Riesling

Clean and crisp, our Riesling displays green-apple and pear flavors. This lightly sweet wine has a bright acidity and a lingering apricot finish. Wonderful for entertaining.

2005 Yadkin Valley Sauvignon Blanc

Bright, crisp, and clean our Sauvignon Blanc has ample flavors of pineapple, melon, tropical fruit, and the subtle signature herbal flavors unique to Sauvignon Blanc.

2004 Yadkin Valley Port

This wine shows lush sweet flavors of ripe berries, chocolate, vanilla, and toffee with a hint of anise. Our port is perfect for sipping with aged cheeses, fruits or desserts.

2004 Yadkin Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

Smooth and supple with black cherry, anise, and dark chocolate notes that are sturdy through the finish. Has strong coffee undertones and balanced acidity.

2004 Yadkin Valley Merlot

Layers of blackberry jam, blueberry and vanilla flavors. Attractive floral notes with hint of spice are backed by round tannins.

2004 Yadkin Valley Chardonnay

This dry wine has complex oak character and focused citrus flavors that are rounded out with just a hint of honeydew and baked apple. Delicate shadings of butterscotch and hazelnut accent its velvety rich texture. ☘



SHELTON
Vineyards

Coming Soon: The Villages at Shelton Vineyards!

Celebrating the Wines of Yadkin Valley



Yadkinville, NC

YADKIN VALLEY

Grape
festival



SATURDAY
OCTOBER 22, 2005

DOWNTOWN
YADKINVILLE
11AM - 5PM

the
Yadkn Ripple

Second annual festival expects great time

On behalf of the Yadkin County Chamber of Commerce, let me welcome you to the second annual Yadkin Valley Grape Festival!

Our festival features the wines of Yadkin Valley, the only American Viticultural Area in North Carolina. The appellation includes all of Yadkin, Wilkes, and Surry Counties, as well as parts of Forsyth, Davie, Stokes, and Davidson Counties that share unique agricultural and geological characteristics. A "Yadkin Valley" wine label will assure a consistent quality equal to any wine region in the country.

We have 15 Yadkin Valley wineries scheduled to participate. You will have the opportunity to sample and purchase a variety of wines, both red and white, made from grapes grown in the Yadkin Valley.

Surry Community College's viticulture and enology program and the Agricultural Extension Service will have information and displays so festival-goers can learn about grape growing and wine making.

In addition to our wineries, there will be a number of select food, crafts, and art vendors, as well as live entertainment throughout the afternoon. Our schedule of performances is listed elsewhere in this program.

As more and more people recognize the impact that grape growing and wines can have on the Yadkin Valley, it is important that we support this burgeoning industry. Grape production and wine making will allow farms to remain in productive farmland, and preserve the long tradition and importance of agriculture to our region.

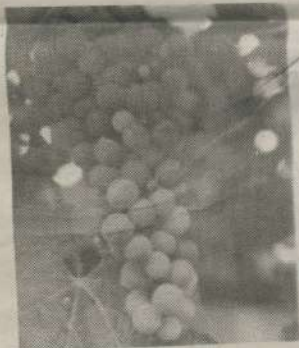
Special thanks to the Town of Yadkinville for their assistance with our festival, and our Premier Sponsor, SunTrust Bank.

Please remember to taste responsibly, and enjoy yourselves as you lift a glass in a toast to the Yadkin Valley!

*Jim Drum, Chairman
Yadkin Valley Grape
Festival Committee*

Enjoy the wines of the Yadkin Valley from:

Buck Shoals Vineyards
Chatham Hill Winery
Childress Vineyards
Flint Hill Vineyards
Hanover Park Vineyards
Laurel Gray Vineyards
Old North State Winery
RagApple Lassie Vineyards
Raylen Vineyards
Round Peak Vineyards
Shelton Vineyards
Stony Knoll Vineyards
Westbend Vineyards
Raffaldini Vineyards
Weathervane Winery



Grape Production and Winemaking at Surry Community College Lobsen, North Carolina

Surry Community College offers a wide range of training opportunities for persons interested in the grape growing and wine industry. Students may choose from a degree, diploma or certificate program or short term seminars/training sessions. Curriculum courses include classroom and practice laboratory applications of viticulture and enology. Topics include: Introduction to Viticulture, Vineyard Establishment and Development, Vineyard Operations, Grape Pests, Diseases and Disorders, Wines of the World, Winery Design, Winery Operations, Wine Production, Wine Analysis, Wine Marketing, and other related studies. Training opportunities include hands-on training in the 4 acre vine and bonded winery located on the campus, internships with the industry, field trips, and seminars featuring industry experts. Online courses available.



For information:

Viticulture: Gill Giese
gieseeg@surry.cc.nc.us or 336-386-3446
Enology: Dr. Bob McRitchie
critchier@surry.cc.nc.us or 336-386-3408

Visit our website: www.surry.edu/grapes

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10/8/05

Round Peak to hold winery grand opening

By **JULIE PHARR**
Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — The 2005 award-winning harvest at Round Peak Vineyards was processed in the new on-site winery, which can produce 4,000 cases of wine per year.

The four owners, Susan and George Little and Janet and Lee Martin, are all excited to show off their new facility to the public in a grand opening along with extending a warm welcome to the community.

"We want to get to know our neighbors," Susan Little said. "We want to see old friends and make some new ones."

Janet Martin added, "The grand opening is an opportunity for the community to come out and see our facility and taste our wines. We are looking forward to becoming more a part of the Mount Airy community."

The grand opening is scheduled for Oct. 15 and 16 from 1 to 5 p.m. The two-day grand opening will feature wine tastings, refreshments and live music by Kirk Sutphin, Backstep, The Country Boys and Tesseract.

Kirk Sutphin and Chester McMillian of Backstep play the Round Peak-style old-time music like the late fiddle player Tommy Jarrell, who was from the Round Peak community. The Country Boys play bluegrass, and Tesseract will play a mix of Broadway, classical, bluegrass and jazz.

The Littles and the Martins just received notification last week that their wines had won several awards at the Dixie Classic Fair in the Mid-Atlantic Southeastern Wine Competition.

Their 2004 wines received awards for the following categories: cabernet sauvignon, gold; sangiovese, gold; merlot, gold; chardonnay, silver; and cabernet franc, silver.

"Needless to say, we are very proud," Janet Martin said.

The 2004 wines were processed at RagApple Lassie Vineyards under the direction of winemaker, Linda King. These wines were all produced with 100 percent Round Peak grapes. Sean McRitchie is the consultant winemaker, who is working with the 2005 harvest, the first harvest to be processed on site at Round Peak Vineyards.

April marked the five-year anniversary of when the first vines were planted at Round Peak Vineyards, which is located at 765 Round Peak Church Road at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, off Hwy. 89 near Interstate 77.

"It has really been a tremendous challenge," Janet Martin said about getting into the wine industry. "But so rewarding and fun. We've met so many wonderful folks in Surry County and the tourists that come by."

The vineyard sits at a 1,300-foot elevation where views of Fisher's Peak, Saddle Mountain and Round Peak, the vineyards' namesake, can be seen. Twelve acres of grapes are grown at Round Peak Vineyards, producing French and Italian varieties including chardonnay, merlot, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, sangiovese, viognier, the brunello clone of sangiovese, and North Carolina's first nebbiolo. The vineyard offers 32 acres.

"It's a wonderful feeling to know that we are drinking a bottle of our wine," Janet Martin said. "It's been a labor of love."



Julie Pharr/The Mount Airy News
From left, Janet and Lee Martin, owners; Mark Golding, general manager; and George and Susan Little, also owners, of Round Peak Vineyards toast the fact that their wines recently won five medals at the Dixie Classic Fair. They are holding a grand opening for their new winery Oct. 15-16 from 1 to 5 p.m.

Mark Golding serves as the manager at Round Peak Vineyards. Golding has roots in the Round Peak area dating back to the Civil War.

"He has been a life saver and an asset to the business," Janet Martin said. "This is a physically and mentally challenging business and multi-faceted."

Janet Martin and her partners have learned everything from growing the vines to marketing the finished product.

George Little and Lee Martin met as students at Davidson College in Davidson. After graduating in 1964, George Martin pursued a career in law, while Lee went into banking.

The Martins moved to Winston-Salem in 1983 and became close friends of the Littles. The couples discovered a common passion for fine wine, and they also liked to garden. The couples visited the Napa Valley in 1998 and were inspired to begin their own vineyard.

Round Peak wines have also won numerous medals from the North Carolina State Fair and the VinoChallenge International in Atlanta.

The tasting room at Round Peak Vineyards offers wine tastings along with hand-made items such as quilts, needlepoint crafts or a tote bag.

To reach the vineyard from Mount Airy's downtown area, take Hwy. 89 West toward Lowgap. Take a right on Round Peak Church Road. Go 1.4 miles, and the vineyards are on the left. The tasting room is open Thursday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.

Wine tastings can also be arranged by appointment at other times. In January and February, the tasting room is open by appointment only.

For more information, call 352-5595 or go to



Julie Pharr/The Mount Airy News
Round Peak wines earned five awards at the Dixie Classic Fair in the Mid-Atlantic Southeastern Wine Competition. Their 2004 wines received awards for the following categories: cabernet sauvignon, gold; sangiovese, gold; merlot, gold; chardonnay, silver; and cabernet franc, silver. The wines pictured are previous award winners.

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WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2005

North Carolina's wine industry, much of it in the Yadkin Valley, gets bigger, but viticulturists have much to learn

FIELD OF GROWTH



California: 1,294

New York: 203

Oregon: 201

Virginia: 88

North Carolina: 50

Number of wineries

Though tiny by comparison to some states, North Carolina's wine industry is growing quickly. The number of wineries has more than doubled in the past five years, and about five more are expected to open by the end of 2005.

JOURNAL GRAPHIC BY NICHOLAS WEIR/PHOTO BY MEGAN MORR

Patricia Coe, 17, harvests Syrah grapes at Stony Knoll Vineyards.

By Sherry Youngquist
JOURNAL REPORTER

MOUNT AIRY — Last month, the N.C. Grape Council added the word "wine" to its name and moved from the N.C. Department of Agriculture to the N.C. Division of Tourism. The move indicated a small but significant shift in thinking about the state's growing wine industry.

Council members asked for the change because they wanted to focus on marketing and tourism, said Margo Knight, the executive director of the N.C. Wine and Grape Council.

"If you can draw a tourist to a North Carolina winery, No. 1, you've created a personal experience between your customer and your product," Knight said. "Therefore, you'll sell more wine. Therefore, you'll bring money to these rural communities where the wineries are located and increase tax revenues and have a positive impact on the state."

In North Carolina's wine country, at least for now, it's not all about the wine.

For every dollar spent on wine in the state, four more are spent because of wine, industry officials estimate. And many of those dollars are coming from within North Carolina.

"When you're in a young wine industry,

your market is almost always in your own backyard, so to speak," Knight said.

Grapes may never surpass the production of such commodities as hogs or soybeans, state agriculture officials say. They are unlikely to replace tobacco, as many people hope, though they thrive in similar soil and climate.

And even though wine may be one of the state's most enticing ventures in memory, an export wine industry is years away, experts say.

It remains to be seen whether the quality of wine produced here can ever rival counterparts in California, Oregon or other states with better growing conditions, better research and a longer history of viticulture.

But wineries and vineyards in North Carolina — many of which are in the Yadkin Valley — can sell the romance and mystique of wine.

People remember quality

Donna and Mike Rupp weren't planning to make any stops en route from Pennsyl-

See WINE, Page A10

■ Wine industry at odds with Yadkin County's law against alcohol sales, A10.

Wine country

California dominates domestic wine production, but many states such as North Carolina and Virginia are developing vineyards and wineries as a way of diversifying their economies.

	North Carolina	Virginia	California	New York	Oregon
Gallons produced annually:	600,000	762,000	560 million	40 million	1,167,231
Number of vineyards:	350	262	4,000	1,000	709
Acres of vineyards:	1,350	2,360	481,266	1,602	13,700
Economic impact:	\$79 million	\$95 million	\$45.4 billion	\$420 million	\$1 billion

vania to their daughter's wedding in the Charlotte area last month. But one "wine tours" sign and a highway exit later, they were sipping chardonnay and merlot inside the 1930s milking parlor that vintner Kim Myers had turned into a tasting room and gift shop.

Myers, whose background is in advertising and graphic art, didn't know much about growing grapes and making wines 10 years ago. And back then, motorists coming through Interstate 77 and U.S. 421 would have passed the farm, a former dairy, with little care.

But not today.

Laurel Gray Vineyards, which Myers has owned with her husband, Benny, in Hamptonville since 2000, is part of the growing tourism industry that many small towns in the Yadkin Valley are trying to bolster.

To measure the intense interest in wine, look no further than the rapid expansion of wineries and vineyards in North Carolina. The number of wineries has more than doubled in five years — from 21 in 2000 to 50 today, with about another five expected to open by the end of 2005. At least 350 vineyards produce grapes for wine production; many of them are in the Yadkin Valley.

"The state has spent a lot of money marketing the wines that are being produced," said Grant Holder, a chemistry professor at Appalachian State University. "Now, they should concentrate on maximizing the quality of the wine, maximizing consistency so that those prices that must be charged for North Carolina wines are true reflections of the quality."

But Holder points out that people associate wine with place. If they don't like the quality of the wine they drink at a North Carolina winery, they'll remember. So, if two wineries here make quality wine but two others are having problems, it reflects on the state as a whole, he said.

"People will pay a lot of money for wine if they like it. They won't if they don't," he said.

Consistency in the quality of the state's wines is one of the bigger challenges the industry faces as it grows, said Gil Geise, a viticulture instructor at Surry Community College. Quality, he said, starts in the vineyard, where some say that about 75 percent of wine-making begins.

Van Coe and his wife, Kathy, can testify that it's hard to get it right.

Always learning

The Coes run Stony Knoll Vineyard in Rockford.

About five years ago, they decided to plant five acres of grapes on the Surry County farm that had been in Kathy Coe's family for more than 100 years. Like many of the growers who have ventured into grapes, both of them came from farming families but did not consider themselves farmers.

"Van wanted to do something to preserve the family farm," said Kathy Coe, who works full time as a registered nurse. "This was the farm I was raised in. It was tobacco when I was growing up. It's the field I said I would never go back to."

Van Coe, who works full time running Homeland Mortgage in Dobson, took night classes in viticulture at Surry Community College. His brother-in-law Lynn Crouse, who was interested in becoming a winemaker, took some classes in wine science.

After the Coes spent nearly \$600,000 to plant vines on their 48-acre farm and build a winery, the wait began. For some, the wait can be anywhere from five to seven years for vines to fully mature. But the Coes had their first real harvest in October 2004, they said. That's when the learning really began for the Coes.

"We incorrectly trellised," said Van Coe, shaking his head.

The Syrah vines that had been planted so carefully in 2001 were too close. Coe put them in at six feet apart, and the vines proved to grow more vigorously than he had planned. He was forced to pull out every other vine on the rows.

"I should have gone with a smaller root stock," Coe said. "It was painful. You had a growing season on a vine that you had to accept that you had to remove."

At harvest, he and his brother-in-law overlooked adding a material to some of the grapes used to kill small bugs and fungus, which contaminate the wine.

This fall, Coe said he is taking steps to not make the same mistakes. But with each harvest, as the family members encounter more of the operation, they are learning more, he said.

"So, it's a moving target," said Coe, who has pursued a marketing plan for his Stony Knoll Vineyards and makes wine only from the grapes he grows there. "You don't know what you're going to encounter next."

Norm Oches builds and designs vineyards in the Yadkin Valley. In his experience, the Coe family's steep learning curve is typical.

"It's a relatively small industry. So, a lot of people have an interest in doing this all by themselves. So, everybody relearns everything," Oches said.

Growers say they need to be able to turn to viticulturists for help with these issues. Though agricultural-extension agents working in each county stay in close contact with vineyard owners, it's not enough, said Joanne Crater, who owns Buck Shoals Vineyard in Hamptonville with her husband, Terry.

The N.C. Department of Agriculture has planted vines at its research station in Reidsville, but Myers said that it doesn't apply to her Laurel Gray Vineyard in Yadkin County.

"I would like to see research plots at several vineyards scattered about. We are considerably different here in the Swan



JOURNAL PHOTO BY MEGAN MORRIS

Van Coe (on tractor) and family, who own Stony Knoll Vineyards, join friends and hired workers to harvest Syrah grapes at the vineyard.



LINDSAY CUMMINGS PHOTO

Brenda Hill (right) chooses a wine at the Laurel Gray Vineyards. At left is Kim Myers, and in the background are Mike and Donna Rupp.

Creek area. The soil's different," Myers said.

Growers want access to current research that is specific to their region. In the state's young wine industry, such specifics are in short supply.

Some efforts are now under way to change that, however.

Appalachian State University is making plans to open a wine services laboratory next spring. The university has requested \$1 million in federal money to set up equipment and hire personnel, and more money has been requested from the Golden LEAF Foundation. Surry Community College is also making plans to open a viticulture research center.

"There's not a lot of natural collaboration that goes on in the farming community. You tend to be very competitive and secretive without a lot of saying so," Holder said.

"Everybody is basically in the same boat. They have to share the ideas and tips they come up with," he continued. "It's all very new here.... It's not terribly easy to grow a vinifera grape here. What do you have to do to get that grape that has sugar and

rather than the ideal 24 or 25 percent sugar — the answer to that question may be to breed a whole new variety, possibly one that thrives in wet conditions.

But would it be accepted?

"The problem is the wine-drinking world wants particular wine-drinking varieties," said Andy Walker, a viticulture professor and grape breeder at the University of California at Davis.

Walker, who has visited the Yadkin Valley, said that the region's growers would always have to compensate for the early harvest of grapes, either through viticulture techniques or in winemaking and blending.

"Learning that is going to be the tricky part," he said.

Though the majority of grapes in the United States are grown in California, Washington, New York and Oregon, grapes are grown across the country, even Minnesota and South Dakota, Walker said.

"In California, where grapes are harvested at 24 or 25 percent sugar, the tannins and flavor compounds change at that time and lead to better quality and more balanced wine styles," he said.

Combination of factors

Mark Rosse, a chef and owner of the Louisiana Purchase restaurant in Banner Elk, has been making wine lists in the state for his restaurant and others from Greensboro to the coast. Very few North Carolina wines make the list, he said.

He looks for *terroir* — a French term encompassing the value of the fruit, soil, climate and practices of a particular place. He also considers identity. He said he doesn't want five chardonnays on the list that taste exactly the same.

"North Carolina has an identity crisis, and there is the quality and price ratio," Rosse said. "I have seen the quality level

jumping. But there has to be more. There has to be a wine at some point that jumps out and says this is what North Carolina is all about."

Some of the wineries have won regional and national awards. *The Wine Report Magazine* last year named Shelton Vineyards' 200 riesling as one of the country's best "50 Forbidden Wines." It was the first North Carolina wine to appear on such a list.

For his part, Walker says that North Carolina's focus on developing a local market and following for the state's wine is OK.

"You won't have the same flavor profile and the same quality as you do in California," Walker said, referring to the fact that harvest in North Carolina comes much earlier. "The question is how do you solve that problem? Look at growing conditions or do you plant other varieties?"

Some say that North Carolina should not be comparing itself to California, with its \$19 billion in annual farm wine grape sales and \$45.4 billion in revenues to wine and allied industries.

"North Carolina can't be Napa, and Napa can't be North Carolina," Geise said.

And the same goes for France.

"The French only have 100 years on us, and California as 200 years," he said.

Geise likens the industry in North Carolina to a teenager.

"Right now, we're just going the hang of what we're doing. Eight or nine years, when the vines are in longer, you'll see a change in quality," he said. "So, right now, we're doing it, it we're growing."

■ Sherry Youngquist can be reached in Mount Airy at 361-789-9338 or at syoungqui@wsjournal.com

Editorials

Planning for action

Like a grape grower preparing for a moment when the fruit is perfectly ripe and ready to be picked, the board of trustees at Surry Community College is planning for the perfect moment to begin building the North Carolina Center for Viticulture and Enology.

That moment is approaching.

The legislature in its just-concluded session appropriated \$300,000 for planning and development.

The Surry County Board of Commissioners gave its "conceptual" endorsement to the concept.

And last week, the college trustees approved hiring Charlotte-based Little Diversified Architectural Consulting to design the center.

The project may cost as much as \$10 million, but the Surry Community College is on its way to that goal, having reserved \$3 million for the center.

It's a lot of money, but potentially well worth the investment. For a look at what it could mean, look 2,600 miles northwest of here to Walla Walla County, home to about 55,000 people in southeastern Washington state.

Immigrants in the 19th century brought grapes to Washington where vines flourished in the river valleys, much as they once did farther to our east in North Carolina. However, the Washington wine industry didn't develop until much later. The entire state had only 19 wineries in 1981 and less than 80 10 years later. In the 1990s, though, growers realized that land east of the Cascade Mountains, including the Walla Walla region straddling the Washington-Oregon border, could produce premium-quality wine grapes. The industry exploded, with the acreage planted to vinifera grapes nearly tripling in a decade and the number of wineries more than doubling from 144 in 1999 to 323 by 2004.

Washington found itself producing more wine grapes than any state except California and its still-growing \$2.4-billion industry employed more than 11,000 people. However, the industry could foresee a need for an additional 4,700 workers by 2006 and had no idea where it would find them. Washington Wine Commissioner Jeff Gordon decided that an in-state viticulture and enology program was "the wine industry's missing link."

At Walla Walla Community College, President Steven VanAusdle and the college's board of trustees anticipated the same need. They had started an enology and viticulture program in 2000, but it focused on the needs of Walla Walla and three adjacent counties. Now the board expanded its view and changed the mission of the school to serve a much wider region — in fact, the entire state's needs for vintners and viticulturists.

The Institute for Enology and Viticulture was given a three-part mission:

- (1) To facilitate alliances with vintners and viticulturists throughout Washington state.
- (2) To promote the economic development of the wine industry.
- (3) To provide education and training for those with an interest in the industry.

In October 2003, the college opened the institute's new 15,000-square-foot, \$4.1-million center — 80 percent of it financed with private donations and competitive grants. The building houses a state-of-the-art commercial teaching winery called College Cellars of Walla Walla, wine curriculum classrooms, a wine analysis laboratory, faculty offices and meeting rooms. In addition to supporting the college's certificate and degree programs in viticulture and winemaking, the institute offers a new degree program in wine marketing and management. Also, both vintners and wine enthusiasts come to Walla Walla for the institute's short courses in sensory evaluation, barrel making, wine yeasts, wine appreciation, wine consumer education, health and wine awareness, hospitality training and other topics.

Through the institute's association with Washington's wineries, the college has been able to arrange on-site internships for enology and viticulture students. In return, the college benefits from increased business and corporate awareness of its needs, programs and capabilities. Many of those businesses were represented at an auction and dinner in conjunction with opening the institute's new building; that event alone raised \$88,000 for student scholarships.

Walla Walla Community College once drew on state funds for 96 percent of its operating budget; now 45 percent is generated from research grants, partnerships and contracts.

Surry Community College President Frank Sells has suggested similar ideas, programs and missions for the proposed N.C. Institute of Enology and Viticulture. An additional feature of the Dobson-based college's plan is an auditorium both for industry presentations and for community entertainment.

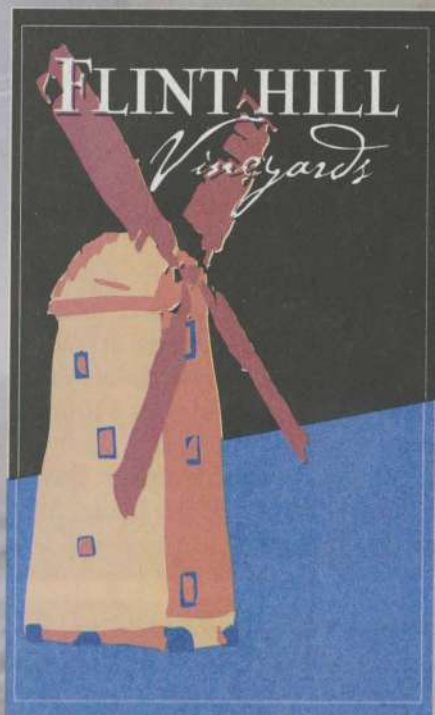
With suitable facilities and staff, the institute — and, by association, Surry County — could be the focal point for North Carolina's entire grape-growing and winemaking industry.

It seems like an ambitious dream, but Washington and Walla Walla Community College showed it can be turned into reality.

Surry Community College should continue making its plans so it can move swiftly when North Carolina is ready to establish the N.C. Institute for Enology and Viticulture.



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9/15/05 YRipple

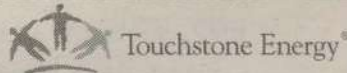


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For more information:

Viticulture: Gill Giese

gieseg@surry.cc.nc.us or 336-386-3461

Enology: Dr. Bob McRitchie

mcritchier@surry.cc.nc.us or 336-386-3-

Visit our website: www.surry.edu/grapes

FESS PARKER: STILL DANIEL BOONE



After mid-'50s TV popularity as Davie Crockett, actor Fess Parker sealed legendary status as Daniel Boone from 1964 to 1970. *High Country Magazine's Randy Johnson interviewed the more than 80-year-old icon.*



Wine-making Actor Has Gone from Appalachians to Appellations

Q: Have you ever been to the North Carolina High Country?

A: Yes I have. A lot of Daniel Boone was filmed on location, in Kentucky and Cherokee. Looking back on that I can't imagine Walt Disney sent his film company that far away from Hollywood. The one phone in Cherokee that I was aware of was a pay phone.

I was in the Grandfather Mountain area as a guest of Hugh Morton. I went up the mountain and to the outdoor drama in Boone about Boone. I thought it was beautiful, especially from the air. I flew in on a STOL (short take-off or landing) aircraft and actually landed on the golf course. That plane could have landed on a tennis court.

I still think about that time. Those Blue Ridge Mountains are hard to beat.

Q: You really made a mark as Daniel Boone.

A: The credit goes to Walt Disney—and some of the finest actors of the twentieth century. There was Buddy Ebsen, Julie Harris, George Saunders, Jody Foster, Kurt Russel, people from the original cast of *My Fair Lady*, including Ethel Waters, Rosie Greer, Jimmy Dean, and by the way, my friend, singer Ed Ames, who played Mingo (Daniel's friend on the show, an Oxford-educated half-breed), is reopening his show this September in Branson. He's my neighbor near Santa Barbara and I see him often.

Q: The town of Boone is taking new steps to memorialize Boone, as *Horn in the West* does. How important is it to preserve Boone's memory?

A: I got my degree in American history from the University of Texas in 1950. I recently gave an historical presentation for three nights in the Hollywood Bowl and your question reminds me of an observation made by Lincoln. He warned that his

country would fall apart, not from outside influences, but from inside influences. He also observed that every generation has to reinvent our democratic way of life. I'll give Hillary Clinton one thing, she brought "the village" to modern attention. So, is it important that local history is preserved? No, it's not important, it's imperative. It's the underpinning of everything else.

The community that supports an outdoor drama like *Horn in the West* is to be congratulated. How else are we going to preserve and exhibit the yesterday that created our today?

Q: You're now a very successful California winemaker. What would Boone think of the recent Appalachian winery boom?

A: He would probably like a little change from *Blue Thunder*. That's what we called the local moonshine in the script sometimes.

Q: Should we give our local and regional wineries a try?

A: Yes. I'm very happy to see our culture come to appreciate wine. It does have a healthful aspect to it if it's not overindulged. It's an agricultural product that promotes tourism. And the grapevine will grow anywhere from Alaska to Arizona and the gutters of your house if you don't clean them out.

Q: What's the great thing about your life right now?

A: Our winery is doing better every year. Our wines are in almost every state, even Europe, and of course Disney World and Disneyland. Best thing is I'm doing this with my son, my daughter and son-in-law, and I've got nine grandchildren that are growing up pretty fast. I like the idea of the old days when people worked and they stayed in their parent's craft or trade. That's a lot better than heading off to NY City.

Commissioners support plan for viticulture center

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — Surry Community College has \$3 million set aside for construction and more than \$300,000 in state funds to begin planning for a viticulture center, the Surry County Board of Commissioners Tuesday night endorsed the concept.

"Since I came to the college seven years ago, we've been talking about having some kind of auditorium on campus to serve the campus and surrounding community," said SCC President Frank Sells. "We've wrestled with that over the years, but we've never

been able to come up with a good way to fund such a project.

"Over the last six months or so, with the emerging wine industry in our state, and our state definitely is a major player in wine and has potential to be more, there is a need to have a center somewhere in the state that addresses that industry."

Sells pointed out the center for marine science is in Carteret County, because that is where the ocean is. "If there is going to be a viticulture center, it ought to be where the wine is," he said. "The majority of bonded wineries in any single area are in our area. Such

a center will serve our state, serve our area and host a lot of international type events we've always wanted to host. It would be something that you could use, that the schools could use, et cetera."

He said the idea was taken to the state's General Assembly right before budget time, expecting, at best, to get a little recognition and maybe something in the future. "The General Assembly really believed in this idea, they not only accepted our idea, they provided some funding for the planning."

Sells said the center would house the SCC winery and an auditorium, as

well as additional space. "We proposed this as a \$10 million project, with the General Assembly paying half and we would match the other half. In matching the other half, we have reserved \$3 million of our construction dollars from the 2000 bond... The General Assembly liked the idea and put planning money in this year's budget. That's excited our board. We think that's a commitment from the General Assembly."

Sells said the college is proceeding to select an architectural firm to give them a design, then will pick up with the local campaign to raise the addi-

tional local monies needed.

"We're not asking you for money. We want to know if you think it is worthwhile to proceed..." Sells pointed out that like other college buildings, the county would be responsible for maintenance and operation costs, and, until the design is complete, he has no idea what those would be.

He said programming at the new facility could help offset the operation costs, and that a similar auditorium even generates money for the community college campus on which it is located.

See PLAN, page 3

MAN 9-8-05
haps its defining purpose, is to provide finality. So the republic could go on, rather than be stuck forever in a crisis of legitimacy.

The chief justice voted to resolve the electoral crisis at last, understanding that a president's legitimacy is established not by the margin of his victory but his conduct in office. (Richard Nixon was re-elected in 1972 in one of the great presidential landslides of American history, but within two years he would be driven from office in disgrace, having forfeited his legitimacy by his own actions.)

Always, always, this chief justice defended the judiciary from those who would not only criticize it (hey, it's a free country), but eat away at its political and moral authority.

only the authority of the judiciary, but that of the other branches of the federal government. He would in the end preside over a kind of rebirth of the federalist principle in American government.

No, he was not much for high drama, William H. Rehnquist. Drama would have looked silly on him, like those Gilbert & Sullivan stripes he affected on his robes for the Clinton impeachment trial. His true genius was for managing the mundane, for keeping this show, i.e., the American republic, on the road.

Paul Greenberg is the Pulitzer prize-winning editorial page editor of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. His e-mail address is paul_greenberg@ardemgaz.com.

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 VOLUME 90, ISSUE 69
 Published twice weekly for
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Rising to the occasion

Local disaster relief team heads to hard hit area to help Katrina victims

BY STEVE LAWSON
 News Editor

As Hurricane Katrina barreled her way northward through Mississippi and Tennessee, several local residents finalized plans to lend a hand to those caught in her wake.

Jimmy Lawrence, owner of Lawrence Garage and chief of the Northwest

Rockingham Volunteer Fire Department, labored into the evening Monday to clear his calendar for the remainder of the week.

"I'm trying to get everything in the shop now finished so I can leave Wednesday morning," Lawrence said. "I have to say, my customers have been very sympathetic to this cause. They understand how important this is to me."

Lawrence, along with his wife Pam, Hal and Terry Carter, and Danny Highfill, left for Meridian, Miss. before sunrise this morning on a disaster relief mission.

All members of First Baptist Church of Mayodan's disaster relief team, the group will be pulling a newly-acquired trailer

equipped with tools to help clear fallen trees and limbs and clean mud from flooded houses.

"We've had the trailer for about six months, but this will be the first major trip for it," Lawrence said.

The group from Mayodan plans to meet the North Carolina Baptist Men's disaster response team in Meridian and head where they are most needed.

"We never know what we might be doing until we get there," Lawrence said. "It's a little of everything. We could be shoveling mud, patching roofs or using chainsaws

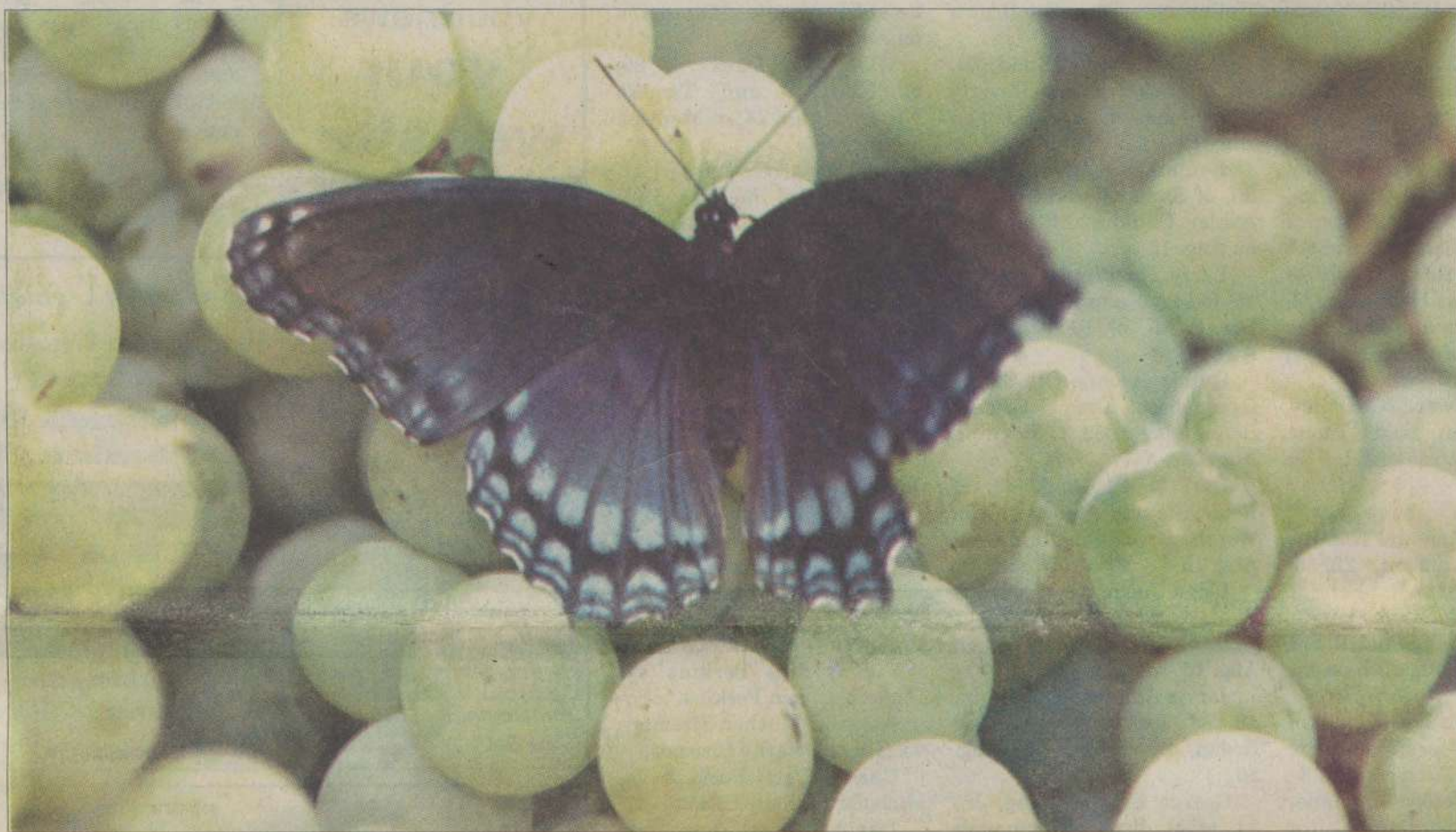
Please see **RELIEF/A3**



The disaster relief team Mayodan gets its first trip the team travels to Hurricane Katrina.

Madison - The Messenger
 8/31/05

The grapes of Walnut Cove



PHOTOS BY STEVE LAWSON/THE MESSENGER

A butterfly rests for a moment on a basket of grapes during Saturday's harvest at Mayodan's B&S Vineyards.

IT'S HARVEST TIME



Michael Cleary, a viticulture student from Forsyth Tech Community College, clips a ripe cluster of grapes from a vine at B&S Vineyards in Mayodan.

BY STEVE LAWSON
 News Editor

The traditional fall harvest time might still be a few weeks away, but one local couple was already into their second harvesting session this weekend.

Just after sunrise Saturday, the morning breeze carried the sweet aroma of fresh grapes far beyond the rows of glistening vines Bryce and Sara Richardson grow just off Peach Orchard Road in Mayodan.

"You can smell them before you ever see them," said Michael Cleary. "I knew we were there before I saw the sign at the driveway."

Cleary, a viticulture student from Forsyth Tech Community College, worked the rows of vines at B&S Vineyards Saturday at the request of his instructor, Philip Gillespie. In fact, Gillespie brought his entire

class along on the trip.

"Actually, this is their first day of class," Gillespie said. "I thought this would be a good way for them to see the final result before they start learning how to get to this point."

Cleary agreed with his teacher. He could see from his first exposure to the business end of growing grapes that it took a lot of hard work.

"My only experience with grapes before this was eating them off an arbor near where I grew up in Ohio," Cleary said. "The one thing that comes back to me now is the great smell of those vines when the grapes started to ripen."

Saturday not only marked the second harvest of this season, but the second year of harvests for the two-year-old vineyard.

Please see **HARVEST/A6**



PHOTOS BY STEVE LAWSON/THE MESSENGER

Students from a viticulture class at Forsyth Tech Community College help harvest grapes at B&S Vineyards in Mayodan.

HARVEST

Continued from Page A1

According to Sara Richardson, this year's total will far exceed the first year's yield.

"We got about 3,000 pounds of grapes last year," she said. "We expect this year's crop to be about six or seven tons."

The vineyard covers about one-half acre of the Richardson's Mayodan farm. A dozen rows containing more than 500 vines of cold-hardy 'Niagra' grapes (*Vitis Labrusca*) were planted in April 2003, but only after extensive research and training.

Sara studied viticulture at Surry Community College and Bryce took courses from Gillespie at RCC.

"We wanted to make sure we knew what we were doing before we jumped in and started," Sara said. "But the learning doesn't stop. We're constantly learning new things from other growers and wineries."

One of the little details Sara picked up in her courses at SCC helped the Richardsons determine which direction to run the rows in their vineyard.

"They said to check the fields nearby for deer paths and see where they ran," she said. "Then we needed to place the rows directly across the paths."

The deer go around the rows if they run across the paths, but will walk through them and damage the crop if the rows parallel the deer path.

"That's just one of the things you pick up in classes that make a big difference from the very beginning," Sara said.

B&S Vineyards' first harvest took place in September 2004, yielding just under two tons.

This year, the first gathering took place earlier this month and yielded about one ton from the first two rows. That crop went to a winery in Germanton.

Grapes from the four rows harvested Saturday were earmarked for Grove Winery in Alamance County.

The remaining six rows are



Ann Smith, owner of Old Town Vineyards in Walnut Cove, helps out Bryce and Sara Richardson with Saturday's harvest at B&S Vineyards in Mayodan.

reserved for the winery at Childress Vineyards, owned by NASCAR team owner Richard Childress. Those rows were still covered with a special netting

to protect the grapes from birds. As the work continued Saturday, Sara couldn't help but be thrilled with the yield. The grapes were fuller and the clusters

larger than the first year's crop. "We've been very fortunate with our grapes," she said. "It's really been amazing."

Japanese beetles wreak havoc on vines

By SARAH NELL DAVIDSON
The News & Observer of Raleigh
An AP Member Exchange

ELKIN — North Carolina's grape-growing pioneers have a lot to deal with — hurricanes, tornadoes, an increasing deer population, a slew of microscopic fungi and swarms of birds that are reminiscent of Hitchcock. But this summer, it's Japanese beetles that are having a devastating effect on the burgeoning Tar Heel wine industry.

"It's definitely worse than any year I have ever seen," said Frank Hobson of Boonville. He and his wife, Lenna, are among the top five growers of vinifera, or wine-producing, grapes in the state.

"It gets to where I can't stand it," Hobson said. "It just gets me so uptight."

Japanese beetles are no stranger to most any backyard gardener. Among the preferred snacks of the insects are roses, apples and sweet corn.

Vineyards also are susceptible to the beetles. And this summer's excessive rain has brought millions of the insects to wreak havoc.

Japanese beetles don't eat the grapes — the insects are gone before the grapes ripen. But the beetles "skeletonize" grape leaves, eating everything but the veins.

Without leaves, which make energy for the plant, the vines cannot make flowers and fruit to reproduce or store energy for winter. So the plants die.

The problem is happening more and more in North Carolina's main wine region, the Yadkin Valley area near Winston-Salem.

Sean McRitchie, an Elkin grape grower and wine industry consultant, said he had never even seen a Japanese beetle before he moved to Yadkin Valley from Oregon in 1998.

Japanese beetles have been creeping across the Eastern United States since 1916, when they were introduced by Japan. For now, the Mississippi River seems to have kept Japanese beetles from moving farther west, so California and Oregon wineries are immune.

European wine regions also don't have beetle problems.

Japanese beetles sport a metallic green and copper armor that protects them from predators and helps them withstand several insecticides.

On the surface, the beetles are a big problem for only two months, from mid-June to mid-Au-

gust. But in reality, the problem is multiplying underground.

By the end of this month, female beetles will have laid about 50 eggs each, depositing them 2 to 6 inches below ground in grassy pastures or lawns. Two weeks later, the eggs will hatch and spend most of the year in "grub stage." The grubs crawl around underground, pigging out on grass roots and destroying lawns.

In May, all of that will come to a halt as the grubs quickly pupate. In June, the next generation of Japanese beetles will emerge as a visible pestilence.

Beetles only migrate about half a mile, but that's plenty to get them from a grassy pasture to an adjacent vineyard.

"You need to separate ... the grass from the grapes," said Ken Sorenson, an extension entomologist at N.C. State University. "Green, grassy areas are Japanese beetle heaven on Earth."

An insecticide called Sevin is the poison of choice for most grape farmers. The pesticide kills insects that chew up plants, but it does not harm the grapes.

"Sevin might sound nasty, but it only kills what eats the leaves," McRitchie said.

But Collins Barwick of Raleigh, who grows wine grapes as a hobby on family land near Salisbury, said the beetles have been so bad this year that some people are overspraying and indirectly killing off beneficial bugs, too.

Sevin also doesn't help as much in a rainy summer, because it keeps washing off the plants.

Another strategy is to set traps in green areas away from the vines.

Traps contain an attractant that lures the bugs, which then fall into the trap and die.

But Mark Greene, who is in the process of building Elkin Mill Vineyard near Elkin, said he has given up on the traps.

"They stink!" he said. "When the beetles die, they are the worst-smelling things."

Instead, Greene is the proud owner of what he calls "the Cadillac of sprayers" to get Sevin on his vines. It seemed to be working as he surveyed his vineyard one day last month.

"These bugs are not 1 percent of what was on here 10 days ago, before I sprayed," he said.

But could Japanese beetles not be so bad after all? McRitchie's father, Bob, seems to think so.

"Leave them. They invigorate the vines,"



Chuck Liddy, The News & Observer/The AP

Japanese beetles munch out on leaves at an Elkin wine vineyard. The insects are causing grape growers problems in the northwestern areas of the state. And this summer's excessive rain has brought millions of the insects to wreak havoc.

preaches Bob McRitchie, who teaches winemaking at Surry Community College in Dobson.

The McRitchies have been pioneers in the wine industry for years. They were in Napa Valley, Calif., before it was such a big wine area, and they were involved with some of the first vineyards and wineries in Oregon.

Sean McRitchie agrees with his father that Japanese beetles could almost benefit grape vines — if they would only eat the leaves that surround the grapes. That would allow increased ventilation as the fruit ripens.

Unfortunately, though, the beetles eat the delectable, tender leaves on the top of the vines and pass up the tougher, older ones toward the bottom.

Sean McRitchie opts for an integrated approach that tries to minimize chemical input and instead takes advantage of naturally occurring insecticides, such as oil that comes from a tree in India.

Sorenson, of NCSU, also advocates a chemical-free method — using milky spore bacteria to kill grubs in the ground. But for that to work, you have to treat a large area. And it takes two to three years to get the milky spore population established.

Hobson, the Boonville grower, relies on Sevin. He estimates that spraying insecticides costs farmers about \$23 per acre with each application.

Cruising through his vineyards recently in his small, battered pickup, Hobson pointed out some Japanese beetle damage. But his focus was elsewhere.

"People said zinfandel wouldn't grow here, but look at that," Hobson said, delightedly pointing out some vines.

Yes, the Japanese beetles have taken their toll this year. But in Yadkin Valley, the fruit will soon arrive — and the beetles will head underground for another year.

The Mount Airy News

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8/17/05

Mount Airy, N.C.

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August 17, 2005

50 cents

Viticulture center receives funding

By **ANGELA SCHMOLL**
Associate Editor

RALEIGH — The funding for a state viticulture center to be located in Dobson is included in the state's 2005-06 budget, which was signed into law on Friday.

Supporters of the budget stated that the bill provides much-needed funding for education, health care and public safety, all of which are vitally important to improving the state's economy and creating new jobs. The House gave its initial approval of the budget last

Tuesday night by a vote of 60-59 and final approval on Wednesday afternoon by a vote of 61-59.

The Senate approved the bill on Wednesday along party lines, 28-20, and on Thursday by the same vote. Gov. Mike Easley signed the bill on Friday.

"Our county, like many other textile and tobacco dependent counties, has faced difficult economic times in recent years, but through it all, we have continued to make progressive strides and this budget continues that

progress," Rep. Jim Harrell III of Elkin. "The needs of our state are growing as more than 100,000 new people move to North Carolina each year, and this balanced budget meets our needs in important areas such as education, health care, public safety, as well as continuing our efforts to improve our economy and create new jobs. All North Carolinians want us to invest their tax dollars wisely and as efficiently as possible, and this budget does exactly that."

The final budget agreement pro-

vides much-needed funding for the state's K-12 schools, community colleges and universities and restores Medicaid and public safety cuts that were included in the original Senate budget, which was passed in May, but not included in the House budget. Passage of the two-year spending plan marks the end of the budget process in the legislature, which began several months ago. The Legislature must still complete work on numerous other pieces of legislation before adjourning for the year, which will occur in the

next two weeks.

The plan includes \$325,000 for the North Carolina Viticulture Center to be located in Dobson in conjunction with the viticulture program at Surry Community College. Harrell announced plans to pursue the development in Dobson several months ago.

Also in this district is an appropriation of \$400,000 for the Sparta Economic Development Initiative in Sparta.

See CENTER, page 3A

CENTER:

To be located at SCC

Continued from page 1A

State-wide appropriations include \$9.48 billion for education, which is a 2.73 percent or \$250 million more than last year's education budget.

The budget includes additional funding to cover the more than 35,000 new students who will show up at state schools this school year. Legislators dedicated close to \$80 million to address the on-going Leandro school funding lawsuit, which will dedicate additional funding to low-wealth school districts, disadvantaged students, high school reforms, school-based family support teams and teacher recruitment.

The budget provides \$100 million for ABC bonuses for teachers, in addition to a pay raise of approximately 2.24 percent, and fully funds teacher assistant positions.

More than \$3.2 million is provided to expand Easley's "Learn and Earn" program, which allows students the opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma and a college degree after just five years of study.

"If the Senate passes the House lottery bill, which would establish the game in our state," said Harrell, "North Carolina will have even more funding to invest in school construction, early childhood education, and college scholarships."

The budget also provides more than \$4 billion in funding for health care for the state's children, blind, disabled and elderly, and restores many of the previously proposed cuts in the original Senate budget. Legislators provided funding to ensure 65,000 aged, blind and disabled North Carolinians and 30,000 children will continue to be covered by Medicaid. Children ages 0-5 currently covered by Health Choice will be moved to Medicaid, which will bring the total projected enrollment to about 200,000 children over the next three years.

The North Carolina Senior Care prescription drug program, which currently covers 120,000 seniors, will receive \$10 million.

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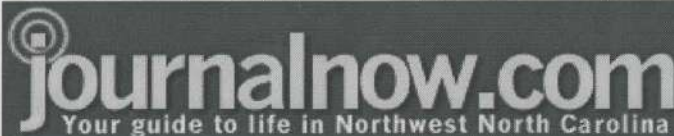
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Tuesday, July 12, 2005

N.C. wine industry shows potential, experts say More than 180 attend wine conference at ASU

By Sherry Youngquist
JOURNAL REPORTER

BOONE

North Carolina's emerging wine industry has potential, industry representatives said yesterday, but it has a long way to go before it becomes a major player in the state's economy.

"If you row together, you make good progress. If you don't, you sort of sit where you are until the daylight runs out," said Grant Holder, an Appalachian State University professor of chemistry, at the first Western North Carolina Wine Conference yesterday at the Broyhill Inn and Conference Center on the university's campus.

More than 180 people attended the day-long conference that included many of the area's winery owners, winemakers and viticulture instructors, as well as representatives from the N.C. Department of Agriculture, N.C. Division of Tourism and local chambers of commerce.

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The grape industry is compromised mostly of small family farms, which makes it even more important to come together as one group, Denka said.

In 10 more years, winery sales in the state could reach \$300 million, he said. Another \$150 million could be earned from distributor sales and \$200million from restaurant and retail sales.

He urged vineyard owners and winemakers to implement site-specific viticulture research, look closer at quality control and improve the image of North Carolina wines and wineries.

"Try to take our story to the region and the country," said Denka, who added that the projected growth of North Carolina winemaking means that the industry must develop new markets in other states.

There must also be a more effective relationship between wine and tourism in the state, said Wade Nichols, a heritage-tourism-development officer for the N.C. Division of Tourism.

"It is almost like a courtship," Nichols said. "How can we keep the relationship flourishing and exciting over time?"

Tourists want to be immersed in an experience and might be happy if they find one at a winery or vineyard, he said.

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Jerry Douglas, the senior vice president of marketing and sales for the Biltmore Co., which owns and operates Biltmore Estate in Asheville, said, "If there's a legacy that we can leave in this in 20 to 30 years, it is that we created an industry, not just an activity, an economically viable industry."

- Sherry Youngquist can be reached in Mount Airy at (336) 789-9338 or at syoungquist@wsjournal.com

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Editorials

Growing agritourism

After reading an article earlier this week about a tour of rural sights and scenes in the Dobson area, a 12-year-old boy of our acquaintance exclaimed, "I didn't know there were so many fun things to do around here!"

Other, older, readers evidently shared his opinion and his surprise. Several called or sent e-mail inquiries about how to find a fishing pond whose stock includes a 45-pound catfish, a farm with corn maze and a man who grows shiitake mushrooms he sells to a wholesaler in Myrtle Beach ("He doesn't have to drive down east. I'll buy some," said one caller).

If nothing else, those responses to N.C. Cooperative Extension Service's tour confirmed some people's interest in agritourism in Surry County.

The next question is how to transform that interest into dollars for farmers and other rural residents.

No one should be surprised to hear that Surry and its neighboring counties could profit from heritage tourism, which includes agritourism as well as visits to historic sites and other cultural attractions. Several economic-development consultants have pointed out heritage tourism as a logical addition to the local economy, building on Mount Airy's well-established popularity as a tourist destination for Mayberry fans. In fact, Surry County probably could develop heritage tourism even without the Mayberry connection, because of its historic associations with traditional music and tobacco farming and the more-recent development of grape vineyards and wineries.

There's more here to see and do than many, and perhaps most residents realize.

One problem is that too many people in Surry County don't know about some of the local attractions. The area's budding agritourism industry needs more advertising, marketing and promotion and, not coincidentally, those will be the topics of an agritourism meeting from 4 to 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Dobson extension service center.

In conjunction with developing agritourism, county extension director Brenda Rose and the staff at the extension service also hope to encourage more value-added agriculture. The two activities often go hand-in-hand.

Take, for example, Fred Taylor and his shiitake mushrooms. He adds value to the timber on his property by using logs as a nutrient base for the highly valued, exotic mushrooms. But if his home was one of the stops on an agricultural tour of Surry County, Taylor might pick up a portion of the tour operator's fee in return for demonstrating the ancient oriental technique for growing the mushrooms and for lecturing about edible fungi.

On the converse side, C.L. White and his family have built a corn maze on W-4 Farm. That's clearly a tourist attraction and people probably will pay a few dollars to go through it. But the Whites might make even more money by selling value-added produce — unusual dried gourds, perhaps, or decorative Indian corn — after the tourists escape from the maze.

One of the most obvious combinations of agritourism and value-added agriculture occurs at many of the Yadkin Valley Appellation Area's vineyards and wineries. Van Coe of Stony Knoll Vineyards said his family's operation attracts visitors from across North Carolina, many U.S. states and even some foreign countries. The tourists love the beautiful setting and the scenic rows of vines. They sample and buy the wine. Coe's only regret is that he doesn't see more tourists from Surry County.

Well, we can sympathize, but it's our experience that people, no matter where they live, tend to take for granted the attractions of their own hometowns. Here in Mount Airy, we're frequently surprised to hear someone admit they've never visited the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History or attended the monthly Blue Ridge Jamboree at the Andy Griffith Playhouse.

However, you probably would have a hard time finding anyone in Mount Airy who can't give a visitor directions to the museum, the playhouse or the Andy Griffith Home Place.

Something worth considering, as heritage tourism takes root here, will be how to inform and educate Surry County residents — particularly service workers in the restaurants, hotels and tourist-oriented retail shops — so they can help guide tourists to the county's attractions.

We believe agritourism and value-added agriculture can be new and profitable cash crops for this area's farmers and rural residents and valuable additions to Surry County's economy.

But if they're to grow, these enterprises will need encouragement and support from everyone, whether they live in town or on an country acreage. And we can't overstate the importance of forming a county tourism association or similar organization, perhaps under the auspices of the extension service or perhaps under the direction of the county commissioners.

That said, we're glad to see Rose and the extension service staff taking the lead in promoting and encouraging agritourism and value-added agriculture in Surry County. In several other North Carolina counties, other local extension service offices have accepted the same responsibility. They are seeding and nourishing these enterprises by sharing their experiences, successes and "educational" failures and by calling on the expertise available from N.C. State and other universities. Once again, as it has throughout its history, and now in a new era, the extension service is helping America's farms and rural areas grow.

N.C. legislators pitching ideas to strengthen young wine industry

RALEIGH (AP) — The state's burgeoning wine industry could get a boost this year from lawmakers trying to build it into an economic power.

Bills intended to improve wine sales, wine education and winery tourism are all making their way through the Legislature. None has become law, but a bill that would bring wine tastings back to grocery stores passed the Senate on Thursday and may be close to final legislative approval. The stores stopped the tastings in October after a disagreement over such rules.

"It's good for the tourism thing," said Rep. Pryor Gibson, D-Anson, who is sponsoring several of the wine bills. "It's good for fine dining."

Legislators are also considering a \$500,000 budget proposal to help Surry Community College build a center for its grape-growing and wine-mak-

ing program. Another bill would give the school limited ability to sell the wine it produces.

North Carolina is best known for its sweet muscadine wines. But wineries in the Piedmont and the mountains, including the fast-growing segment in the Yadkin Valley that includes Surry County, are trying to build their reputations around fine wines.

The state is also trying to attract tourists to its winemaking hubs. As part of that effort, legislators want to move the N.C. Grape Council, which aids research, education and marketing, from the state Department of Agriculture to the Commerce Department, and add wine to the council's name. The Commerce Department oversees the state's travel and tourism department.

"We think that our emerging wineries can learn a lot from the

Carowinds of the world," said Jerry Douglas, senior vice president of marketing and sales at Biltmore Estate in Asheville, which has its own winery.

Another legislative proposal would give more money — \$500,000 rather than the usual \$350,000 — to the council.

Retailers say other legislative proposals, including one they say will shield them from a wholesaler's fee when they buy less than a full case of one type of wine, will help keep prices down. The House and Senate each passed their own versions of a bill with this provision.

Doug Diesing, owner of the Seaboard Wine Warehouse in Raleigh, said the fee would limit store selection or drive up prices.

"Most restaurants buy by the bottle," Diesing said. "If they have to pay more by the bottle to stock their bar, they have to raise their price."

Long Road to Fitness

400-pound man is walking across country as way to lose weight
E1



Sara Lee division to cut 775 jobs in North America, 400 in N.C. / D1

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New BCS poll will start a month into the season / C1

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TUESDAY, JULY 12, 2005

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N.C. wine industry shows potential, experts say

More than 180 attend wine conference at ASU

By Sherry Youngquist
JOURNAL REPORTER

BOONE

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CENTER

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■ *Sherry Youngquist can be reached in Mount Airy at (336) 789-9338 or at syoungquist@wsjournal.com*

Future Tense: Don't stick a cork in it; screw it

STEVE WELKER
Editorial page editor



I'm not really a wine snob, but I play one in real life.

When I tell old friends about the joys of living in North Carolina, I often rhapsodize about our area's wines. They think I'm knowledgeable. Truth is, I'm a rank amateur, but the turnip truck that dumped me seems to be receding in the distance while I become oriented to the Yadkin Valley Viticultural Area and its products.

Many years ago, my dad often traveled abroad and picked up the European tradition of serving wine with meals. Not every night, but often enough, my parents would have a glass with supper. Sometimes they would give me a sip to educate my palate, but it was years until I developed a taste for wine.

Living in Iowa for 30 years didn't add to my oenological education. When Hawkeyes reach for a fermented beverage, the label probably says Bud-

weiser, Busch or Pabst. Iowans care less about what year their beer was made than what month. "Did you try the January Heineken?" "Yes, but I much prefer the February Blatz."

Iowa claims to have about two-dozen wineries, all seemingly devoted to making "wine" out of anything except grapes. Iowa wines have scents of cranberries, apricots and plums because that's what's in them. Also dandelions and roses. The Amanas' dangerously delicious rhubarb wine, Piestengel, will blow the top off your head.

In school, I studied Spanish and German. Neither equipped me for ordering wines with French names. My education has come at the price of my dignity, lost through a long series of embarrassments. Memorable is the time I tried to impress an executive secretary by taking her to a high-class Des Moines restaurant (an oxymoron, I know). "I'll have the 'sal-aid nick-oh-ease' and a glass of 'sow-vig-none blank,'" said I. "I believe that's 'sa-laund nee-schwaa' (salade Nicoise) and 'saw-veen-yawn blonk (sauvignon blanc)," said she. If the floor hadn't been in my way, I would have slid under the table all the way to the wine cellar.

Moving to North Carolina's wine country has improved both my pronunciation and palate. I know that viognier, chardonnay

and cabernet rhyme, never mind how they're spelled. And when I open a bottle and the wine smells like wet dog or *eau de basement*, I no longer drink it, because I know it's "corked."

We amateur wine snobs all believe the only good wines come in a bottle with a natural cork. Screw-topped bottles and boxed wines are for cheapskates and winos. Synthetic corks might be all right — reputable vintners such as Kendall-Jackson and Clos du Bois ("cloh-doo-bwaa") use plastic corks — but only for wines to be consumed now. In our received wisdom, we wine snobs believe natural cork, preferably from Portugal, defines a good wine.

We might be right. Science has had a hard time producing viable alternatives to cork.

Cork is bark from a cork tree, a kind of oak. Workers peel the bark every nine years or so, but the process doesn't harm the tree, so it's a naturally renewable resource. The oldest and

largest known cork tree, called The Whistler, has produced cork in Portugal since 1820. Beginning with a tree's third cutting, usually when it's about 52 years old, an average tree will provide 12 to 18 harvests.

In each cutting, an average tree produces enough cork for 4,000 bottles. Like any wood, the cork varies in quality. The cheapest corks cost about 7 cents a piece; the best about 27.

Cork works so well as a stopper because, after being compressed into a bottle's neck, its cells expand to fill even the most microscopic imperfections in the glass. Those cells also act like little suction cups, grabbing the neck and holding the cork in place (corks didn't become popular closures until someone invented the cork screw around 1680). And although it is very resistant to absorbing water, natural cork allows a small amount of gas exchange as a wine matures, which helps it "age" and mellow.

As a natural product, cork has only two problems. Cork trees cannot be planted and grown fast enough to meet the rapidly rising worldwide demand for wine. And corks can carry microscopic bacteria and fungi, including one that produces TCA.

If you open a bottle of wine and it smells musty or moldy — like wet cardboard — it's probably tainted with 2, 4, 6 trichloroanisole. TCA stinks so bad that you could smell an eighth of a teaspoon dissolved in Reeves' swimming pools. It's not harmful — except that it ruins the pleasure of drinking any wine it contaminates. And by some industry estimates, it ruins one bottle in every 20.

Bleaching the corks doesn't work; the fungi thrive on chlorine. Chopping up cork, washing out any TCA and then binding the pieces is one solution, but it's costly and those corks don't seal or hold as tightly.

Synthetic corks, in contrast, hold almost too well. Introduced about 20 years ago, synthetic corks made from plastics and resins have names like Neocork, Nucork, Nomacorc and Supreme Corq. Most are manufactured with a honeycomb-like interior (so they can be compressed) and a smooth exterior surface. They're easily sterilized and the makers claim they add no plastic aroma to the wine (a subject much debated among

wine experts). However, the synthetics can be tough to extract and you can pretty much forget about cramming one back into the bottle. They also cost more than natural cork.

However, science has come up with a new (old) solution for replacing corks: screw-top caps.

An Englishman, Dan Rylands, invented the screw cap in 1889, but it never caught on with makers of fine wines. Aside from their aesthetic deficiencies, screw caps posed a problem for winemakers because they're made of metal that wine's acid corrodes, producing a distinctly metallic taste. Putting a piece of cork or plastic in the cap hasn't worked either.

However, French engineers have invented a high-tech screw cap, called a Stelvin, whose surface is sintered with a fine glass coating. It costs more, but it produces no flavors and it is sterile, so winemakers don't lose money on tainted product.

Stelvin-capped wines have proved popular in Australia and you'll soon see more on shelves in the United States.

Which gives me one problem. If the bottle doesn't have a cork, how will I know the wine is really good ... in the future?

Steve Welker is the editorial-page editor of The Mount Airy News. His e-mail address is swelker@mtairynews.com.

Letters to The News

The Mount Airy News welcomes letters from readers. All we need is your name, address and a telephone number we can call to confirm the letter is yours. The phone number isn't published.

Mail letters to Editorial Page Editor Steve Welker, The Mount Airy News, P.O. Box 808, Mount Airy, NC 27030 or e-mail swelker@mtairynews.com.

Anonymous, unsigned letters will not be printed. Letters from The News' circulation area are given preference.

5/23/05 MAN

SCC trustees express support for on-campus viticulture center

By **BRYAN GENTRY**
Staff Writer

DOBSON — The Surry Community College Board of Trustees gave formal support to the idea of establishing the North Carolina Center for Viticulture and Enology during its monthly meeting Monday after-

noon. money for the project in the next budget year.

Sells said the center would include a better environment for the college's viticulture and enology program, which is currently housed in an old maintenance warehouse facility.

"In addition ... the center

"I feel we need to continue leadership in this field. I would like to make a motion that the project presented by Dr. Sells ... be accepted by the board."

LaDonna McCarther, board vice-chair

noon.

Although the trustees are cautious and want some questions answered about the center's operations, they expressed optimism and enthusiasm about seeing it built on their campus.

"It's an idea that I have presented to the legislators, and they seem to like it because there's money in the budget for it," said SCC President Dr. Frank Sells. The Senate's budget, which passed early last month, would allot \$500,000 for planning the facility. The House budget, still under deliberation, also calls for some

will have classrooms, a resource library, a wine cellar with temperature control, instructors' offices and an auditorium, which can host conventions, large seminars and meetings for the wine industry," reads the proposal document Sells gave to legislators earlier this year.

The college would also use the auditorium for meetings and events such as graduation.

"I feel we need to continue leadership in this field," said Vice Chair LaDonna Mc-

See CENTER, page 3

The Mount Airy News Tuesday, June 14, 2005-3

CENTER: Would serve a variety of purposes

Continued from page 1

Carther. "I would like to make a motion that the project presented by Dr. Sells ... be accepted by the board."

After her motion, the board discussed their concerns and their hope for the center.

Mike Royster supported the idea, but he said he wants the board to be cautious. State law requires that the college's operational expenses be paid for by money from local budgets. With local budgets tightening, Royster said he wonders if the county would be able to budget enough to the college to support the viticulture center.

"Would this center be primarily self-supporting, or will the burden fall on the college to maintain it?" he asked.

"This is a great idea," he said. "But we as trustees need to make sure that we don't outgrow our ability to keep what we have maintained.

"What I don't want to see happen is us ... building something that the whole community uses, and it's a boon to the economy, but we're stuck with having to pay to maintain it," he said.

Dan Stone of Pilot Mountain said the center would probably not break even, but it would be worth the support of the local

economy.

"The county found a way to help bring water out to Zephyr Road, as did the city of Dobson," he said. "I think they'll find a way to help us, too."

"It's economic development for the whole area," said Barbara Harrell. She said the center would help increase tourism.

"I don't think we'll have another opportunity like it," said board member Gene Rees. "I think it's very well thought out. This is one where you step up to the plate and swing."

"I do believe it has an opportunity that we won't get any other way," Sells said, adding that there is risk involved in the project, but having the legislature's support and help is worth the risk.

He said he has received a lot of positive responses from local people he has approached with the idea.

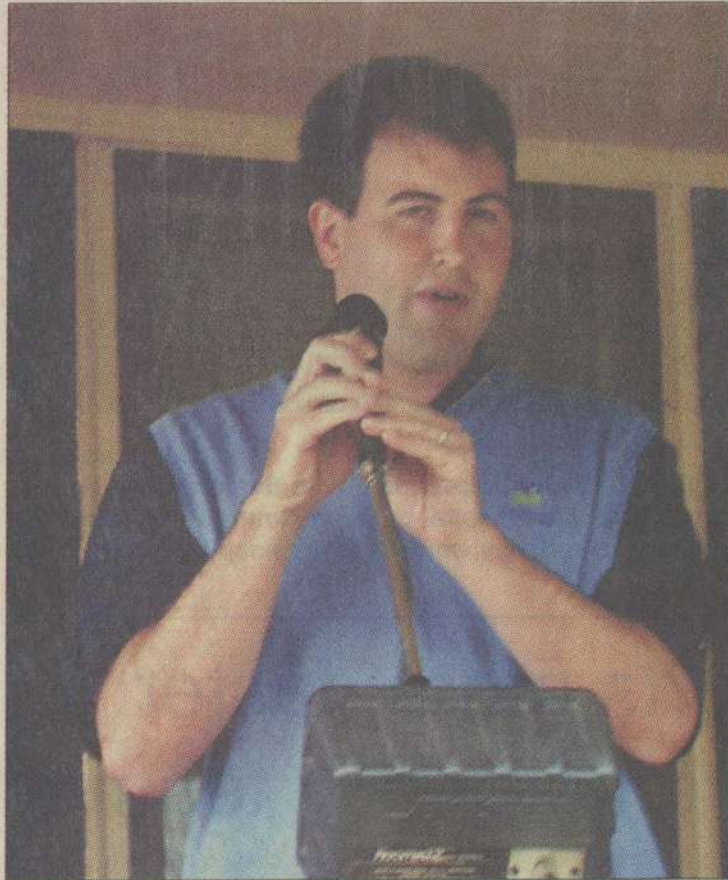
Stone added that the center provides a good opportunity for the college to develop its niche in viticulture and enology.

The board unanimously approved McCarther's motion to support the idea. Chairman Charles Madison said that the motion does not commit the college to building the center, only to support the idea and investigate it further.

6/14/05 MAN

5/15/05

Harrell pushing for viticulture center



Bryan Gentry/The Mount Airy News

Rep. Jim Harrell III speaks to a group of democratic supporters during a barbecue at Creek Ridge Vineyards Saturday. The democratic precinct Stewart's Creek number two sponsored the lunch.

By **BRYAN GENTRY**
Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — While attending a barbecue at one of Surry County's newest vineyards, Rep. Jim Harrell III spoke about his belief that viticulture will continue to strengthen the local economy. He hopes to see a viticulture center in Dobson that will attract people from across the nation.

Creek Ridge Vineyards on Urban Garden Lane hosted Harrell and other elected representatives, including Judge Spencer Key, at a barbecue Saturday afternoon.

Harrell said he is working on the effort for the state to create a North Carolina Viticulture and Enology center at Surry Community College. He said the state House of Representatives has, in its budget bill, appropriated \$1 million towards the project. But local people must accept and work toward that goal to make it really work, he said.

"We need to jump on board before anyone can take it from us," he said. "This is a venture that we must pursue ... If we sit back at all, we could lose this project to another region."

See CENTER, page 3A

CENTER: Proposed here

Continued from page 1A

He said other areas of the state, such as Duplin County, have made wine longer than Surry County has, and could try to get the center placed in their regions. But he said this is the right area for many reasons.

Those reasons include the number of vineyards springing up across the county, the location, with I-77 coming straight through the county, and Surry Community College's viticulture program.

He said the viticulture center would bring many benefits to the area, as people would come from all over the country to study wine making. They would patronize local hotels, vineyards, restaurants and stores while visiting the center.

The center would also include an auditorium that all schools in the county could use.

"We're looking at a total package, a \$10 million facility," Harrell said.

On May 3, Harrell introduced House Bill 1578, which would allocate \$5 million of state money to the project. Al-

though this bill has not passed and become a part of the house's budget, Harrell feels the \$1 million will be enough to start the project, buy land and pay for architectural designs if it remains in the final budget.

The state senate included just a half million dollars for the viticulture center in its budget bill.

Harrell said the state would probably eventually give \$4 million for the project. The other \$6 million would have to come from private contributions, including some money from SCC's budget.

"Our community is very excited. That's the key," he said. When other members of the legislature visit Surry County, Harrell says they need to see support for the project.

"We have the infrastructure, we have the workforce, we have to bring money and jobs here as an investment," he said.

"I think, if we build it, people will come," he said. "It's a really intriguing industry."

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Elkin Tribune
YV Wine Festival
Narrative
for Tabloid
5/6/05

In 1999, Surry Community College formed a Viticulture Program Advisory Committee with representatives from the NC Community College System, NC Grape Council, NC State University, NC Cooperative Extension Service, Shelton Vineyards, The Biltmore Company and various Surry Community College departments. The Committee gave full endorsement for the proposed Viticulture program. As a result in the fall of 1999, the college began a series of Viticulture courses through the Continuing Education Division. A two-year degree in Viticulture was approved by the North Carolina Community College System and added as the fifth agriculture related program in the fall of 2000; Enology was added to this program in the fall of 2001. Surry Community College has received \$300,000 in private and public grant funds for support of the Viticulture/Enology program since its inception.

In the fall of 2004, agricultural based programs offered thirteen unduplicated curriculum classes taught by three full-time instructors. The Viticulture and Enology program has attracted an interesting mix of students including recently graduated high school students, tobacco farmers, entrepreneurs, second and third generation farm owners searching for alternative crops that might save the family farm, and land owners looking toward retirement. Students are not only from the service area of Surry and Yadkin but also from the surrounding counties of Wilkes, Stokes, Forsyth, and from as far away as Alamance, Rockingham, Nash, Mecklenburg, and Wake. In addition to curriculum courses, classes/seminars are offered through the Continuing Education Division to provide opportunities for those not interested in a degree program. Since the establishment of the Viticulture and Enology program over four hundred students have taken some type of wine grape class.

The impact of the Viticulture and Enology program has been immediately exhibited through the increased acreage of wine grapes planted throughout North Carolina. The latest statistics of the North Grape Council note that there are currently 350 vineyards across North Carolina with a total of 1,350 vineyard acres. Student interest in planting vineyards continues with the current viticulture class planning on either establishing a vineyard or expanding their current vineyards in the spring of 2005. Wine making continues to grow with thirty wineries already established in North Carolina. Twelve of these wineries are within a thirty-minute drive of Surry Community College and there are currently two more under construction in the college service area. Economic development activity related to the industry has continued to flourish in the establishment of new restaurants, overnight accommodations, retail ventures, product representation, consulting services and three area wine related festivals. Grape growing has proven to be a viable agricultural alternative yielding a profit margin comparable with tobacco.

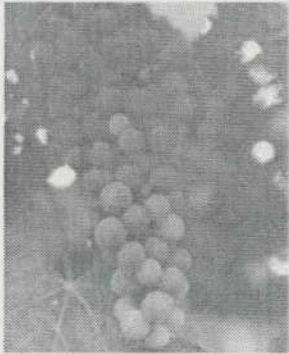
Under the leadership of Dr. Robert McRitchie, Enology instructor and Gill Giese, Viticulture instructor, Surry Community College established an internship program for students in the Viticulture/Enology program in the spring of 2004. The internship program is supported through funding from the Golden Leaf Foundation. Students work

side by side with vineyard and winery owners learning the challenges associated with quality grape and wine production. Students are being employed in the industry and are helping to build an educated workforce for this rapidly expanding industry.

Surry Community College provides the support system needed for farmers and entrepreneurs who are rebuilding an agricultural economy for both the college service area of Surry and Yadkin counties and the state of North Carolina through grape and wine production. This college provides applied research, demonstration, evaluation, technical support and workforce development for vineyard and winery owners. For more information about the Viticulture/Enology program contact giese@surry.edu 336-386-3461 or mcritchier@surry.edu 336-386-3408.

in Valley wine country.
urry County Chapter of
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in Elkin in time to enjoy
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and a winetasting ticket for the festival.
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Grape Production
and Winemaking
at
Surry Community
College
Dobson, North Carolina

Surry Community College offers a wide range of training opportunities for persons interested in the grape growing and wine industry. Students may choose from a degree, diploma, or certificate program or short-term seminars/training sessions. Curriculum courses include classroom and practical laboratory applications of viticulture and enology. Topics include: Introduction to Viticulture, Vineyard Establishment and Development, Vineyard Operations, Grape Pests, Diseases, and Disorders, Wines of the World, Winery Design, Winery Operations, Wine Production, Wine Analysis, Wine Marketing, and other related studies. Learning opportunities include hands-on training in the 4 acre vineyard and bonded winery located on the campus, internships with industry, field trips, and seminars featuring industry experts. On-line classes are available.



For more information:

Viticulture: Gill Giese

giese@surry.cc.nc.us or 336-386-3461

Enology: Dr. Bob McRitchie,

mcritchie@surry.cc.nc.us or 336-386-3408

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SARAH BYRD
ADVERTISING MANAGER

April 14, 2005

Dear Merchants,

As you probably have already heard The Yadkin Valley will celebrate it's Fourth Annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival on Saturday May 21, 2005 at the Elkin Municipal Park in Elkin. After the great weather and turn out from last year I know you won't miss this year because it is going to be even bigger and better.

In conjunction with the festival The Tribune and The Yadkin Ripple will publish a special tabloid section on Wednesday, May 18 in The Tribune and Thursday, May 19 in The Yadkin Ripple we will also print 5000 extra copies to be distributed to local motels and chamber of commerce's. Bringing the circulation of this special section to 18,000. This special tabloid will serve as the official program for the festival.

We are very excited about what the fascinating industry of grape growing and wine making will mean to the economy of this area.

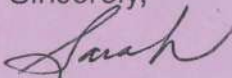
You can be a part of this special event by placing an advertisement. Below are prices and sizes.

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Please call the advertising department for more information.

Hurry ad deadline is Friday, April 29, 2005.

Sincerely,



Sarah Byrd



Bryan Gentry/The Mount Airy News

Old North State Winery employee Sara Coalson packs up bottles of wine to be shipped. Direct shipping has become an important part of the wine industry, and a Supreme Court ruling Monday might open up doors for more states to receive out-of-state wine.

Supreme Court ruling pleases wine makers

Could increase wineries' direct shipping sales

By **BRYAN GENTRY**
Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — Local wine makers are looking forward to increased direct shipping sales as states react to Monday's Supreme Court ruling.

The court ruled that a state cannot ban out-of-state wineries from shipping directly to customers in the state if in-state wineries are allowed direct shipping. This could allow locally-made wines to reach customers in states that once banned direct shipments from other

states' wineries.

"It's some of the best news that the North Carolina wine industry has had in a long time," said Gray Draughn, general manager of Old North State Winery.

"We ship out probably five to eight cases a week, just to the reciprocal states that we can ship to," he said. "We also turn down as many cases (requested from states) that we can't ship to. That's really probably doubled our shipping business."

Shelton Vineyards Winery President

George Denka said the change could increase gift shipping. "We have customers ... every day in our tasting room who would like to ship wine to a friend or relative back home. In many cases, it's not allowed because of that state's laws."

Direct shipping has become an important source of income for wineries.

"It gives us direct access to wine consumers who are looking for the product,

See RULING , page 2A

County board of education Oks facility recommendation

By **WENDY BYERLY**
WOOD
Staff Writer

DOBSON — The Surry County Board of Education approved recommendations from the Buildings and Ground Task Force with a 4-1 vote at its Monday night meeting.

At the board's April meeting, members acknowledged receipt of the recommendations and voted to hold off on making a decision for a month in order to hear public comment.

Those recommendations include using current available funding to do the Central Middle School addition/renovation and then, with any additional funding or the next available funding, identify and acquire land and begin design process for two new schools — a new middle school for the east dis-

"The only thing I would look at is using the existing cafeteria and enlarging it, rather than moving the plumbing, and then build extra classrooms."

Jeff Hall,
board member

Yadkin Valley Wine Festival Celebrates Fourth Year

By Julie Pharr

ELKIN, N.C. — The Yadkin Valley Wine Festival began about four years ago by the Yadkin Valley Chamber of Commerce, then called the Elkin Jonesville Chamber of Commerce, to emphasize the burgeoning wine industry.

“The chamber started the festival as a way of promoting the grape growing and wine industry in the Yadkin Valley,” said Teresa Osborne, president of the chamber. “We limit participation to those wineries who produce wine from at least 85 percent of Yadkin Valley grown grapes.”

The festival spotlights wine from the Yadkin Valley — an American Viticultural Area (AVA) that encompasses 1.4 million acres including all of Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties, along with portions of Stokes, Forsyth, Davie and Davidson counties.

The Yadkin Valley region was declared an AVA Feb. 7, 2003, by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and is North Carolina’s first and only designation of this type. The appellation or name “Yadkin Valley” is an important marketing tool that recognizes the area as a sound and distinct grape-growing region and allows growers and winemakers to establish Yadkin Valley branding for their products.

Elkin is in the geographic heart of the Yadkin Valley wine-producing region. The chamber changed its name recently in an effort to include more businesses in its coverage area that were not in Elkin or Jonesville.

“Our service area has always extended far beyond those boundaries, and the name change was a way to recognize that fact,” Osborne said. “It was also done to encourage the wineries to become members of the chamber of commerce.”

Osborne says the festival was the “brainchild” of Rebel Good, the publisher of the Elkin Tribune, who presented the idea to the chamber’s board of directors.

“After attending the North Carolina Wine Festival at Tanglewood in 2001, I realized that if we were to position ourselves as being the heart of the Yadkin Valley wine region that we would need a signature event,” Good said.



Submitted Photo

Wine festival goers sample wine and buy wine-related products and accessories.

The fourth annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival is scheduled for May 21 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Elkin Municipal Park in Elkin.

“The festival’s growth has been phe-

nomenal, and we anticipate seeing it continue as the interest in the Yadkin Valley wine growing region increases,” Osborne said.

Attendance at the first two festivals

was around 5,000 each year, Osborne said. Favorable weather brought in a crowd of about 15,000 for the festival’s third year. Participants came from Charlotte, Wilkesboro, Mount Airy, Winston-Salem and parts of Virginia and other surrounding areas.

Derrill Rice is the festival chairman for this year’s event.

“The Yadkin Valley Wine Festival committee is in full swing in preparation of our fourth annual event,” Rice said.

More than 14 North Carolina wineries are expected to participate with wine tasting booths or displays including: Black Wolf Vineyards, Dobson; Chatham Hill Winery, Morrisville; Grassy Creek Vineyards & Winery, State Road; Hanover Park Vineyard, Yadkinville; Laurel Gray Vineyards, Hamptonville; Old North State Winery, Mount Airy; Raffaldini Vineyards & Winery, Ronda; RagApple Lassie Vineyards, Boonville; Raylen Vineyards, Mocksville; Round Peak Vineyards, Mount Airy; Shelton Vineyards, Dobson; Stony Knoll, Dobson; Westbend Vineyards, Lewisville; and Windy Gap Vineyards, Ronda,

See Next Page.

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Editorials

Center for industry

North Carolina would nourish its re-emerging grape-growing and wine industry with a \$5-million Center for Viticulture and Enology if the General Assembly approves an appropriations bill introduced Monday by State Rep. Jim Harrell III, D-90th District.

House Bill 1578 proposes that Surry Community College would host the center. The facilities would include a state-of-the-art, bonded winery for producing quality wines; classrooms and offices; a resource library; a climate-controlled wine cellar; and an auditorium for seminars, conventions and conferences.

The choice of the Dobson-based school is logical, practical and economical, because Surry Community College already offers the East Coast's only two-year degree, diploma and certificate programs in viticulture (cultivating grapes) and enology (winemaking). The college also supports applied research efforts and provides consultation, evaluation, technical support and workforce development for vineyard and winery owners. And, of course, Surry Community College has a central location in the North Carolina's only designated American Viticulture Area: the Yadkin Valley Appellation.

Harrell suggests to his fellow legislators that the N.C. Viticulture and Enology Center would serve as a teaching laboratory and demonstration model for the grape-growing and wine industry.

More than that, we believe, it is an important component — some economists would say an essential component — in this region's economic redevelopment.

Almost 30 years ago, USDA economist Clark Edwards tackled the question of why some rural areas' economies expand while others stagnate or decline. In a single paper that influenced a whole generation of planners and policymakers fighting losses of rural population and jobs, Edwards identified five factors and how they interrelate to produce rural economic growth. The five keys are increasing the availability of resources, advancing technology, expanding markets, conquering the effects of producers' being spread over a wide area, and building institutions.

From Edwards' work came the concept of "industry cluster resource centers" (ICRCs) as a way to positively influence all five factors.

In 2000, the North Carolina Community College System and the Office of Economic Development at UNC-Chapel Hill produced a plan to establish ICRCs in North Carolina. They were described as "one-stop shops for an industry — somewhere member firms can go for help in translating their organizational needs into education and training requirements, or for expertise that can enhance their competitiveness." The planners had 11 industries in mind, such as agriculture, banking and finance, biotechnology, etc. Each ICRC was to support its industry throughout the state, but the choices of where to put the centers depended on finding concentrations of related businesses in a defined geographic area.

The NCCCS ultimately decided to seek state funding for ICRCs to serve eight industries.

Viticulture and winemaking weren't on the list. Five years ago, they had barely re-emerged as industries in North Carolina — we say "re-emerged," because this state was a major producer of wine and grape juice before Prohibition — and few people then could have forecast their rapid growth in the Yadkin Valley.

Today, applying the same criteria that NCCCS and the Office of Economic Development used in 2000, viticulture and enology not only would be on the list for an ICRC, they would be near the top. And Surry Community College would be the most logical host.

Harrell is doing this county, this region and the state a real service by offering the N.C. Center for Viticulture and Enology for the legislature's consideration.

However, this is not the best year for it. We repeatedly have urged the legislature to reduce spending and hold down taxes while our state's sputtering economy regains its strength. Appropriating \$5 million for a viticulture center runs counter to that philosophy. The grape-growing and winemaking industry has grown this far without an ICRC and it can get along a little longer without one.

That said, the viticulture center remains a good idea. We hope Harrell continues to pursue it and to enlist the support of other legislators for this appropriation. When the time comes that the state can afford \$5 million and establishes the N.C. Viticulture and Enology Center at Surry Community College, we'll be among the first to raise a toast to the General Assembly for its wise investment in this growing industry and in this region's economic future.

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Editorials

Hitting a sweet spot

In Thursday's editorial about tourism marketing, we forgot to mention that half of the Golden LEAF Foundation's \$225,000 grant is for wine.

Not to buy it.

To promote it.

Specifically, at least half of the grant must be spent to advertise and promote the Yadkin Valley's wineries, vineyards and associated enterprises.

The money could hardly have come at a better time.

This region's burgeoning wine industry has reached another "sweet spot" in its development, according to a forthcoming report by two Wake Forest University sociologists. Their study found that the industry is shooting off in more directions than an untrained viognier vinifera vine in spring.

Ian Taplin and Saylor Breckenridge, professor and assistant professor of sociology, respectively, documented the rapid growth of retail wineries and commercial wine production for a study that will be published in the 2005 issue of *Research in the Sociology of Work*. They went door-to-door to wineries in the Yadkin River Valley and across the state to find out how the wine industry has taken root in North Carolina. They looked at how good grape-growing soil and climate conditions (particularly in the Yadkin Valley area), the decline of tobacco farming and a few pioneering entrepreneurs gave the fledgling wine industry its start.

In the same way that it takes time for a good red wine to mature, it takes time for grape vines to mature — Shelton Vineyards planted its first vinifera grapes in 1999 and they're just reaching their full potential this year — and time to establish a new industry. After several years of acquiring and developing the new skill sets for growing grapes and making wines, the Yadkin Valley wine-growing region is entering what should be a highly productive period. With more of the wineries' production entering the consumer market, there's a much greater need for advertising the wines and wine-related enterprises, the Taplin/Breckenridge study says.

The two researchers found that even North Carolina's small boutique wineries — the fastest-growing group of wineries — are likely to make at least a small profit, even with as little as 10 acres planted to wine-making grapes. Just because they're small doesn't mean they can't compete if they concentrate on producing high-quality wines, Taplin and Breckenridge said.

Coincidentally, in a newspaper review published just two weeks ago, Victorville, Calif.-based wine connoisseur and columnist Bob Johnson called his readers' attention to Chateau Laurinda's cabernet franc and blackberry merlot from Sparta and Windy Gap Vineyards' viognier from Ronda. It's pretty impressive that two of our area's wineries can attract attention from 3,000 miles away.

However, if they have to rely on the occasional wine connoisseur's newspaper column to promote their products, the grape growers and winemakers of the Yadkin Valley may have to wait years for large numbers of customers to find their products.

The grape growers and wineries have a good story to tell, but they need to tell it far and wide.

People who appreciate good wines will listen, because they're often searching for something new or unique. This area is blessed with unusual soils and the climate to grow vinifera grapes and make distinctive wines. The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms recognized those special factors when it awarded North Carolina's first American Viticultural Area designation to the Yadkin Valley. A second AVA may result from a petition filed by the Vineyards of Swan Creek (Raffaldini, Windy Gap, Laurel Gray and Buck Shoals). Someday there might even be a Round Peak AVA to complement the distinction of our Round Peak-style musicians.

However, most American consumers won't know about our wines, wineries and vineyard tours — plus nearby restaurants, motels and bed & breakfasts — unless someone tells them.

The marketing task is being undertaken by Yadkin Valley Host, an alliance of tourism interests in Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties together with the Yadkin Valley Winegrowers Association. The partners pledged \$100,000 to the effort. As we noted on Thursday, the Golden LEAF Foundation has added \$225,000 more. That will support a year-long promotional campaign including advertising, public relations, direct response, festival presentations and special tasting events.

As we said, this couldn't have come at a better time.

The wine industry has left its infancy. Now it's ready for a growth spurt. An active, on-going program of advertising, marketing and promotion is just what's needed to nourish and stimulate this growing segment of the area's economy.

MAN 2-19-05

U.S. wine sales abroad up

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Robust marketing and a weak dollar led to a sharp jump last year in U.S. wine sales abroad, industry observers said.

Preliminary figures released by the U.S. Commerce Department and reported Friday by the San Francisco-based Wine Institute showed wine exports were up 28 percent from the previous year, totaling \$794 million in winery revenues. Some 95 percent of wine exports are from California.

By volume, the increase was 29 percent, to 119 million gal-

lons.

The top overseas market for California wine was the United Kingdom. Export revenues to that country were up 41 percent to \$299 million, and volume was up 20 percent to 38 million gallons.

Market Report

Dow Jones ▲ Up 8.87
 S&P 500 ▲ Up 0.58
 NASDAQ ▲ Up 4.65

Business

Treasury bills

3-Month	1-Year
2.480%	2.95%



Maria Magher/The Mount Airy News

Father Demetri Kangelaris blesses Panos Old North State Restaurant with holy water and a prayer at a special party to celebrate its opening. Kangelaris, a priest with the Greek Orthodox Church in Winston-Salem, explained that, in the Greek Orthodox tradition, a blessing is given to all new ventures in life.

Panos opens in Old North State winery

By MARIA MAGHER
 Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — Panos Old North State Restaurant is doing well after its first week on Main Street, according to its owner.

The restaurant opened last Monday on the first floor of the Old North State Winery.

The atmosphere is family dining. The menu includes French-American cuisine.

"It's classic American foods with French sauces, basically," said Athanasios Katsoudas, chef and owner.

One featured entree is the herb-grilled salmon with a lemon-chive aioli sauce. Others include a mushroom-stuffed flounder, a grilled cajun-spiced pork chop and a rosemary roasted half-baked chicken.

At 24 years old, Katsoudas is in his first venture as a restaurant owner, but he comes from a family with a long history in the restaurant business.

His father, for whom he named the restaurant, owned several area restaurants before he passed away in March.

When Katsoudas was only 5 years old, his family moved

from Greece to Winston-Salem so that his father could pursue business opportunities here.

Katsoudas later earned an associate's degree in culinary technology and another in hotel restaurant management before earning a bachelor's degree in hospitality supervision.

He has worked as a chef at Noble's Grille and Forsyth Country Club, both in Winston-Salem.

"I've always wanted my own restaurant," Katsoudas said. "I always knew I'd own my own, but didn't know when."

Katsoudas said he sees his youth as a benefit, not a disadvantage.

"I can work a hundred hours a week and it not faze me," he said.

The restaurant is open for both lunch and supper every day of the week. Diners can come inside for a relaxed meal or can order food to take home.

Katsoudas said the restaurant eventually will offer catering services and will be available for private parties.

For now, he said, "I'm just looking to do good food and good service. I'm not looking to reinvent the wheel."



Maria Magher/The Mount Airy News
 Panos Old North State Restaurant opened last week inside the Old North State Winery on Main Street in Mount Airy.

Hunters honored as citizens of the year

By **WENDY BYERLY WOOD**
Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — For only the second time in its history, at its 44th annual meeting, the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce named a couple as "Citizens of the Year."

The award recipients are a husband and wife duo, Craig and Michele Hunter.

"The citizen of the year is a person who has touched many lives. It is the highest honor the chamber annually bestows, it is the who's who of the community," said Burke Robertson, 2004 chair of the chamber's board of directors, as he began uncovering the secret of the recipients' identity.

"To serve the community means to sacrifice your time to make this a better place to call 'home,'" he said.

Robertson said at Tuesday's night's annual chamber banquet that the first person honored

"played a key role in nonprofits in the community and approaches opportunities with a level-headed attitude. This person is an ultimate team player."

He said she served on numerous nonprofit organizations' boards, including the Surry Arts Council and Reeves Community Center, and "is one of the founding members of Young Life."

He said she was elected in 2001 to the Surry County Board of Education and "serves as an advocate in and for the schools."

Robertson went on to describe the second award recipient.

"This person is one who thinks progressive and aggressive. Since '92, he has been a vital part of two businesses and has helped countless others," Robertson said.

Also a founding member of Young Life, Craig Hunter has served on the boards of both The Shepherd's House and the Franklin Youth Foundation and

was elected to the Surry County Board of Commissioners in 2002.

As he announced the winners' names, the Hunters stood up and hugged each other. They receiving a standing ovation.

"Wow, thank you so much," said Michele after she and Craig received their award. "I view service as a privilege and as a great example to our children of giving back to the community."

"I want to thank God first of all," Craig said. "We are very blessed. I have the most incredible wife in the whole world. She is an incredible partner and my best friend. Thank you so much."

Other award winners were honored during the annual meeting.

A special Lifetime Achievement Award surprised Jim Grimes who, among his many accomplishments, served as the

See AWARDS, page 6A



Wendy Byerly Wood/The Mount Airy News

Michele and Craig Hunter, center, accept their award as "2004 Mount Airy Citizens of the Year." Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce President David Bradley made the presentation Tuesday at the chamber's annual meeting as 2004 board Chairman Burke Robertson looked on.

Provost: Universities can spur economic growth

By **WENDY BYERLY WOOD**
Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — Institutions of higher education should play a key role in economic development.

That was the message of guest speaker Dr. Melvin N. Johnson, provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs at Winston-Salem State University, at the 44th annual meeting of the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce.

After presenting a new promotional video about Winston-Salem State, Johnson said, "Institutes of higher education have the opportunity to be leaders in economic development. It has not always been that way."

He said colleges and universities now serve in several roles: as powerful economic drivers, as technology setters, as employers and as investors.

"I think the economy of the future will rely on intellect and knowledge — that is a key resource," he said. "We think universities will fuel economic development."

He gave examples of areas where higher educational institutes have helped spawn economic growth — Silicon Valley, for example, where businesses capitalized on research at Stanford University.

The other area he mentioned was Research Triangle Park, which benefits from proximity to the

See PROVOST, page 6A



Wendy Byerly Wood/The Mount Airy News

Dr. Melvin N. Johnson, provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs at Winston-Salem State University, speaks Tuesday night to guests at the 44th annual meeting of the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce.



Wendy Byerly Wood/The Mount Airy News

Award winners at the 44th annual meeting of the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce are, from left, Craig and Michele Hunter, citizens of the year; Ed and Charlie Shelton, Travel and Tourism Award of Excellence; Gray Draughn of Old North State Winery, Small Business of the Year; David White of Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Co-operative, Business in Education Award; Amy Whitaker, Ambassador of the Year; and Jim Grimes, special Lifetime Achievement Award. Not present was Michella Huff, recipient of the Public Service Award.

AWARDS: Grimes cited for lifetime achievement

Continued from page 1A

chamber president for 30 years. He has worked with the Boy Scouts for 55 years, is an Eagle Scout and a member of the Order of the Arrow and has had perfect attendance in the Mount Airy Rotary for 40 years.

"He is passionate about his work, but it is all voluntary now," said chamber President David Bradley as he began revealing hints about the award winner. "It is amazing how much information about this community he has and he remembers facts about the community ... in intimate detail.

"Since he moved here in 1965, he has been an ambassador for this town," Bradley added.

This year's Small Business of the Year award went to Old North State Winery, which "has become a landmark destination," said Robertson, who presented the award.

Winery manager Gray Draughn accepted the award.

The Business in Education Award went to Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Co-operative for its Round Up Fund that helps hundreds of children and families in need of clothing, kerosene, glasses and other necessities. David White accepted the award for Surry-Yadkin.

Amy Whitaker was given the Ambassador of the Year award for her work with the chamber and the Administrative Assistants and Professionals Luncheon that fell into her lap at the last minute.

"If you are looking for energy, this person is energy personified," said Jack Horne, who presented the award.

John Springthorpe III gave out the Public Service Award.

The recipient, Michella Huff, was unable to attend. Springthorpe said, "When tourists enter the town, they notice the vibrant downtown and the friendly people.

"The colors we see help us," he said. "This person supervises all aspects of upkeep of the city cemetery, but she also coordinates events like the Christmas tree lighting, the dedication of the greenway and more."

"She is one of only four certified arborists in the area," he added.

Tanya Jones presented the Travel and Tourism Award of Excellence to Charlie and Ed Shelton of Shelton Vineyards.

"Economic development is so important and I believe tourism is the economy," said Jones. "These recipients are two connected brothers. They were born and raised in Mount Airy and taught to dream. They have come full circle. They started in Toast, went to Winston-Salem, went to Charlotte and then came back to a Surry County that was challenged economically. They dreamed and bought a farm in 1994 and started a world-class winery in a challenged community."

"They set out to teach the hungry to feed themselves and donated funds to Surry Community College to start a winery program," Jones continued. "When they met obstacles, they turned them into stepping stones."

"How can you not be fired up to live in this community?" Robertson asked after the awards were presented. "Not only is this a beautiful location..., (but) we are the friendly city and we have some of the best people living in this area."

PROVOST: Triad region has great potential to grow

Continued from page 1A

University of North Carolina, North Carolina State University, Duke University and the biotechnology work being done at North Carolina Central University.

"We seem to think in the Piedmont Triad we are rich with colleges as well and that will help with the development of the Piedmont Triad Research Park and businesses like Dell," Johnson said.

He said Winston-Salem State's economic impact includes employing more than 800 people with salaries and benefits and buying more than \$24 million in supplies locally.

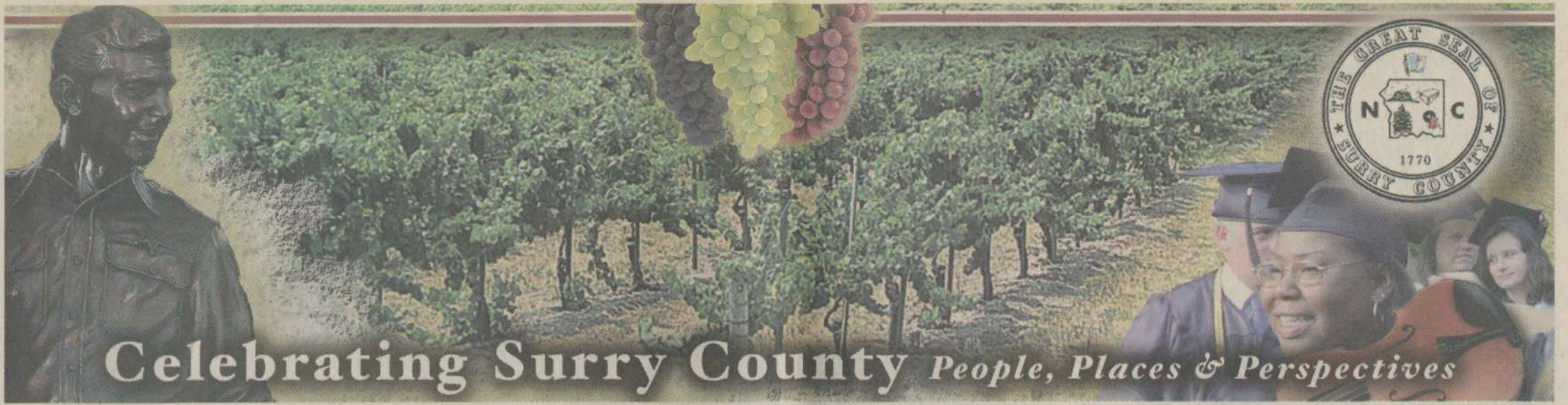
"Granted, the missions of higher institutes of learning are to provide higher education for students, but this is a given at every school.... They should be fostering economic develop-

ment in the regions they are in," he said.

"It is a continued debate on campuses," Johnson admitted. "The faculty believes increasing institutions' emphasis on economic development will decrease the emphasis on teaching and research, but we think we can have both. And the goal in North Carolina is to have both."

He said WSSU's motto is "Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve." The school's staff and students put in more than 64,000 hours of community service every year, according to Johnson. He said that equals \$500,000 in economic impact.

"Universities along with communities ... can really transform economies," he said. "By working with other colleges, community colleges, businesses, over time we're going to measure their economic value and impact."



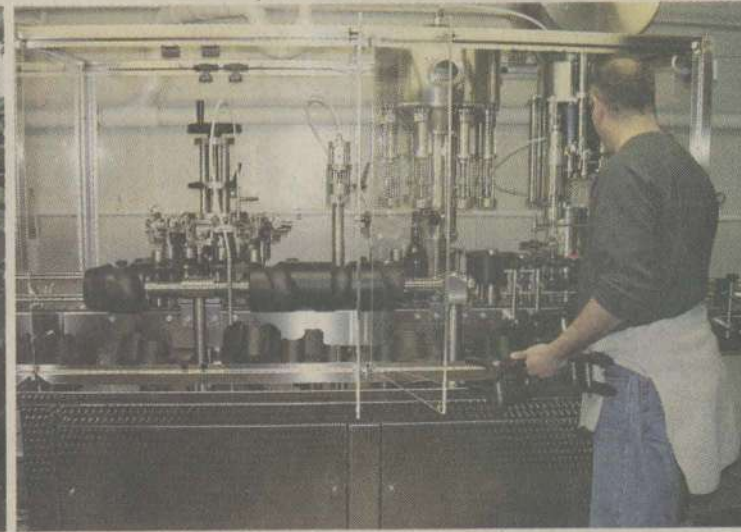
Celebrating Surry County *People, Places & Perspectives*





WINE & FARMING INDUSTRIES

A special supplement to The Mount Airy News



Old North State brings growers together

MOUNT AIRY — The Old North State Winegrowers Association Inc. was incorporated as a member-owned agricultural cooperative in November 2001, following several months of planning and discussions among a number of independent growers of vinifera and hybrid wine grape varieties.

The group began under the name of Yadkin Valley Winegrowers Cooperative in late 2000. Surry Community College and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service's Surry Center sponsored and nurtured the fledgling organization.

The efforts to provide reliable sales channels for grape growers in the changing agricultural economy of North Carolina were recognized by the Golden LEAF Foundation in December 2000, and it provided a grant to assist with startup and planning. The grant was in conjunction with funding for the Viticulture and Enology Program at Surry Community College, as well as research efforts by the Surry Center of the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, and the government of Surry County.

This joint effort was aimed at assisting farmers involved in shifting to new primary crops, with a strong focus on wine grape production.

The Old North State Winegrowers Association was formally launched with a membership offering in November 2001. At an organizational meeting, members elected directors. The co-op directors subsequently adopted a business plan and began the process of hiring professional management to implement that plan.

The founding board members, committee chairs, members and advisors from 2001 — many of whom remain active with the association and the winery — are Fred Jones, chairperson, of Fisher Peak Vineyard, Mount Airy; Tom Webb, vice chairperson, Mount Airy; Billy Needham, treasurer, Fox Creek Vine-

Shore of Sanders Ridge Vineyards in Boonville, General Manager Gray Draughn, Jerry Haynes, Kerry Johnson, Judy Rees of River Rhys Vineyard in Ararat, Rob Kornegay of Copeland Vineyards, Paula Hamby, Fred Wallace, Heather Marsh, Lynn Jones, Renee Simpson and Anne Webb; Terry Garwood, extension horticulture agent; Charles Boles and Robert McRitchie of Surry Community College; and Old North State's first winemaker, Stephen Rigby.

The winery on Main Street in Mount Airy opened in 2003.

Old North State introduced its new wine label, "38 Vines," to the market in the spring of 2004.

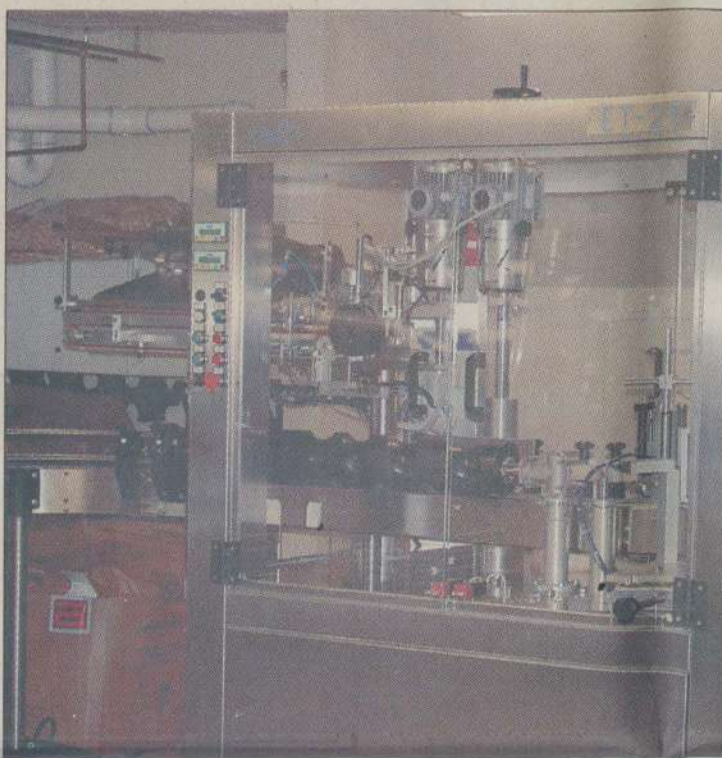
Throughout its existence, the Old North State Winegrowers Foundation has continued to assist vineyard owners with technical services, bulk purchasing of supplies and grape brokerage services.

In 2005, a restaurant called panos opened inside the winery building.



The winepress is in the basement of the winery on Main Street.

MAN File photo



MAN File photo

secretary, Rock Hill Vineyards, Ararat; committee persons Carl Massey, Jay Mosley of Old Mill Vineyard in Mount Airy, Randy and Vivian Fulk of Medley Meadows Vineyard in King, Neil

The machine for making the wine is housed in the winery in the basement of its Main Street facility.

Round Peak adds winery

By **JULIE PHARR**
Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — The 2005 harvest at Round Peak Vineyards will be processed on site this fall.

"We have just signed a contract to begin construction of the winery on the property," said Janet Martin, one of the four owners.

April marked the five-year anniversary of when the first vines were planted at Round Peak Vineyards, which is at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, off NC 89 near I-77.

"We hope that the winery will be completed at the end of July or the first part of August in time for the 2005 harvest," Martin said. "We are thrilled about moving on to the next step. We have been working toward having the whole operation, but we have done it in increments."

The tasting room at Round Peak will remain open throughout the construction period so visitors will get to see the work in progress.

"It has really been a tremendous challenge," Martin said about getting into the wine industry, "but so rewarding and fun. We've met so many wonderful folks in Surry County and the tourists that come by."

The vineyard sits at a 1,300-foot elevation where views of Fisher's Peak, Saddle Mountain and Round Peak, the vineyards' namesake, can be seen. Twelve acres of grapes are grown at Round Peak Vineyards, producing French and Italian varieties including chardonnay, merlot, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, sangiovese, viognier, the brunello clone of sangiovese, and North Carolina's first nebbiolo. The vineyard offers 32 acres. Round Peak wines are made exclusively from grapes grown in its vineyards.

"It's a wonderful feeling to know that we are drinking a bottle of our wine," Martin said. "It's been a labor of love."

Mark Golding serves as the manager at Round Peak Vineyards. Golding has roots in the Round Peak area dating back to the Civil War.

"He has been a life saver and an asset to the business," Martin said. "This is a physically and mentally challenging business and multi-faceted."

Martin and her partners have



Submitted Photo

Above, grapes grow on the vines at Round Peak Vineyards in Mount Airy. Round Peak Vineyards will soon have a winery built so its grapes can be taken from the vine to the bottle on site. Below, grapes are handpicked at Round Peak Vineyards.



learned everything from growing the vines to marketing the finished product.

Martin and her husband, Lee, operate the vineyard along with their friends, George and Susan Little. George Little and Lee Martin met as students at Davidson College in Davidson. After graduating in 1964, George pursued a career in law, while Lee went into banking.

The Martins moved to Winston-Salem in 1983 and became close friends of the Littles. The couples discovered a common passion for fine wine, and they also liked to garden. The couples visited the Napa Valley in 1998 and were inspired to begin their own vineyard.

Round Peak wines have won numerous medals from the Dixie Classic Fair, the North Carolina State Fair and the

VinoChallenge International in Atlanta.

The tasting room at Round Peak Vineyards offers wine tastings along with hand-made items such as quilts, needlepoint crafts or a tote bag.

To reach the vineyard from Mount Airy's downtown area, take NC 89 West toward Lowgap. Take a right on Round Peak Church Road. Go 1.4 miles, and the vineyards are on the left. The tasting room is open Thursday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.

Wine tastings can also be arranged by appointment at other times. In January and February, the tasting room is open by appointment only.

For more information, call 352-5595 or go to www.roundpeak.com.



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Shelton Vineyards leads, changes

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — While leading the region as the largest and most recognized Yadkin Valley winery, Shelton Vineyards is still making changes to take advantage of local growing conditions and better meet the desires of customers who come from across the nation to tour the facility and taste the wines.

One of the changes most evident to visitors will be the addition this year of a full-service restaurant in the building where Shelton cheeses were made for several years.

"We hope to open The Harvest Grill sometime in early May," said George Denka Jr., president of Shelton Vineyards. "We have had a lot of requests from visitors. So many people who come through ask for a full-service restaurant."

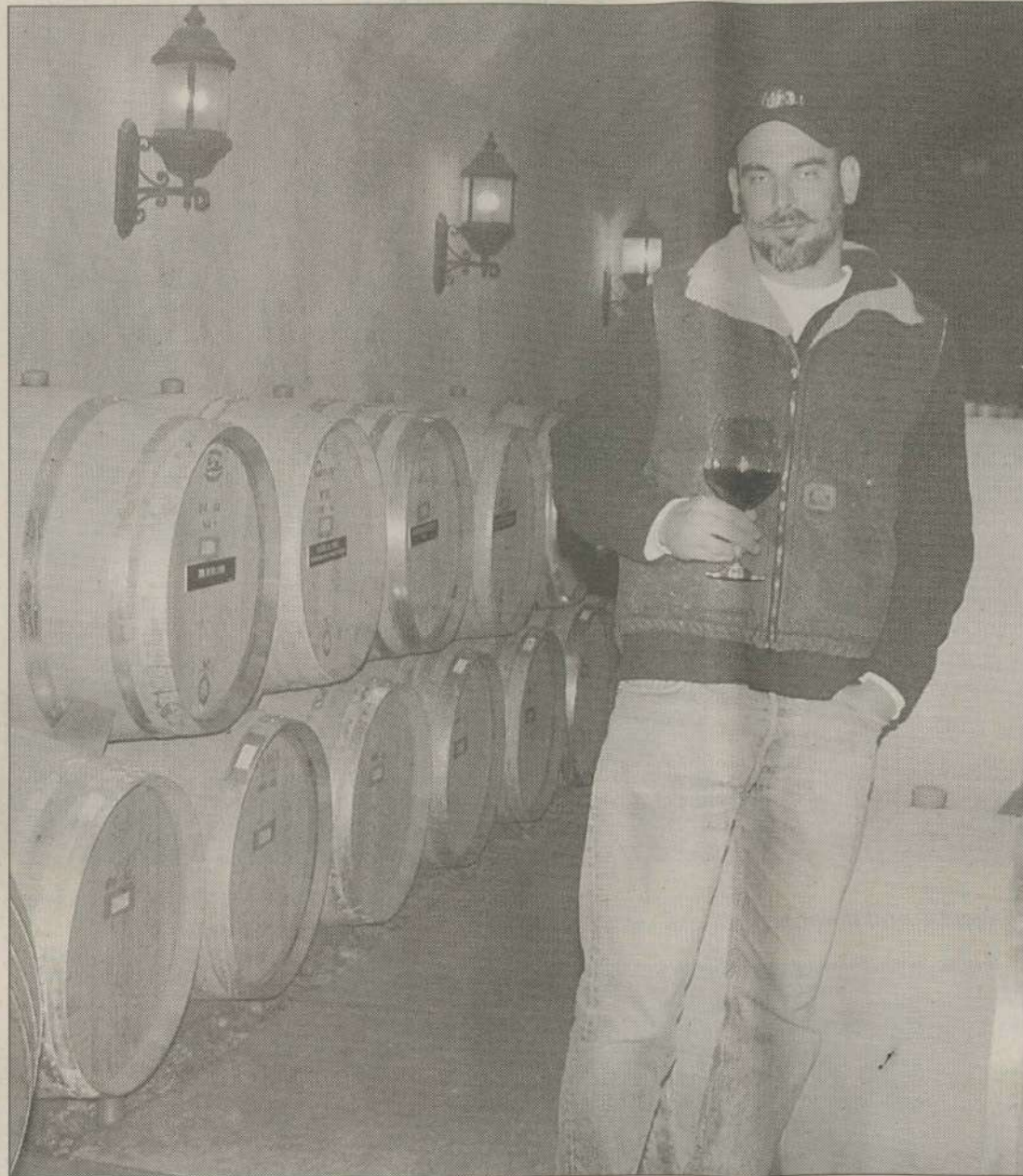
Denka said the vineyard will continue to offer cheese and a deli for those not interested in a full meal. "We're going to maintain the retail portion and the deli," he said, "but, in the rear, we are remodeling for a restaurant since we no longer produce the cheeses."

While the cheeses, like Shelton wines, had been acclaimed, Denka said the decision to stop making the cheese almost two years ago came after they "lost" their goat herd, which was contracted to provide the milk for the cheese. "We decided rather than go into the goat business to discontinue making the cheese."

Lindsay Payne, a recent graduate of the Johnson and Wales Culinary School, will run the restaurant when it opens this spring, he said. "We want to have it open by the time we have our first concert."

The restaurant will seat 50 to 60 people, he said. "It's relatively small, but we can always enlarge it if need be. This is a good time of year to do it. It's our slowest time of year until things get started around Easter."

While there may be less going on as far as the vineyard is going — the main tasks being aging and blending wines and pruning the vines — there are still guests. "This time of year it's hit or miss," he said. "We're very dependent on the weather.



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

Shelton Vineyard Winemaker Matt Dyar gets ready to taste some of the winery's vintage.

zine. To be included on that list validates our belief that world-class wines can be made in the region. A lot of people doubted that, but we're changing people's minds on a daily basis."

Denka said 2004 had been a busy year for the vineyard. "We planted another five acres of Riesling in the spring of 2004 and will be making additional plants in 2005 as well. Our Riesling has become so popular that it sells out within four to six months of its release, and that top 50 placement will only exacerbate that. We had no idea Riesling would do that well ...

meaning they will have a better gauge of how many grapes they can produce. "We have 36,000 cases of the 2004 vintage — there's enough wine in the tanks and barrels now to do that."

Of course, making a name for Shelton Vineyards' wines involves more than growing and harvesting a good crop of grapes, and Denka said they have Winemaker Matt Dyar to help in achieving the goal of award-winning wines. Dyar, who has been the winemaker for four vintages now, comes to Shelton from Firestone Vineyards in California.

Vineyards label, Denka said the vineyard also produces "formula" blends that are marketed under a Salem Fork label. "We'll be producing a new Salem Fork label wine this spring with the Snow Hill White," he said. Both Salem Fork, and many of the wine names, such as Snow Hill, are derived from the communities around the vineyard, he pointed out.

"We started with a Salem Fork Blush because so many customers were asking for it," he said. "It was so popular that we did a Salem Fork Zephyr Red, and we continued to have

requests for a white, so this year we'll do the Snow Hill White."

He said the formula wines are blends of different grapes, instead of being varietal, and may be sweetened to produce the taste customers want.

"We're trying to incorporate the history and roots of the area into our labels," he said. "We're one of the few wines that is es-

tate bottled, and we're trying to incorporate that in most of our core products.

"I think it's meaningful. The Yadkin Valley has a specific taste profile, and we want to stay true to that taste profile. That means using wine produced from our local fruit, and, more specifically, from our own local fruit."

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that makes some people don't want to venture far from home when the weather is bad."

Aside from the restaurant, Shelton Vineyards is anticipating a banner year in 2005, thanks to a good 2004 crop and an expanding market base, according to Denka.

"Last year, we experienced record sales," he said. "We're now in seven states in the Southeast, and we had to delay going into some new markets that we had hoped to get into because we decided not to bottle our 2003 red wines under our label due to the excess rain. We wanted to make sure we had an adequate supply for our established market."

"We had a good 2004 vintage, and we're ready to resume our efforts to broaden our market in the Mid-Atlantic states."

Not marketing the wine in all 50 states doesn't mean it's not going there, however, as a guest registry can attest. "I think we've had visitors from all 50 states and 25 different foreign countries," said Denka, "so our guest list is growing rapidly."

Although most of the 2004 vintage is still aging — Denka said a couple of the white wines, which require no barrel aging, have either been bottled or will be within a few weeks — the vineyard is expecting a good vintage from the grapes.

"We were very proud and pleased that our 2003 Riesling was selected as one of the top 50 wines out of all the wines tasted by the Wine Report, which is a major wine maga-

we knew we could grow it, but could we make wine?"

"The growing conditions on this site are seen as ideal for it, and we've bought every vine we could get our hands on for another five to 10 acres in the spring of 2006. Even then, it's usually four years before you get any crop and seven years before you get to full yield."

In addition to adding more Riesling vines, Denka said the vineyard is fine tuning some of its other plantings. "We have about 200 acres in vines, and some of the new varieties that weren't doing so well have been ripped out and replaced."

He said there is one particular variety that is doing well in some of the vineyard's micro-climates, but failing to thrive in others. "Until we get them in the ground and wait a few years, we really can't tell. We've got them growing well 500 yards from where they won't grow at all."

Denka said the majority of the first plantings that went into the ground when the vineyard was constructed will begin reaching maturity this year,

wines to bottle and, as in the case of the late ripening grapes in 2003, which to let pass.

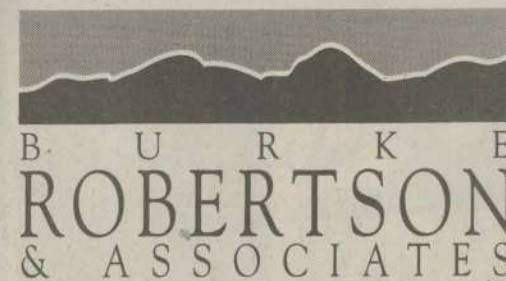
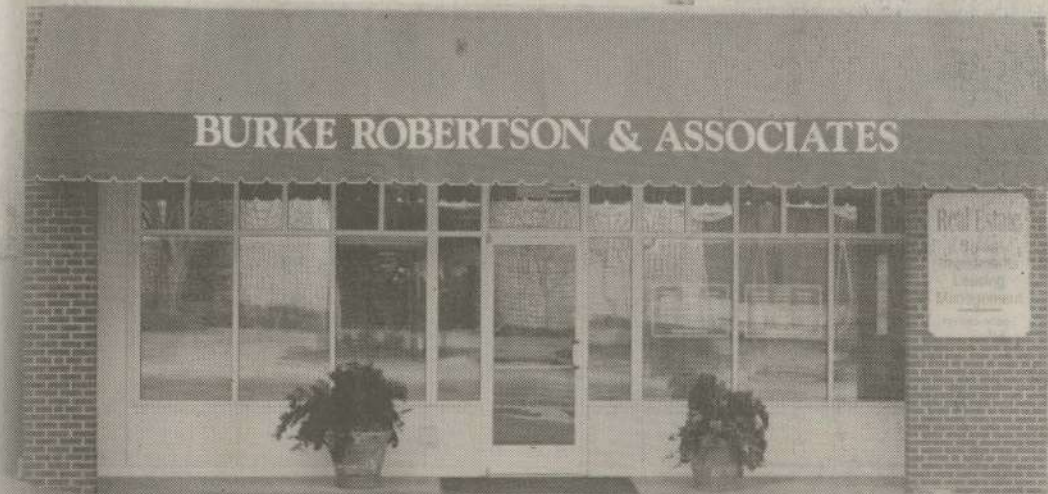
Denka said, due to the heavy rains in 2003, the late ripening grapes were super hydrated, which meant they produced a thinner wine. "They made a sound, commercial wine, but they were thin and under ripened. After tasting them, we decided to maintain our commitment to quality and excellence and not bottle them under our labels." Instead, most of the vintage that produced the award winning Riesling early in the year was sold in bulk to maintain the integrity of the Shelton label.

Denka said decision-making when it comes to the wines, however, isn't all up to Dyar, but involves a panel including company executives and the Shelton brothers, Charles and Ed. "We may taste 50 blends of Chardonnay before we find the blend we like. It's based on how much from each barrel to combine for the best flavor."

While the traditional blends are marketed under the Shelton

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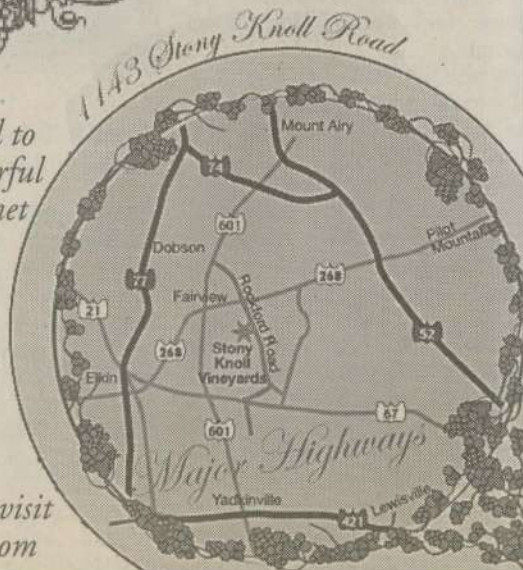
The Mount Airy News

Stony Knoll Vineyards

DOBSON, N.C.

Since 2001, Van and Kathy Coe have cultivated their family farm in Stony Knoll to create a vineyard that has produced wonderful wines such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Chardonnay.

Recently designated a North Carolina Century Farm, the vineyard is open Saturdays 12 noon to 6 pm, Sundays 2 pm to 6 pm and private tastings are arranged by appointment. It is also available for special events. You can find out more by calling Van or Kathy at 336-374-5752 or visit their website at www.stonyknollvineyards.com



Stony Knoll creating new tradition

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — On the rolling hills off Stony Knoll Road, a sixth generation is learning to farm the land, but the lessons aren't the ones their great-great-grandparents would have taught them.

Stony Knoll Vineyard requires a different set of skills these days, although it demands the same commitment to hard work and the land as it did when it was planted in tobacco in generations past.

"When harvest time comes, the whole family is here. You could hold a family reunion in the vineyard," said Van Coe, who, along with his wife and her sister and brother-in-law, made the dream of a working family farm a reality again for themselves and their children.

The land on which Coe and his wife launched Stony Knoll Vineyard in 2001 had been in his wife's family since 1896 and is a designated N.C. Century Farm. From the early 1940s to the 1980s, the land was a tobacco farm where Coe himself worked some summers. As tobacco fell from favor, it was converted to pastureland and used to graze cattle until Coe and his wife became the owners in 1987.

"We wanted to do something different," said Coe, who was looking for ideas when the first vineyard was planted in Surry County in the mid-1980s on U.S. 601 at what is now Black Wolf Vineyard. "There was interest in planting vineyards and seeing if the French varieties would grow in the area."

Coe said what kicked the local vineyard effort off, and his own plans as well, was the Sheltons' commitment to the area with their sprawling vineyard and funding for a viticulture program at Surry Community College.

Coe enrolled in the viticulture program, continuing his full-time job as owner of Homeland Mortgage in Dobson and taking classes for three years at night. "It was a way to learn and avoid the pitfalls and mistakes," he said.

"My brother-in-law is our winemaker, and he's still going. He's been going for four years



The area around Stony Knoll is peaceful and serene.

Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

The family started planting the vines in April 2001 with a 1.25-acre plot of Cabernet Sauvignon, which can be seen in front of the winery. Four more acres were planted in Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Niagara. "We planted it all at once," he said. "It was quite a job."

"We harvested our first crop in 2002," he said. "The set is vigorous. The vines like this soil and grow well in this soil. We had 3.5 tons of grapes that first year that we sold to other vineyards."

In 2003, the harvest was up to 15 tons and the vineyard contracted with Linda King at RagApple Lassie Vineyard to make the wine for them. "That was the first vintage we made wine out of, and we had 801 cases from 13 tons," he said. "It is 100 percent estate Stony Knoll grapes."

The winery was built in 2003 as well and was ready for production with the 2004 harvest, which is aging in barrels



Angela Schmoll/The Mount Airy News

Barrels line the walls at the winery.

from an American native vine that finishes faster. The French wines won't be ready until the fall of 2005 or spring 2006."

He said the new wine, a white, sweet wine, will be

that alone, but which also offers a light, sweet taste.

Since it doesn't require barrel aging, he said, it should be bottled in March.

The family has purchased

prepare those wines for the market.

With 20 tons of grapes harvested and processed for wine, Coe said he expects the winery to bottle around 1,200 cases.

"People thought we were crazy trying to do this," said Coe. "They were right. It's been quite a feat, but I'm pleased. The project is ahead of schedule."

"We are still making changes in the vineyard. We want to prune and trellis the vines for optimum fruit delivery. It's sort of trial and error as far as wine quality and achieving premium wine effects."

Coe said the winery's unique location, between the Fisher and Yadkin rivers and within the arms of the Blue Ridge and Brushy mountains, which offer a splendid view to the south, seems to be working exceptionally well for the grapes. "There's a geographic air drainage here," he said. "It's interesting to observe its impact

trees." The vines should also be maturing enough to reach maximum output this year, making it a key year for the winery.

With the winery complete and open for a few events last year, Coe said they expect to be open for more activities this year and begin marketing their wines more.

"We'll be able to have wine at the festivals," he said. "This is the first year we have been really engaging the business in wine festivals and having wines to sell."

The Web site is receiving hundreds of hits a day and Coe hopes to be able to do more marketing through the Internet and postcards that have been printed with an artist's image of the winery.

No one is giving up their "real" jobs either. He still works at his mortgage company. The winemaker is employed at one of the remaining textile factories. Family members, including children, provide their free time for everything from working the vines to being in the winery for weekend wine tasting or special events.

"I like the fact that the kids are working the farm," he said, noting that, although neither his son or daughter are old enough to sell wine, they're involved in other ways. "It pleases the family a great deal. They're gaining a work ethic and insight into agriculture and business."

With the winery new, Coe said they'll be looking at their first full year of weekend wine tasting and special events. The winery is open each weekend, Saturdays from noon to 6 p.m. and Sundays from 2 to 6 p.m., for wine tasting.

"We haven't had a lot of events, since we just opened the winery in October," said Coe. "We're getting ready to change that some."

The first event will be an art show April 17, featuring a number of artists from the Winston-Salem area and wine tasting from 2 to 6 p.m. "We're going to ease into it," he said.

"We don't want to rush. If we did, we couldn't take the time to make the changes and do the things that will give us the best vineyard we can have."

"We want to build something

procedures to learn, and, if you don't stay with it, you won't pick it up. He's getting close to being done."

"We will probably have our first 2004 vintage at the North Wilkesboro Wine Festival in April," said Coe. "It's made

ing her middle name, Ardella. The Ardella Blanc is a fragrant offering that, he said, people have told him should sell on

bottling as well and the basement of the winery houses not only the aging wines, but the bottles, labels and equipment to

"Last year, we noticed the vines were beginning to get acclimated," he said. "Their leaves began to change with the

are good for 50 or 100 years, and I want to do something that will need those vines for 50 or 100 years."

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Area wineries take honors

By **ELEANOR POWELL**
Lifestyles Editor

Where tobacco and cotton once grew, many farms are replaced by fields of grapevines that provide a healthy viticulture for people along the Yadkin River and throughout North Carolina. With the mass production of grapes, vineyards have sprung up all around the state.

The first commercial winery established in this state, Medoc Vineyard, led the country's wine production in 1835. After more than a century, North Carolina is rebuilding its grape industry and creating promising futures for its farmers and citizens.

The Yadkin Valley Appellation was born out of a need to find a new crop. Farmers needed to find a more profitable way to utilize their fertile ground. The gently rolling hills and mixture of clay and loam soils provided the area with excellent draining which was combined with a long, warm growing season and a mild winter.

As the conversion took place, wineries popped up in the area and soon they were capturing awards of excellence for their fine wines.

During the 2004 North Carolina State Fair in Raleigh, 101 medals were awarded in the commercial winery division with the 2003 Chardonnay from RagApple Lassie Vineyards in Boonville taking home the N.C. Winegrowers Cup and Best of Show honors. RagApple Lassie Vineyards is in Boonville with Frank and Lenna Hobson as owners.

The Old North State Winery of Mount Airy took honors for its Starlight White as the best muscadine wine.

Double gold medals also went to RayLen Vineyards, Cabernet Franc 2001; and Shelton Vineyards, Yadkin Valley Family Reserve, Claret '01.

Gold medals went to Hanover Park Vineyard, Early Twilight; Raylen Vineyards, Shiraz 2002 and Barrel Chardonnay 2003; Shelton Vineyards, Yadkin Valley Sangiovese '02; and Westbend Vineyards, Yadkin Fume.

Silver awards were presented to Hanover Park Vineyard,



Eleanor Powell/The Mount Airy News
Paula Stanley, left, and Carol Hunter show off Old North State Winery's Starlight White, which took the N.C. Muscadine Cup for best muscadine wine during the N.C. State Fair in 2004. The local winery was awarded double gold medals.



Angela Schmolz/The Mount Airy News
Shelton's Vineyards has won several high-profile awards for its wines.

Chambourcin and Unoaked Chardonnay; Raffaldini Vineyards, Sangiovese; Raylen Vineyards, Merlot 2002 and Pale Red; Round Peak Vineyards, Chardonnay; Shelton Vineyards, Madison Lee Red Table Wine NV, Yadkin Valley Merlot, '02, Yadkin Valley Cabernet Sauvignon '02; Yadkin Valley Cabernet Franc '02, Chardonnay Bin 17 '02, and Yadkin Valley Riesling '03; Westbend Vineyards 2002, bar-

rel fermented Chardonnay, and 2002 Chardonnay, Windy Gap Vineyards, Windy Gap Merlot and Windy Gap Cabernet Franc.

The state is the home to 38 commercial wineries and several more are expected to open within the next year. The majority of vines here are finifera, with wineries finding the greatest success with Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet, Sauvignon and Merlot.

So, just what is the Yadkin Valley Wine Appellation?

By **MICHAEL HOWLETT**
News Editor

The Yadkin Valley Wine Appellation, the first American Viticultural Area (AVA) in North Carolina, includes two wineries and 12 vineyards covering 1.4 million acres in the Yadkin River basin. It spans seven counties, including all of Surry, Yadkin and Wilkes counties and parts of Stokes, Forsyth, Davie and Davidson counties.

An appellation is a marketing tool that designates the region where grapes are grown that is placed on the label of wine bottles. There are 150 appellations in the United States, including 14 in the southern region.

An application for an appellation was made to the Department of Treasury's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau in 2001 by Patricia McRichie, who was vice president and legal counsel for Shelton Vineyards at the time. The appellation was granted in December 2002, with an effective date of Feb. 7, 2003.

A region can be granted an appellation if its soil, growing season, climate and amount of rainfall differ from the surrounding areas.

"Yadkin Valley is very distinct, and it's the distinction that matters. It's a different type of area in geographic terms and geological terms," said McRichie at the time of the appellation application. "The soil is clayey, well-drained and moderately fertile, which are excellent qualities for grape growing."

Marion Venable, executive director of the Surry Community College Foundation, said, "All the vineyards in the appellation can use the appellation on their labels" if they adhere to the requirements.

"If you don't get a certain percentage of your grapes from the appellation, you can't put that on your label," said Gill Giese, head of the college's viticulture department.

Appellations have been around for quite some time, according to Giese.

"The French have had appellations for 1,000 years, but they evolved," he said. "In the United States, they're a marketing



The appellation designation is a marketing tool that designates where grapes are grown. It is placed on the label of wine bottles.

tool. Some people say that should be evolved."

In the U.S., American Viticultural Areas carry a different connotation than the French appellation of origin. Labels, for instance, may identify a wine's AVA when a minimum of 85 percent of the grapes used come from within that specified AVA, while French Institute National Des Appellations d'Origine regulations have stricter guidelines, which include vineyard location, varietal, growing technique, crop yield, grape ripeness and ensuing alcohol content and winemaking practices. As a rule, the French rely more on terrain and the manifestation of nature on grapes than do Americans.

Although the appellation should pay off in time, Giese said it was not a quick fix. "I think there is a time component. At some point, it will be a real advantage."

The key to the appellation paying off, said Giese, is the region developing a "signature variety" of wine.

"Oregon has been in the wine business since the early 1970s and the pinot is its signature

variety. When you think of cabernet, you think of the Napa Valley in California. What we really need to make the appellation is a signature variety."

With that in mind, Giese said a wine which is a blend of more than one variety, may be the Yadkin Valley's best bet for a signature wine.

"I think a red or white blend is where we need to go, instead of trying to compete with the chardonnays and cabernets," he said.

Vineyards and wineries that will be able to take advantage of the appellation label are Black Wolf Vineyards, Shelton Vineyards, Stony Knoll Vineyards and Surry Community College Winery in Dobson, Round Peak Vineyards and Old North State Winery in Mount Airy; Raffaldini Vineyards and Windy Gap Vineyards in Ronda; Buck Shoals Vineyards and Laurel Gray Vineyards in Hamptonville; Childress Vineyards in Lexington; Hanover Park Vineyards in Yadkinville, RagApple Lassie Vineyards in Boonville; RayLen Vineyards in Mocksville; and Westbend Vineyards in Lewisville.

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Yadkin Valley offers taste of local wines

By **MARIA MAGHER**
Staff Writer

During the past several years, the Yadkin Valley has become well-known for its wines, winning awards and national recognition. The area even earned federal recognition when the government granted it the distinction of the Yadkin Valley Viticultural Area in February 2003.

Several festivals are held in the region, including the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival, scheduled for May 21 this year in Elkin Municipal Park, and the North Carolina Wine Festival, scheduled for June at Tanglewood Park in Clemmons.

Along the Yadkin Valley Wine Trail, there are 14 operating wineries open to the public for either winery or vineyard tours, tasting and sales. In Surry County, there are four: Shelton Vineyards, Old North State Winery, Black Wolf Vineyards and Round Peak Vineyards.

All let the public taste their wines, and some even offer tours of their facilities.

At Shelton Vineyards, at 286 Cabernet Lane in Dobson, the public can receive a tour and a tasting for \$5, which includes five different wines, a tour with an overview of the wine-making process and a souvenir glass.

"A lot of wine lovers enjoy visiting wineries and vineyards and meeting the people who are bottling the wines," said George Denka, president. "I think when people see all that goes into making the wine, they can appreciate it more."

The winery has been offering tours of its 33,000-square-foot facility since it opened in 2000. Tours include an overview of the history of the property, the crush pad, tank room and barrel cave.

Tours are conducted every 30 minutes from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday during the winter season. Large groups can also be accommodated.

In addition to tasting one of the chardonnays that is aging in the barrel, Denka said that tour groups are also able to taste four other wines, which are selected daily.

There are about 10 different

"From grape to bottle, it's all in one building," Hill said.

Tours also cover the history of the building (the winery is in an 18th century building that was once the Belk store) and the history of the 38 wines from 38 families.

Hill pointed out that the winery is one of the only cooperative wineries in the country, if not the only one.

"It makes us kind of special, and it's right here in Mount Airy," Hill said.

An appointment is not required for a tour, but large groups are encouraged to make one.

"It helps us to call ahead for large groups so we can take special care of them," Hill said.

Old North State Winery also has some special features. Melva Houston, a jazz singer, gives tours on certain days, and live music is offered on Tuesday nights.

In January, the winery welcomed panos, Old North State Restaurant, which offers French-American cuisine.

At Black Wolf Vineyards in Dobson, at 283 Vineyard Lane, the public is invited to taste their wines Monday through

Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and on Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. Home to the Wolf's Lair Restaurant, the vineyard also offers tastings and lunch pairings throughout the week and is open for dinner nightly.

The vineyard is currently in the process of building a winery, which General Manager Kam Wehr said is almost finished. The building is already complete.

"It's going to be a working winery, so it won't be open to the public," she said. Therefore, there will not be any tours.

The vineyard also offers live

music performances every weekend.

Round Peak Vineyards at 765 Round Peak Church Road in the Round Peak Community, also offers special tastings at its vineyard from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. During January and February, tastings are by appointment only.

The vineyard is also open Thursday and Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on the weekend from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Special dinners are hosted in the vineyards.

"A lot of wine lovers enjoy visiting wineries and vineyards and meeting the people who are bottling the wines."

George Denka,
Shelton Vineyards
president



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they react to the group on tour, to personalize tours and tastings to suit their preferences. For example, proper wine-tasting etiquette can be covered if the group is interested.

"Our tour guides are very well-versed in wine etiquette," Denka said.

Though Denka said that the focus at the winery is primarily on growing the fruit and harvesting the wine, there are a number of other activities at the facility, and new things are always being introduced.

The tasting room has recently been remodeled, and the cheese shop is in the process of being remodeled. A restaurant, The Harvest Grill, is slated to open on the property in May.

Two new wines were also planted at the winery: the Malbeck and Tannat, both of which are red wines that will be used as blenders, Denka said.

There is even live music at the winery in the summer, the Shelton at Sunset concert series that runs from May through September on Saturdays.

"Regardless of what time of year you come, there's always something to see," Denka said.

In Mount Airy, the Old North State Winery, at 308 N. Main St., also offers winery tours and wine tastings. The public can try a couple of wines for free, but a more extensive tasting costs \$3, which includes a minimum of seven wines, including three reds, three whites and the state's Muscadine double-gold winner. A souvenir glass is also included.

"For the inexperienced wine drinker, Old North State Winery is a great place to start," said Bryan Hill, retail manager, adding that the winery offers more sweet wines, including its Muscadine, Spring House and Autumn Leaf.

To help those inexperienced wine drinkers, Hill said that guides also offer tips on how to enjoy dry wines.

"To experience dry wines, you have to let it sit in your mouth and let it roll around your tongue until you get that tingle in your mouth," Hill said. "You really can't experience that if you just drink it and swallow it."

Tours of the winery are conducted from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday, with hours extended on Friday and Saturday, and from 1 to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Tours are free, and they cover the machinery involved in the entire wine-making process, including the fermenting tanks and aging tanks.



Jerry



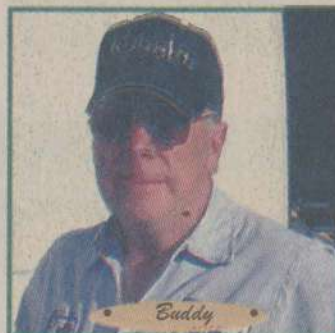
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SCC grows own program

By **BRYAN GENTRY**
Staff Writer

DOBSON — Surry Community College's Viticulture and Enology program serves its students in many ways.

Some of them take classes to quench their thirst for general knowledge of the industry.

Others want to learn wine making as a leisure activity.

Still others cash in on a viable business opportunity with the skills they learn in the vineyard.

With the help of experienced winemakers, SCC has transformed a once-barren plot of land into a vineyard that has already turned out a harvest of delightful grapes and several batches of SCC wine.

Looking through a viticulture magazine, SCC instructor Gill Giese pointed out machines that his former colleague, Justice Morris at the University of Arkansas, designed.

"These things will be sold all over the world," he said. "That's my background."

Giese got his first taste of wine making in the 1980s as a University of Arkansas student. He picked grapes in the school's vineyard. He continued working with the horticulture department there, receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees, and worked in the experimental winery there beginning in 1995.

A few years later, he got the opportunity to relocate to North Carolina and help Surry Community College pioneer its own wine-making program.

"Surry wanted to start this Viticulture and Enology program, and they called Justin Morris, who is known worldwide for viticulture mechanization," Giese said. Morris referred them to Giese, who accepted the job.

He had quite a job ahead of him. The college's vineyard was years away from bearing fruit. The program was just getting off the ground.

The college had obtained the



Submitted photo

Surry Community College viticulture students work in the vineyard planted at the college.

vineyard, on the college's property next to Surry Central High School's football field, and other equipment with the help of a grant from two Surry County natives who wanted to help their home county's economy grow.

Ed and Charlie Shelton gave the grant because they realized that agriculture in Surry County could grow in the winery business.

"What happened was, as they developed their own vineyard, they started realizing the enormous potential the industry could have for the area," said George Denka, president of Shelton Vineyards' winery. "They felt there was a need to educate the local farmers... in order for those people to survive and hopefully go back to their family farm and utilize that land for agriculture.

"They gave a grant to the college for the initial funding of the program, in order to get it started."

According to Anne Hennis, SCC's dean of research and assessment, the viticulture program had 34 students in its inaugural year, the 2000-2001 school year. Enrollment grew as

the vineyard grew: There were 43 students in 2001, 69 students in 2002 and 64 students in 2003.

"Many of the students who are enrolled in the program are older and are taking the program at night. It will ultimately take those students longer than two to three years to graduate from the program," Hennis said.

In 2003, one student graduated with an associate's degree in viticulture and enology, and four other students completed a certificate program.

Giese is currently teaching three classes, with a total of 42 students. He concentrates on the viticulture side of the business, while Bob McRitchie focuses on enology, making the grapes into wine.

Giese said students have many different reasons for taking the viticulture classes.

"These people are looking into starting their own winery," Giese said. "The older people, a lot of them have inherited land, some have a background in agriculture.

"Now we're getting younger people. It's kind of a romantic thing. For others it's a viable business option.

"We have an impact where people already have jobs in a

winery, but they come here for continuing education," he said. Currently 12 students are working as interns in nearby wineries. These internships were provided by a grant from Golden LEAF.

Giese said wine making is great for those who like to travel, because grapes are grown in many different parts of the world.

And while those grapes are growing everywhere, the wine-making business is growing right here in North Carolina.

The number of bonded wineries in the state has doubled, from 20 to 40, in the past five years.

Also, there are more than 90 wineries in Virginia, Giese said.

He said the college needs to keep working on its product until it has one that can compete on the local market.

"Then we can think about the East Coast, the nation, and the world," he said.

SCC's program teaches not only how to grow grapes, but also how to handle viticulture problems that are unique to this region. Of course, grape growing is no picnic anywhere. "It's tough to grow grapes and then to grow vinifera, the traditional wine grape, is even harder," Giese said. Humidity, fungal diseases and thick-growing greenery complicate wine growing in the Southeast.

SCC is participating in a phenological study to identify areas in the state that will be the best for growing grapes.

Last year, the viticulture students picked the college's first harvest of grapes. Those grapes are now being turned into wine.

Giese believes the future of viticulture is good in the state.

"North Carolina has this tradition of providing for a family with a small farm," he said. Most people he meets still share that belief that they can continue to work the land for a living.

"That's powerful if you believe you can do something," Giese said.



Submitted photo

Vance Marion, an SCC graduate, works as a viticulture and enology technician at the college.

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So how do you make wine?

By **ELEANOR POWELL**

Lifestyles Editor

MOUNT AIRY — It was



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On Sept. 1, 2003, that Gray Draughn, chief operating officer of the Old North State Winery, and several of the cooperative members gathered on the lower level of the winery on Trinity Street to begin the first crushing of grapes for their newly-established business.

The winery fronts Main Street, with the wine cellars on the lower level where the wine is made.

Looking back on that first crushing, Draughn explained that the Old North State Winery is home to the only cooperative of grape growers in North Carolina. Each member follows growing standards to ensure that only the highest quality fruit goes into creating wine bearing their seal.

Draughn supervised the reception of the first white chardonnay grapes from Jim Johnson's Credence Vineyard as the group looked on with anticipation.

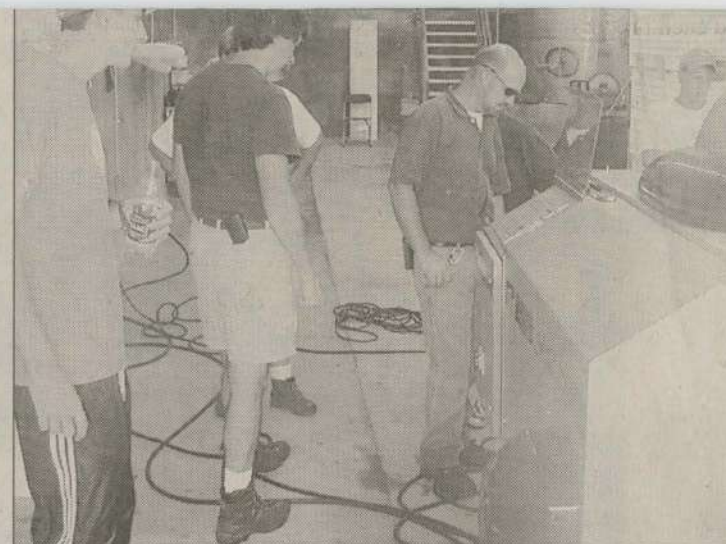
The grapes were weighed and inspected, stripped of their leaves and stems and then dumped into a huge tank for the crushing process. The professional winemaker then pushed the button to start pumping the juice into another tank.

Draughn said the juice was left there for six to eight weeks to ferment and then filtered and silted into oak barrels to mature and pick up more flavor. "Once aged, the juice is sent back to fermentation tanks for cold and heat stabilization. Then it is ready for bottling here on site," he added.

The wine is available in panos, the newly-opened restaurant at the winery, the retail tasting room and to growers all around the state. Sean McRitchie is the winemaker.

The high quality wines include chardonnay, with a taste of spiced apples and lemon; Merlot, fruit forward flavors of ripe black cherries and blackberries; Cabernet Sauvignon, gives big hints of blackberry and candied cherry; and Starlight White is powerful in peach, honeyed apricots and ripe fall apples. Other high quality wines to please every palate feature Starlight White, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Chambourcin, Barbera and Sangiovis.

The Old North State Winery is a cooperative supported by 38 vineyards that use the facility to ferment, bottle and market their wines.



Winemakers wait for grape juice to be released.



Eleanor Powell/The Mount Airy News

Gray Draughn, left, general manager of the Old North State Winery, was on hand for the first grape crushing on Sept. 1, 2003. These grapes came from Jim Johnson's Credence Vineyard.



Cheri Massey, left, and Kim Atkins directed the hose carrying the first grape juice.

Agriculture education prepares for new generation to face changes in farming

By **BRYAN GENTRY**
Staff Writer

DOBSON — The agriculture business faces a challenge in recruiting new members to its ranks.

Some young people see the changes the business faces and are discouraged about building successful careers in it.

Bryan Cave, an extension agent for the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in Dobson, lists the age of farmers as one of the key problems that the county needs to change in order to keep a strong agricultural sector. He said the average farmer in Surry County is in the upper 50s.

"Obviously, they're not going to be producing for us a lot longer," he said.

"Agriculture's changing. The loss of the tobacco program is going to be a very big motivator for that," Cave said. "How to keep young people on the farm is something that a lot of these vocational agriculture programs are addressing."

Vocational agriculture education programs are in place at three high schools in Surry County — North Surry, East Surry and Surry Central. These programs give students the knowledge they need to work and lead in the world of agriculture.

Jeremy Hart, vocational agriculture teacher at Surry Central High School, enrolled in those same programs when he was in high school.

"As a freshman in high school, it was just signing up for the class my friends took," he said. "But, once I got in there, I was hooked."

Eventually all of his friends switched into other programs, but he stayed with it and enjoyed it.

"I'd grown up on a farm," he said. "To learn about things I had always done on the farm was really neat."

Hart said his father taught him many of the mechanics of farm work, but activity in agricultural education taught him the reasons and the details be-



Submitted Photo

Myles Branch, an active student in Surry Central High School's Future Farmers of America club, receives the National Equine Science Award from FFA national officer Amy Rasmussen. Branch and other FFA students in the county are preparing to work in the changing world of agriculture by learning techniques and leadership skills.

Surry Central, Hart is excited about passing on the love for agriculture and helping his students prepare to succeed in the changing field.

Surry Central High School currently has 65 student members. Hart says that is about average.

"It's a program that kind of recruits itself," he said.

Many aspects of the FFA program draw students to it. Some of them get involved for the same reason Hart originally did, just to be with friends. Others hear about the trips the FFA travels on and decide to sign up. Whichever way they get in, they always stay in.

"Once you get them to that first thing, it's no trouble to get them to the second thing," Hart said.

FFA includes many activities to help members learn — and

tool contests, forestry contests, hunter safety contests and more.

They have also participated in proficiency awards and the state fair. This summer, some of Hart's students will attend FFA camp.

Hart said these activities will help students accept new jobs in the agriculture field.

"One of the primary challenges they face is what people perceive as agricultural careers," Hart said. Many people view agriculture as simply working in a field to raise a crop. It is much more than that. In fact, "most of them won't go in to farming," Hart said.

Instead, the rising generation will fill other jobs related to agriculture. These jobs require more than a knowledge of when to plow, plant and harvest.

FFA activities teach students to work with others, to voice their opinions logically and to present themselves well.

For example, when FFA students judge animals in a fair, they have to articulate why they feel the animal they pick is the best. They have to explain their position to a judge.

Other activities prepare them for future job interviews.

In addition to learning and preparing for an agricultural career, Cave said young people can also participate and earn money in agriculture now.

"With the change in agriculture, there are a lot of things that might help the younger people get involved," he said. "The young people are going to have to change with the way traditional agriculture is changing.

"They're just going to have

wood, another extension agent. "The future is small farms, locally grown."

Garwood and Cave both said the farmers market can provide a place for young people to market their products.

The Mount Airy Farmers Market, which opens in May, will be held in the parking lot of the Andy Griffith Playhouse on Rockford Street in Mount Airy. It will be held each Tuesday from 4 to 6 p.m.

The Elkin Farmers Market runs every Saturday from May 7 to Sept. 24. It is open from 8 a.m. to noon.

Garwood said young people are perfectly welcome to market their homegrown products. "If they want to sell at the market, the only requirement is that they grow the product," Garwood said. "I will come and look and make sure that what

Surry County or any of the adjoining counties, including Patrick and Carroll counties in Virginia. The \$40 registration fee pays for booth spaces at both markets and for advertising. In addition to farm-produced products, such as vegetables, fruits and eggs, vendors are allowed to sell crafts made from agricultural products, or even baked goods if they grew every ingredient.

Garwood said the farmers market offers a lot of economic strength. Some vendors have made as much as \$600 per market day.

"When they get out of school, if they want to participate in the market, they can make as much money there as they can at a job," Garwood said.

Participants in the farmers market are required to complete two trainings before they sell. One is a WIC training, which qualifies vendors to accept Women, Infant and Children coupons as payment. The other is a Good Agricultural Practices training, which covers safety techniques for harvesting and packaging foods. Garwood said interested sellers should register at least two weeks before they plan to begin selling.

Cave said the market fares well because consumers recognize the quality of the products. "I think the American consumer would rather have farm-fresh, farm-direct products," he said. "They know where it's coming from, there's a face behind it. It's locally-produced, they know where to come back for it."

The value-added enterprise offers a lot of opportunities for young farmers. Instead of selling a product as soon as it grows, farmers can add value by processing the next step. Cave said farmers might raise beef cattle and market their own beef instead of selling their cattle to a beef producer. Also, they might grow wheat and make bread to sell. Adding value to the product helps them receive more money than they would by selling the raw products. This offers opportu-

hind each process.
In his second year as a faculty advisor for Future Farmers of America and his second year at

test their knowledge — about agriculture.
Hart's FFA students have participated in animal judging,

"We've moved away from pure technical," Hart said. "We're developing leadership skills and communication skills."

to look at different opportunities." "Traditional agriculture is large farms," said Terry Gar-

they're selling is what they're growing." He said anyone can market their products if they live in

nities for young farmers to innovate and experiment with new, more profitable business practices.

What types of grapes are grown in Surry?

By **MICHAEL HOWLETT**
News Editor

Of more than 20 types of grapes grown by the vineyards in the Yadkin Valley American Viticultural Area, most are vinifera grapes, a species of grapes most responsible for producing the world's best wines.

Among the most popular vinifera wines is the chardonnay, which is known as the "King of White Wine." Its taste can vary from sweet to sour, heady or light. It goes best with poultry, seafood red meat and cheese.

"The chardonnay does good around world and is doing well here. It's a real flexible wine," said Gill Giese, head of the viticulture department at Surry Community College.

Among the other white wines that have proven popular with local wine growers is Viognier and Riesling.

Giese said, "Viognier is a good white wine" and "Riesling is more of a cool season grape, although local wine growers have had some success with it."

Viognier, which is a tough grape to grow, yields a medium-bodied wine, noted for its floral, spice and citrus flavors, while the riesling grape has a taste of dry tartness. It is best served with seafood and most oriental dishes.

Sauvignon Blanc, sometimes known as the "Other White Wine," is also popular with local growers. It is typically very light with a sweet to dry tastes, and is a very popular picnic wine. It goes well with fish, shellfish, chicken and pasta dishes.

Of all the red grapes, Giese said he "would recommend the Merlot." He added that the Petit Verdo "has also done well."

Although the merlot is often used as a blending grape with

the Cabernet Sauvignon grape, it has developed into a delicious wine in its own right. It has a plummy fruit flavor, and is a good match with beef, chicken and pasta dishes. It's also an excellent compliment to chocolate.

Other types of red grapes popular among local wine growers are Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Sangiovese and Syrah.

The Cabernet Sauvignon, known as the "King of Red Wine," has a richness of taste and flavor. It serves well with hearty foods.

The Syrah grape creates a wine with taste varying from peppery to fruity flavor. Hearty foods such as beef as well as spicy Indian or Mexican foods serves well with the wine.

The second type of grape grown locally is Vitis Labrusca and its sister grape, the Niagara, which "has become popular with some growers as a dessert wine," according to Giese.

"In between those two types are the French hybrids, which I think will do well here," added Giese, adding that the chambourcin grape is "popular with local growers."

Included in this group is "ice wine," which is made from grapes that are allowed to freeze before processing. The trick is to begin the processing before the "cells break down and start to rot," said Giese.

A new item among local growers is port wine. Although the grapes are still fermented, not distilled, the wine contains a higher percentage of alcohol and is often aged in brandy barrels. The fermentation process is "stopped at a certain point and additional spirits are added to raise the alcohol content."

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Surry farmers adapt to changing world

By **BRYAN GENTRY**
Staff Writer

Bryan Cave believes in the power of agriculture.

As an agent with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, he has seen farmers rise to the challenge posed by a changing economy and agricultural atmosphere. Even though building and maintaining income from a farm is more difficult today than it once was, he believes small family farms will still survive.

"You need to remember the agriculture sector has always been very resilient and very in-

dependent," he said. "They will make those changes and keep feeding us. I have all the confidence in the world that that will happen."

"Farmers aren't typically just an old guy in dirty bib overalls anymore. They're soil scientists, they're engineers. They're mechanics and they're electricians," he said. "They're a very astute group. They're using GPS systems to map their farms ... they're changing fertility practices. It is high tech, and those are some changes they are making."

Agriculture has taken a hit as

an economic strength for several reasons. Tobacco has lost its hold as a profitable product, causing many farmers to close their operations or find a new crop. Even when they do find a new crop to grow, they lose income.

"You can't replace tobacco economically," Cave said. "There's no single crop or agriculture enterprise that can do that financially for the farmer. ... Tobacco provided so much income per acre, and we don't have another crop that will produce that income on that amount of land."

Rising land costs also make it hard for new farmers to join the business.

"Probably the biggest issue is the rising cost of land. It's so prohibitive for a young person to go out and buy a large farm on a commercial scale," Cave said.

Another factor that impacts agriculture is the aging farming population. Cave said the average farmer in Surry County is 57. "Those guys are just aging out. They're retiring," he said.

Even though agriculture has taken these hits, Cave said, it still remains a strong

part of Surry County's economy. According to 2000 data presented in a report from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at N.C. State University, agriculture and agribusiness is responsible for more than \$432 million in county income, or 24.28 percent of the county's income. Also, the report states that 28 percent of employment in the county was in agriculture and agribusiness.

Cave said the agricultural sector can be strengthened more with an emphasis on value-added and niche agriculture,

agritourism and agriculture awareness.

"A lot of the farms will be part time," Cave said. "Number wise, the small niche farmers will be the largest group of farmers ... A lot of people will work full-time jobs and then they'll return to the farm at night and work on the farm."

"Those niche farms are what we visualize as the future."

Niche farming takes place on smaller plots of land. It requires creativity and diversification. "Instead of being just a crop farmer, they're looking at adding cattle ... poultry house or a vegetable crop to sell at the farmers market."

"Diversification is going to be the key to remain vital," he said.

Niche farming includes some work with value-added agriculture. In this kind of agriculture, farmers take what they grow and add value to it by altering it. They might use their farm's apples to make pies, or they might use wheat to make bread. Each new step adds value to the product until it is finally sold to the consumer.

Joanna Radford, another extension agent, gave an example of value-added agriculture. "I found this wheat grower that sales his wheat as ... ground up flour, ready to be used in breads, or you could buy the grain yourself and you could grind it," she said. "The price that he was charging was considerably more than what we would get." She estimated that this farmer might make up to \$77 more per bushel of wheat than what Surry County wheat growers can get.

The farmers market will help niche farmers to earn a living. It provides consumers the opportunity to meet the farmers who grew their food.

Cave said agriculture awareness will help consumers support local producers.

"One thing we're really concentrating on here is doing some programs on ag awareness," he said. "Most people now are at least one to two generations removed from farming. Lots of kids now view food as something you go to the grocery store to get, not something they link to farming."

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would "stress agriculture with the thought in mind that they will support the local producers. So that in itself will help keep agriculture viable here. Keeping the dollar at home." He said every dollar spent on local producers has been shown to have a multiplier effect in the local economy, generating three to five dollars in economic activity.

Agritourism offers other opportunities to grow the local economy.

"It's wide open," Cave said. "There are possibilities for educational field trips to farms. We're working now on some historical slants toward agritourism. We're looking at the possibility of trails."

One idea he mentioned would be a trail that tourists could follow to see and learn about historic barns in Surry County. "It's not as much growing the product as it is the tourism aspect, where you make Surry a destination, where they (tourists) would spend a day or two looking at historical aspects... (and) to get out into the country and see the natural resources we have," he said.

"One of the big things is the people who are involved want an experience other than a trip to a theme park," Cave said. "They want to take their family back and get something they can actually put their hands on and take a look at."

He said Home Creek Living Historical Farm in Pinnacle is "a tremendous resource when you're looking at historical agriculture."

Cave said local farmers are willing to adapt to the changes in agriculture and adopt these new ideas. "They're very interested. They're looking at any way they can incorporate value-added... That's what we see as the way for the farmer to remain viable. Whether you're a young person trying to get in or an older person adapting," he said.

"It's a whole new ball game. That safety net that tobacco's provided for years is not there anymore."

Cave said the community accepts the idea of purchasing crops and value-added agriculture products directly from the farmers. "They want to be able to put a face with the farmer who produced it," he said. "We think that's the future of agriculture in Surry."

Chicken, beef, cattle remain big items in Surry County

By WENDY BYERLY WOOD

Staff Writer

Through the years, Surry County's livestock population has shifted from mainly cattle to a wide variety of animals.

"We have basically all different species, but, obviously, the largest number is beef cattle," said Bryan Cave, extension agent for agriculture and natural resources at the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Surry center.

"But there is a pretty big horse population, and goats are growing," he said. In addition, he mentioned the presence of sheep, llamas and alpacas in Surry County.

"Basically, any kind of animal that's grown is grown here," Cave said. "Traditionally, cattle have been dominant and have gone hand in hand with tobacco production, because the part of the farmer's land that wasn't suitable for crops, they would put cattle on."

Surry County ranks fifth in North Carolina in the number of cattle, and those numbers continue to grow annually, Cave said. "This past year, income from beef cattle actually surpassed the income from field crops," he said. "As tobacco trended downward, the farmers couldn't maintain the same level of farm income and that is part of the reason why, but a lot is people moving into the area and buying small tracts of farm land and want cattle or horses."

Of those cattle farms, Cave said most are cow-calf operations, which means the farmers own the cows and sell the calves in the feeder range of 500 to 600 pounds.

"I am working with a few people who are taking the calves to continue to feed and grow them, harvest them and then the meat is sold to the consumer directly," Cave said. "One of the things AngelouEconomics talked about was agriculture.

"A lot of people like buying fresh, locally-produced beef,

"Basically, any kind of animal that's grown is grown here. Traditionally, cattle have been dominant and have gone hand in hand with tobacco production, because the part of the farmer's land that wasn't suitable for crops, they would put cattle on."

Bryan Cave, extension agent

and it is higher quality."

Looking toward the future, Cave said, "I think the tobacco buyout will have an effect, and those people will retire and grow cattle. I see the value added aspect, because I think people will want locally-grown over what they get at the grocery store.

"There are already now three or four people starting to retain their cattle and market to the consumer. I think there will be more interested as the market is there."

Cave said anyone interested in buying meat from local farmers can reach him at the extension office at 401-8025.

The latest available statistics reported that in 2003, beef cattle generated a gross of a little more than \$26 million in Surry County.

Even with that large amount of money, Surry's largest agricultural industry is poultry with a gross of \$74 million in 2003.

The county's total farm income, including crops, grossed \$132 million in 2003.

"It is a significant contributor to the county," Cave said, referring to a report from North Carolina State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences on agriculture and agribusiness in Surry County. The report stated, "In 2000, employment in agriculture and agribusiness was 12,623, or 28 percent of the county's total employment."

"I'm not sure the public realizes how important agriculture is to our county income," he said.

Cave also pointed out other livestock breeds that are in Sur-

ry County and contribute to the ag income.

"Sheep have stayed about the same in numbers over the years, but we are seeing a pretty significant increase in meat goat production," he said. "Part of that are some of the new marketing opportunities and part is that it takes such a small area to raise them.

"Last year, we did a lot of programming for people wanting to learn about the goat industry."

But that's not all. "Sheep historically have not been a staple here, but some of the sheep from here are shipped north to Pennsylvania, where there is a slaughter plant," Cave said.

He explained that one ag industry that has decreased is dairy farms.

"Dairy farmers, just a couple of years ago, were being paid the same prices for the product that they were in the '80s," Cave said. "Other inputs were increases in feed, fertilizer and gas not being the same price as it was in the '80s, so what they were being paid wasn't enough to pay the bills.

"In 1988, there were 21 dairies in the county. Now there are three."

He said a growing interest in the area are llamas and alpacas, because they are more of a nov-

elty and unique.

"Lots of people just want to grow animals," he said.

There is also a local farm that raises mules and trains them, then sends them to work on Amish farms.

"I think agriculture understands the SEDS report (from AngelouEconomics) that talked about the value-added aspect, and we will see farmers take that attitude, whether it is picking berries and turning to jellies and selling them at farmers markets or taking wool and spinning it and selling as scarves or in the beef market," Cave said. "Farmers are very adaptable. One of the reasons the United States is a superpower is because we can feed ourselves from within our borders. We are a net exporter of foods."

He reported statistics that in the U.S., a person spends 9 percent of his/her annual income on food. In Japan that percent is 17, in South Africa 23 and in India 53. "We are extremely lucky. We have the safest and most abundant food supply in the world," he said. "The average person, in 40 days, will earn enough to feed themselves for a whole year. It takes 140 days to make enough to pay taxes.

"We are becoming more efficient and are doing that with less farmers — in Lyndon Johnson's days one farmer fed 40 people, now one feeds 144."

He said in Surry County, in addition to the livestock mentioned, there is also pigs and chickens and some bison.

"We pretty varied. In some ways, it is a little unusual just in the diversity of a county not just having two or three species, but for the diversity I think it speaks to the people moving in the area to buy small acreage and trying new things," Cave said.

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New group offers internships to help attract people to area

By JULIE PHARR

Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — Attracting talented people to become residents of the Mount Airy area and providing college students with real-world experiences are the main objectives of the Internship Foundation.

Bob Meinecke of Paradigm Financial Group Inc. is the chairman of the Internship Foundation, which is a part of the Old North State Winegrowers Foundation, a 501c(3) that was formed in December of 2002. The Winegrowers Foundation is an education and economic development entity.

The Internship Foundation's mission is to provide an organizational structure for training professionals in Mount Airy and the surrounding communities through internships.

"We want to attract students back to the community after they do internships here," Meinecke said. "If they will come back and work in the community after completing an internship, we will help them pay back their monthly student loans during the period that they work and stay here."

The foundation has already placed one intern, Erin Paulson, who worked as a physical therapy intern for Casey Vedder of ProHealth.

"We will work with companies to solicit folks from the college ranks to do internships and, hopefully, the students will stay and prosper in the community," Meinecke said.

Some of the internships will offer pay whereas some will only offer college credits depending on the companies' program format. The internships will have various time periods such as 60 days to a six-month program depending on the student's class requirements.

The Internship Foundation will offer a broad variety of internships including medical, architectural, engineering and just about any professional field that requires an internship as part of its training.

The Internship Foundation



Julie Pharr/The Mount Airy News

Employees of panos, from left, Eva Katasoudas, Julia Katasoudas and Athanasios Katasoudas, look forward to hosting a culinary intern provided by the Internship Foundation of the Old North State Winegrowers Foundation. Some of the foundation members are, at back, Bob Meinecke and, from left, Carol Burke, foundation director Susan Campbell and Hal Brownfield.

has been working with Mark Fleming with the University of North Carolina. Fleming will sponsor an intern who will work in the local community.

Hal Brownfield of Andrew Pearson Design serves as the chairman of the Old North State Winegrowers Foundation and is a member of the Internship Foundation.

Brownfield described the Internship Foundation as having two main components.

"We will assist companies in finding interns," he said. "And, we need to give college people some real-world experience. It makes their education more valuable."

Brownfield expressed some frustration with two designers he had hired from Beijing, China.

"It was a sad experience for me," he said. "It was apparent that they had never been exposed to a factory setting." That's one reason why Brownfield thinks the Internship

Foundation is so valuable.

Brownfield also sees the Internship Foundation as a way to convert talented individuals into residents of the community.

"We need to be recruiting talent," Brownfield said. "If we recruit talent, then we will build industry."

The committee members of the Internship Foundation are recruiting volunteers from companies who will mentor students and oversee internships.

"We help the kids and the kids help the community," Brownfield said.

Brownfield will sponsor an intern who will do design work for his company. The Internship Foundation is also currently seeking a landscape architect intern.

Meinecke described the effort as a grassroots approach to economic development.

"If they have a good experience while they are here, they may decide to live here," he said.

The committee is working on its Web site, www.theinternshipfoundation.org, which will promote local internship opportunities along with the community by providing links to the Web sites of the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce, Surry Community College and the Surry County Economic Development Partnership along with others.

Carol Burke is the vice chair of the Winegrowers Foundation and the secretary to the Internship Foundation. Burke is the owner of GIG Properties LLC.

"With professional skills, you can get a job if you want to work. We don't have enough people here to fill certain professional job openings," she said.

The Internship Foundation held its first meeting Dec. 19, 2004, and is meeting monthly on the second Thursday for lunch at panos at 11:30. For more information, call 786-5155.

Local men elected to state wine council

By **MARIA MAGHER**
Staff Writer

RALEIGH — The North Carolina Winegrowers Association recently announced the newly elected members of its executive council, including two Surry County men.

Phil Hammond of Pilot Mountain Vineyards in Pinnacle was named treasurer and Norm Oches of Surry Community College in Dobson was named secretary.

Margo Knight, executive director of the N.C. Grape Council, said that the men were elected by secret ballot by the approximately 350 members of the association. The winners were announced at the association's annual meeting earlier this month in Greensboro, but the elections took place in January.

Larry Kehoe of Silver Creek Vineyards in Morganton, the past president of the council,

See MEN, page 3

MEN: Hammond, Oches

Continued from page 1

said that both men have had experience with the council.

Kehoe said that Oches is a certified vineyard consultant who helps others install vineyards and grow grapes. He has served on the council for two years previously, and has served as the chairman of the education committee.

Kehoe said that Hammond is a chemist with a doctorate degree who owns Pilot Mountain Vineyards and sells grapes to local wineries. Kehoe said that Hammond has been involved with the council since it began in 1993, and served as treasurer for the last two years.

Both men were elected to two-year terms.

Mark Friszolowski of Childress Vineyards in Lexington was elected this year's presi-

dent, and Kim Myers of Laurel Gray Vineyards in Hamptonville was elected vice president.

Kehoe said that the association represents growers of bunch grapes.

"We're an organization that attempts to communicate all the newest winemaking and growing techniques," he said.

The association also provides educational and informational resources for amateur and professional winemakers.

There are about 42 wineries across the state involved with the association, Kehoe said.

"We're discovering that this is a great area to grow grapes and make wine," he said. "It's a very exciting time to be in the business."

2-15-05 MAN



Wendy Byerly Wood/The Mount Airy News

Twyla Sickmiller of the Maxwell House Bed and Breakfast opens the door to the limousine she bought to escort people around for Yadkin Valley Wine Tours, her new business venture.

New business offering tours of local wineries, vineyards

By **WENDY BYERLY WOOD**
Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — A new business is catering to people interested in touring numerous vineyards and wineries in Yadkin Valley region.

Yadkin Valley Wine Tours is providing wine connoisseurs with a way of going to five or six wineries in one day, tasting all the wine they want and not worrying about driving.

Twyla Sickmiller, owner and operator of Maxwell House Bed and Breakfast, said guests at her inn had asked about a service such as Yadkin Valley Wine Tours, which provides a limousine escort to five or six wineries.

Sickmiller said she keeps hearing the North Carolina tourism representatives and agritourism representatives say

how great the wine industry is going to be in the area. "The feds say it is going to be bigger than Napa and Sonoma valleys (California)," she said.

"I talked to the Napa Valley bed and breakfasts and asked them what they would have done differently when they implemented wine tours like this one," Sickmiller said.

One thing she was told was that they would have bought a limousine rather than renting one every weekend.

"I got together with four other people, and they liked the idea (of the wine tours), but everybody wanted a piece of the pie," she said.

Sickmiller waited and nothing seemed to happen, so she took the initiative herself and found a limo for sale from Omaha, Neb., on eBay. She bought it.

"It used to belong to the woman who was the chauffeur for the governor of New York. She sold it to a Nebraskan guy who is the U.S. professional heavy weight weightlifter," Sickmiller explained. "It wasn't big enough for him, so he turned around and sold it."

She flew to Omaha and drove the limo home. "I was stopped by four police officers, just so they could see who was in the limo," she said.

Sickmiller pulled in front of her home on Main Street at 3 a.m. the Thursday morning that Mayberry Days began in September 2004.

"The rumor was that Oprah was staying here. I had police officers and fire officers calling to find out if it was true," she said.

See TOURS, page 2

MAN 1-31-05

SERVICES: Start Feb. 9

Continued from page 1

offering prayer on March 2. The Rev. Vladimir Strejcek of the Mount Airy Friends Church will give the message, and Shelby Nichols, a member of the Friends Church, will offer the special music.

On March 9, the Rev. Frank Huffman will give the scripture and prayer, while Evelyne Gunter will present the special music. Gunter's husband, the Rev. Lonnie Gunter of Genesis Full Gospel Church, will offer the message.

The Rev. Raleigh Amburn will have the scripture and prayer on March 16. Tammy Clement, a member of Bethel Presbyterian Church, will perform special music, and the Rev. Richard Loman, pastor of Mount Airy Wesleyan Church, will give the message.

During the last service on March 23, the Rev. Cecil Hill will offer the scripture and prayer. The Rev. Bob Josey, a retired Southern Baptist interim

minister, will give the message, while Patti Miller Fulk, the choir director of Dobson First Baptist Church, will have the special music.

In addition, Grace Moravian's staff and congregation will be providing a light luncheon following each service. Donations will be accepted to help cover the cost of the meals, and any excess money received will be contributed to Yokefellow Cooperative Ministries.

In addition to the Lenten services, the ministerial association's annual Good Friday services on "The Last Seven Words of Christ" will be on March 25 at the Mount Airy Friends Church at the corner of South Main and Wilson streets. The services will be held from noon to 3 p.m. with each speaker talking in 25-minute increments, except the last, which will be 30 minutes.

Also, the Mount Airy Ministerial Association will have its March meeting following the Lenten service on March 2.

Old North State winery recognizes top growers

By **BRYAN GENTRY**
Staff Writer

MOUNT AIRY — Wine producers in North Carolina face challenges from the weather that make it difficult to grow good grapes. Some of those problems are excessive rain, wind and even hurricanes, said Shelton Vineyards General Manager Sean McRitchie.

In spite of those challenges, 22 vineyards in the region produced grapes this year. McRitchie helped Gray Draughn, general manager of the Old North State Winegrowers Cooperative Association, choose the best of those last summer.

"In my opinion, if you're among the top eight, you've really done something," Draughn said as he led an awards ceremony to honor those top eight grape producers Saturday at the Old North State Winery on North Main Street.

The awards ceremony was sponsored by the Old North State Quality Alliance whose goal is to make sure wine producers get the best grapes possible from Surry County soil. Draughn said the quality alliance was formed in 2003 as a way of monitoring grape quality and awarding vineyard operators who meet and surpass quality standards.

"We're pretty much setting the standard for

everyone making wine in the Yadkin Valley," Draughn said. "Quality is everything. If you don't have a quality product, it's a plan to fail."

"This quality alliance is going to be the backbone of this co-op," he said.

Draughn continued, "This past summer we visited every fruit-producing vineyard (in the co-op). We came up with a rating system, sort of a report card." The vineyards were graded on 10 points of vineyard management that contribute to a clean environment at the vineyard and good-tasting grapes.

Draughn, with the help of McRitchie, tried to find out "who was really striving to produce the highest quality fruit you could get," he said.

Two brothers, Von and Kerry Johnson of Winnbrose Vineyards, won the Gold Award.

Tim and Brenda Doub of Flint Hill Vineyards won the Silver Award.

Joyce Rigby and Rob and Rhonda Kornegay of Copeland Vineyards won the Bronze Award.

Grower Recognition Awards went to Gary and Teresa Hodges of Da-Lu Vineyards; Randy and Vivian Fulk of Medley Meadows Vineyards; Neil and Marienna Shore of Sander's Ridge Vineyards; Marty and Renee Simpson of Old Place Vineyards; and David Chapman of Big Creek Vineyards.

(See more winners' photos on Page 8)



Bryan Gentry/The Mount Airy News
Winnbrose Vineyards won the Gold Award at the Old North State Winegrowers awards ceremony Saturday night at the Old North State Winery. Pictured here are Susan, left, Von, Kerry and Shelia Johnson. Von and Kerry Johnson own the Winnbrose Vineyards.

8A-The Mount Airy News Monday, December 13, 2004



Bryan Gentry/The Mount Airy News
Tim and Brenda Doub, owners of Flint Hill Vineyards, won the Silver Award Saturday night at the Old North State Wine Growers awards ceremony.



Bryan Gentry/The Mount Airy News
Gray Draughn, right, manager of Old North State Winery, congratulates Rhonda Kornegay, Rob Kornegay and Joyce Rigby for winning the Bronze Award at the Old North State Wine Growers ceremony Saturday. See story on Page 1.

MAN 12-25-04

Shelton's on Top 50 list of The Wine Report '04

DOBSON — In winter 2004-05 edition of The Wine Report, an Atlanta-based wine publication, Shelton Vineyards 2003 Riesling was listed as one of the “top 50 wines we tasted in the year 2004.”

The list is included in the cover article, “50 Forbidden Wines: The best wines of 2004 that you were never supposed to see.”

“We are flattered that one of our wines was selected for this honor and included in such an impressive list of international wines,” said Ed and Charlie

Shelton, owners of the estate, in a joint statement.

The previous vintage of Shelton Riesling won a Gold Medal/Best of Class Award in last year’s New World International Wine Competition held in Ontario, Canada.

“This award further solidifies our belief that Riesling is a grape variety well-suited to our particular site at the higher elevations of the Yadkin Valley,” said wine maker Matt Dyar. “Our cooler evenings help to stabilize natural acidity while

the hot summer days serve to fully ripen the fruit allowing us to produce a very well-balanced wine.”

Shelton Vineyards also received high scores (87-92 points) from the publication’s tasting panel for several other wines in the same issue of The Wine Report.

Unfortunately, the 2003 version of Shelton Riesling has been sold out at the winery for months, but may still be found in a few retail stores. The 2004 vintage has just been released,

“We are flattered that one of our wines was selected for this honor and included in such an impressive list of international wines.”

Ed and Charlie Shelton, owners

and, according to Dyar, “may be the best yet.” Shelton Vineyards is in the heart of the Yadkin Valley near Dobson.

The 383-acre estate has 200 acres of producing vineyard. Visit its Web site at www.sheltonvineyards.com.

Weekend

B1

The Courier-Times
Roxboro, N.C.

SATURDAY, Nov. 13, 2004



Kevin Moore is moving forward with plans for a vineyard and winery in Person County even as he is going to school to learn what he needs to know about the business, which as a novice, he admits, is everything. But if all goes well, he could be selling wine from Person County-grown grapes as early as 2006.

Ken Martin / C-T

Three acres of grape vines and a dream

By VICKI BERRY

Kevin Moore believes new wine profit in school at the same time as the venture

Kevin Moore believes new wine, profits lie in Person County's vintage tobacco soil

NORTH CAROLINA IS home to 38 wineries, and if all goes according to plan, that number will soon increase by one, and Person County could be home to the state's most recent — Rock of Ages Vineyard and Winery.

Kevin Moore is in the midst of formulating plans and making changes down on the farm.

After several generations of tobacco farming, the Moore family farm will soon be transformed. The fields will reap a new harvest, and former tobacco barns will be replaced with a wine producing facility, complete with a wine-tasting room and ultimately, maybe even a restaurant.

The Person County commissioners recently amended the county's planning ordinance to add wineries to the list of uses allowed in districts zoned Rural Conservation. This change allowed Moore, who had petitioned for the amendment, to proceed with his plans to build a winery.

"This is something I've been interested in for a long time," said Moore adding that he made up his mind last spring, while on a camping trip, to proceed with the venture. Over the years, Moore said, he visited wineries across the country, from New Jersey and New York in the East, and toured the famed Napa Valley wine country in California.

The resolve did not come about suddenly, however. Moore said he has spent a

lot time considering the matter, including "pondering my middle age and what would I do the second half."

Relishes challenge

Not only did Moore want to do something he enjoyed, but, he said, he also relishes the challenge of producing a new product, which in this case happens to be wine.

Additionally, he pointed out, grapes happen to be one of the few crops that could rival the income earned from tobacco.

Once he made up his mind, Moore put the wheels in motion. Already armed with a degree in economics from N.C. State University, he enrolled in Surry Community College with a goal of earning a two-year degree in viticulture — the science or practice of growing grapevines,

especially for wine making — and enology — the scientific study of wine and the making of wine.

Maintaining his current business as a granite fabricator and ceramic tile distributor along with school, plus putting into motion a new business venture, Moore created some hectic and busy days for himself.

Three acres planted

This year marked a first with three acres of grapevines planted and growing on former tobacco ground along with constructing the plants' growth framework of posts and wires. He now is preparing additional acreage for planting next spring. In fact, he

ordered the grape plants in early summer in order to guarantee delivery for a spring planting.

While it leaves him little free time, Moore said, one of the advantages to being

is developing is that he has unlimited access to resources and unbiased opinions. Those resources led him to Georgia from where the newest plants will be shipped.

After planting, Moore has a year or two to get the winery ready to receive the harvested fruit.

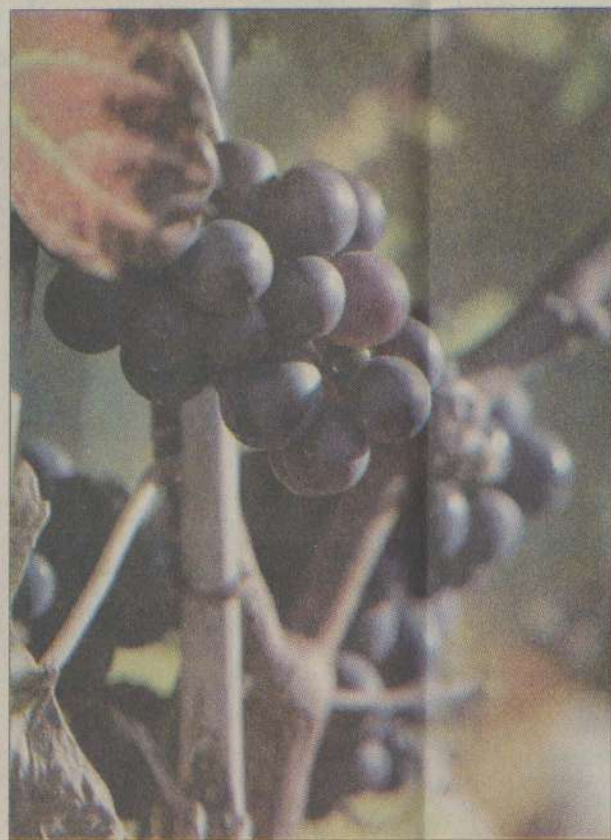
Grapes take years to reach potential — vines produce 10 to 20 percent of their potential the second year; 70 percent the third year and by seven to eight years are producing at full potential. Patience pays off, because from that point on, the vines will produce for the next 40 years, explains Moore.

Moore has plans to plant a variety of grapes, including the southern muscadine, which is native to the southeastern United States and is the ancestor of cultivated varieties used for winemaking.

Another advantage of growing muscadine grapes, explained Moore, is that it has been discovered to have innate health benefit with its antioxidants — the substance that inhibits the destructive effects of oxidation in the body.

According to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, "Recent studies have found muscadine grapes and their resulting products contain more resveratrol and other antioxidants than any other types of grapes. Muscadine grapes contain antioxidants in skins, seed, pulp, juice and wine."

Because of these health benefits, in
See **THREE** page B9



The year-old grape vines pictured here are to be joined in the spring by new grape plants scheduled to be planted in the plowed ground in the foreground.

Three acres of grape vines and a dream

Continued from page B1

addition to wine, muscadine grapes are being used in the manufacture of lotions, dietary supplements and peels.

Moore said he wants to encourage other farmers in the area to grow grapes with the winery ultimately becoming a marketplace for those farmers to sell their grapes. He said he has already discussed grape growing with a couple of Person County farmers and would be willing to talk to any farmer who is interested.

Confident of viability

"I am confident grapes will become a viable crop, and I have made a sizeable commitment to the industry," Moore said.

So confident is Moore that his spring planting for next year will cover an additional 40 acres.

Although much of the vineyard and winery remains in planning stages, the initial three acres of the vineyard are making progress.

"The vines are doing real well for the first year," said Moore.

By next year, the plants may produce grapes to the tune of 400 to 600 gallons of juice. But Moore is not sure that any wine will be produced from that first year yield. On the other hand, he is confident that the yield in the third year will be enough to go into wine production, and therefore he expects to make the first sale of Person County produced wine in 2006.

While the vines are growing, Moore will continue planning for the winery — all the while tending to the vineyard. There are pesky critters, such as deer and birds, with which to contend; vines must be pruned; soil balances checked; and still more vines to be ordered, planted and likewise tended. There are technical matters for Moore to consider as well.

"I thought I knew how to grow grapes, and found out I didn't know anything. So that is why I am willing to share," admitted Moore.

Winery construction

Moore said he could start construction on the winery later this year, with an eye toward completion as soon as a year from now.

Also as a side to the vineyard and winery and its products, Moore's plans for the future include making the area a tourist attraction.

In addition to the 10,000 square foot winery, with its customary accoutrements of stainless steel and oak barrels, Moore plans to include a 4,000-to-5,000 square foot wine tasting room. And some day, maybe even a restaurant, he said.

Moore also envisions seasonal farmers markets on the grounds along with a corn maze as well as wine related products, all of which have proven to be successful on farms that have adopted similar agri-tourism ventures.

Noting that, up until the time of Prohibition, North Carolina was the largest wine producing state in the country, Moore said, "I would like to see a return to those more popular days."

Moore hopes to produce a premium wine.

"It will take some time and research to find out what grows well here," he said. "We want to be able to compete with smaller vineyards by producing a quality wine."

"What is unique about Person County is that the climate is identical to that of Verona, Italy," he said. "I feel we can make a really good Chianti and Bordeaux."

Even with the best-laid plans, strong interest and fervent desire, as well as a degree in grape growing and wine making, Moore admits there is a "knack" for producing a good wine and knowing the optimum time to pluck the grapes, pointing out that the last two weeks on the vine are the most critical.

He is hopeful of developing that knack so that Rock of Ages Winery and Vineyard not only will be successful in its own right but also could prove the vanguard toward giving old tobacco country a new lease on economic life.

Grandfather Vineyard?

Foscoe family learns ABCs of winemaking

By Frank Ruggiero

Staff Writer

Some families have gardens in their backyards. Others have swimming pools, while some might even have trampolines.

The Tatums have a vineyard.

Driving by their Foscoe home, one would not assume it was a house of viticulturists, though a keen eye may spot the "Support Your Local Winemaker" sticker on Steve Tatum's truck.

In the backyard, however, a thousand vines of many varieties grow below the slopes of Grandfather Mountain. Winter may be well on its way, but Tatum is confident the bulk of his crop will survive. After all, 200 vines will be three years old next April, and the remaining 800 were planted last year on a terraced slope.

"Last year, I didn't lose one," Tatum said. "They all did well; they all came back and tried to grow grapes."

Typically, a winemaker doesn't crop his or her vines in their second year, as the root sys-



Marie Freeman/Watauga Democrat

From left, Steve, Sally and Dylan Tatum own Foscoe's only vineyard — one of the few in the High Country.

tems are still trying to establish and build energy, Tatum said, though the third year is ideal.

Tatum feared the vines would be lost to hurricanes Frances and Ivan, especially considering the vineyard's proximity to the Watauga River, but was relieved by their resiliency.

■ Please see page 5

Watauga Democrat 11-24-2004

Hicks Farm, Traci Parlier, Main Street Antique Mall, Mildred Bunten, Brinkley Hardware, Eunice Johnson, Tolley's Flowers Inc.

Linda Guy, Carter W. Wiseman, D.D.S., Avery Square Beauty Shop, Lowes Foods of Newland #116, River View Grocery, Edge of the World, Watauga Humane Society, Leon Holder Wholesale, Parents Country House Restaurant, Community Members Sunrise Market, Staff Hump Mountain Apple Orchard/House, Ted Harmon, Talk of the Town Beauty Shop, Gardner Barber Shop, Kwik Jax, Avery Power & Equipment, Scott's Pizza.

Highland Union Bank, Flower Shop, Avery Journal, Napa Auto Parts, Clyde Jones Auto Parts, Toyota of Boone, K & G Automotive, Advance Auto Parts, Winn Dixie, Talk of the Town Beauty Salon, McCoury's Nursery, Cut up and Tan, Dollar General, Mountain Lumber Company and Flick Video.

Thank you for investing in the lives of children.

**Beech Mountain Elementary School
Parent-Teacher Organization
Ken Townsend,
Principal
Beech Mountain Elementary**

'Right some wrongs'

Editor:

As the dust settles on this election year, I am writing to right some wrongs from my point of view. My husband, Cullie

are called to help those in need, to be good stewards of what we have, of our environment and try to leave the word a better place.

We didn't have a political committee working for us. What money we raised came from friends and the good people in Ashe and Watauga counties. I was my husband's campaign manager; our office was our dining room table.

Yes, we moved here from Charlotte, but that is not where we're from. We are from the small town of Marshville, North Carolina (Cullie was raised on a small farm near Marshville) and just like some in your family perhaps, we had to move to the city to earn a living. We will not ever be from this area but this is where we choose to live.

Cullie would have done an exceptional job in Raleigh for the people of Ashe and Watauga counties, just as he did for the companies he worked for and the communities in which we lived.

If there is a next time, I hope you will take time to get to know the man before you judge him based on negative radio and television ads and political literature. You will find a person who will work hard for all the people of this district.

As we enter the season of Thanksgiving and Christmas, Cullie and I wish for you and your family peace, joy and happiness. To those of you who were so generous with your support, prayers and kindness, we thank you.

**Sylvia Tarleton
Blowing Rock**

The Herald-Sun

Durham, North Carolina

WWW.HERALDSUN.COM

11/24/2004



Feeling fine about wine



THE HERALD-SUN | PHOTOS BY ROSS TAYLOR

Kevin Moore (top) has started Rock of Ages Vineyard and Winery on his property in Hurdle Mills. He had a tough season this year when a frost killed his grapes. But enthusiasm for wineries is gurgling across the state as farmers begin seeking alternatives to tobacco. In the top photo, Moore holds some grapes (above) from his vineyard.

As tobacco declines, farmers see a future in grapes

BY SHAUN LOCKHART

slockhart@heraldsun.com; 419-6618

HURDLE MILLS — There's hardly a grape to be found in Kevin Moore's vineyard.

Thanks to a recent frost, all that remains are few scattered bunches of dark purple orbs.

Moore's season may be over. But his business is just budding, part of a new economy geared around wine involving everyone from barrel makers to operators of bed and breakfasts.

Moore comes from a long line of farmers.

The land he's growing his wine grapes on was once part of his family's tobacco farm, and he hopes his sons and daughters will continue farming.

"This is going to be a family kind of operation," he said.

Moore already has planted 3 acres of grapes and plans to plant 14 more on his Hurdle Mills property next year, making it the only winery in Person County. Moore grows muscadines, native to North Carolina, as well as some European grapes.

Moore doesn't remember when he had his first glass of wine, but he does

remember he didn't like the brand he drank.

"It's been some years ago," said Moore, 44. "It wasn't very good as I recall."

He hopes his brand of chardonnay will leave a different impression with first-time wine sippers.

"Our winery will make premium quality wine," he said.

He's already got a name picked out for his business, Rock of Ages Vineyard and Winery — a nod to his day job as owner of a granite company. He's also designing a label for his

see **WINE** | page A5

doesn't have pg 5

The Mount Airy News

WEDNESDAY

Established 1880

Mount Airy, N.C.

<http://www.mtairynews.com>

October 13, 2004

50 cents

Board approves new winery

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — The Surry County Board of Commissioners voted three to one Monday to approve the rezoning request of Grassy Creek Vineyard to allow the construction of a winery in a nearby barn.

The vote on the winery had been postponed twice due to objections from some neighbors and Grassy Creek United Methodist Church, which adjoins the vineyard. The church members were in attendance again Monday night, this time armed with signs bearing the slogan "Vote No" and others as they had been warned there would not be an additional public comment period.

The church members had been outspoken in their opposition to the vineyard during the two previous meetings.

"The issue isn't the winery, it's the location," said Willard Swift, lay leader of the church, last week while addressing the potential economic impact and the fact that the vineyard has already obtained the necessary zoning for an adjacent tract. "Our position in opposition of this rezoning still stands."

County Planning Director Chris Knopf presented the basic plans for the property at the Sept. 7 meeting. Those plans involve converting a former dairy barn at the Klondike Dairy to a winery. The developer, Derrill Rice of R&R Properties, LLC,

has an option to buy the 10.39-acre tract from Michael Van and Holly L. Hargett. The property would be used in conjunction with four adjoining properties totaling over 200 acres, which comprise Grassy Creek Vineyards. The planning board recommended the request be approved.

Monday night Board Chairman Jim Miller opened the meeting, then made the motion to approve the recommendation of the planning board.

His motion died for lack of a second; however, Commissioner Craig Hunter offered an alternative — approval of the request with two additional stipulations.

See WINERY, page 2A

Doctor recommends specialty care

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — Surry County paramedics are already delivering specialty care and should be able to complete the process to be designated specialty care providers, according to Dr. Jason Stopyra, the medical director for Surry County Emergency Medical Services.

"We want to have our paramedics providing the best care they can," said Stopyra. "I think it's important to provide the care, even without the certification. But it's time we were designated what we are — that we get the classroom training and equipment to do it."

Specialty care, Stopyra explained, is the equivalent terminology for critical care.

EMS Director John Shelton said equipment

will only cost about \$23,000, training another \$28,080, and the increase in salaries for 27 employees would run \$41,310. After the first year, out of the \$92,390, only the salary cost would be a recurring cost.

That move would generate about \$235,000 in additional revenue, based on current services being delivered that the county's emergency medical service cannot bill for because of its level of certification, Shelton said.

"Some of the procedures we are already performing fall under specialty care guidelines," he said. "However, we are not able to charge at the specialty care level because we do not have all the required equipment on board our units."

See SPECIALTY, page 2A

Old North State Winery takes home top honors

By REBEL GOOD

Mid-South News Service
RALEIGH — Old North State Winery of Mount Airy claimed a top honor Tuesday in the wine judging competition at the North Carolina State Fair.

The winery's Starlight White received a Double Gold rating, one of only 11 wines of 150 entered to receive the highest mark, and also was judged Best Muscadine.

"It was very unexpected," said Gray Draughn, general manager, after receiving the NC Muscadine Cup at a reception in the Hall of Fame Room of the Jim Graham Building. "To come in with such an award is a little overwhelming. It's a most gratifying experience."

The wine was crafted by winemaker Stephen Rigby, who now makes wines for Raffaldini and Buck Shoals vineyards in the Swan Creek area of Yadkin County. Draughn said that about 1,500 cases were made and that Starlight White "outsells our other wines by a 2-1 margin."

The muscadine was not Old North State's only award winner.

See HONORS, page 3A



Rebel Good/Mid-South News Service

Sherry Boyd, wholesale manager, Gray Draughn, general manager, and Laura Cockerham, retail manager, toast the success of their Starlight White, the winner of the Muscadine Cup given annually at the North Carolina State Fair to the best muscadine wine.

Deaths ...

SUTPHIN

MOUNT AIRY — Mr. Jack Nathan Sutphin, 80, of Mount Airy, husband of Mrs. Margaret Juanita Sutphin, passed away Monday, Oct. 11, 2004, at his home. Mr. Sutphin was born in Surry County on June 18, 1924, to George and Sarah Elsie Hicks Sutphin. He was retired from Boston Hosiery Mill; was a veteran of the U.S. Army, having served during World War II; and was the recipient of two purple hearts and an Eamet Campaign Medal with four Bronze Service Stars; and was a member of Flat Rock Baptist Church. Surviving are his loving wife, Margaret Sutphin of the home; and although Mr. and Mrs. Sutphin did not have children of their own, they do have "special children," Wanda and Ron Roberts of Mount Airy, Chrystal and Tommy Lawrence of King and Cory Hardy and Tonya Edwards of Mount Airy; "special grandchildren," Cameron Hardy, Zachary Lawrence and Katie Lawrence; sisters, Lois Short, Betty Key and Clarice Hall, all of Mount Airy, and Savannah Midkiff of Winston-Salem; brothers and a sister-in-law, Johnny and Merle Sutphin of Westfield and Joe Sutphin of Winston-Salem; and several

LOCAL

DUTCHER, Florence Partridge, 84, of Coconut Grove, Fla., formerly of Mount Airy, died Sept. 26, 2004.

AREA

GWYNN, Mr. Curtis, 86, of Ararat, VA., husband of Nettie Boyd Gwynn.

HOLLEY, Miss Courtney Leigh, 24, of Greensboro, passed away Thursday, Oct. 7, 2004.

nieces and nephews. In addition to his parents, Mr. Sutphin was preceded in death by three sisters, Bessie Short, Frances McAdams and Maggie Hiatt; and two brothers, George Abb Sutphin and Donald Sutphin. The funeral service will be held on Thursday, Oct. 14, 2004, at 2 p.m. at Moody Funeral Home Chapel, and will be conducted by Mr. Sam Prince, with burial to follow in Midkiff Cemetery, with full military rites conducted by V.F.W. Memorial Honor Guard Post 2019 of Mount Airy and Post 9436 of Pilot Mountain. The family will receive friends on Wednesday from 7 to 9 p.m. at Moody Funeral Home in Mount Airy. Flowers will be accepted, or

memorials may be made to Northern Hospice, P.O. Box 1373, Mount Airy, NC 27030.

DUTCHER

COCONUT GROVE, Fla. — Florence Partridge Dutcher, 84, a resident of Coconut Grove since 1959, died Sept. 26, 2004. She was born in Mount Airy on Dec. 20, 1919, to Alma Prevette and Wyatt Bradshaw Partridge. She attended Greensboro College and Women's College of the University of North Carolina. She is the widow of the late David J. Dutcher, and is survived by two daughters, Darrow Hodges of Denver, Colo., and Pamela Dutcher of Los Angeles, Calif.; three sons and a daughter-in-law, Arthur and Sharon Dutcher of San Francisco, Calif., David Dutcher, Jr. of Norfolk, Va., and Douglas Dutcher of Atlanta, Ga.; son-in-law, William V. Hodges III of Aspen, Colo.; two granddaughters, Kathryn Hodges of Aspen and Andrea Dutcher of San Francisco; and a grandson, Will Hodges of Aspen. She was a member of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church of Coconut Grove, and the Central Methodist Church of Mount Airy. A private service was held.



Carolina West Wireless food drive

Carolina West Wireless/Submitted photo

Carolina West Wireless employees are, from left, Michelle Davis, Tonya Gross and Kristy Norman. During the month of October, Carolina West Wireless will be collecting cans of food to be donated to local food pantries. For more information, call (336) 973-5000 or visit online at www.carolinawest.com

HONORS: Local wineries earn awards

Continued from page 1A

Five others received bronze medals — 2002 Cabernet Franc, 2002 Sangiovese, 2002 Chardonnay, Autumn Leaf Red and Spring House White.

The winery uses grapes from 38 vineyards, including 34 in the Yadkin Valley Appellation. The award-winning muscadine grapes came from Nash County and from Hinnant Farms in Pine Level.

Shelton Vineyards in Dobson received a Double Gold for

its 2001 Family Reserve Claret and a gold medal for its 2002 Sangiovese. It earned seven silvers — 2002 Merlot, 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon, 2002 Cabernet Franc, 2002 Chardonnay Bin 17, 2003 Riesling, Madison Lee Red and Salem Fork Blush — and five bronzes — 2002 Chardonnay, 2002 Syrah, 2002 Viognier, 2003 Sauvignon Blanc and Madison Lee White.

Round Peak Vineyards, west of Mount Airy, won three sil-

vers — Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and 2002 Nebbiolo — and three bronzes — Cabernet Franc, Rosé and Sweet Rosé.

Some 22 wineries had 150 entries, with 65 total medals awarded. Nine vineyards and wineries from the Yadkin Valley earned medals. Rag Apple Lassie from Boonville took the fair's top honor, the NC Winegrowers Cup, with the Double Gold Best of Show given to its 2003 Chardonnay.

The Mount

10/2/04 MAN

SATURDAY

Established 1880

Mount Airy, N.C.

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Winery rezoning heads agenda

PILOT MOUNTAIN — The revisiting of a rezoning request from Grassy Creek Vineyards will head up the agenda at Monday night's meeting of the Surry County Board of Commissioners.

The board will be meeting at the Armfield Civic Center, 873 Old Highway 52 Bypass, Pilot Mountain.

Board members on a 3-2 vote postponed a decision on the winery from their Sept. 18 meeting, saying they wanted time to visit the area and see the proximity of the location to the nearby Grassy Creek United Methodist Church.

Derrill Rice of R & R Properties, LLC, had asked the county to rezone a tract of land with an old dairy barn on it from Restricted Residential to Rural Agricultural — Conditional to allow him to locate a winery in the barn.

Rice is already developing a vineyard with tasting room, lodges and other accommodations on a tract of about 200 acres surrounding the church.

He told commissioners he thought he had already obtained the zoning he needed for the barn until he went to get a permit. He learned then that the rezoning he had approved by Elkin did not apply to the 10-acre tract housing the barn because it is outside of the town's zoning district.

Church members said they had not objected to Rice's development of the vineyard or his plans for a winery, until they learned the winery would be located in the dairy barn less than 1,000 yards away where it could be seen from the church.

With most of the board unfamiliar with the area, they voted to postpone a decision on the rezoning until they could do

more investigation.

That decision is the top item on the agenda, behind approval of minutes, open forum and consent agenda. The public hearing will not be reopened and additional public comment will not be received on the request.

Other items on Monday's agenda include:

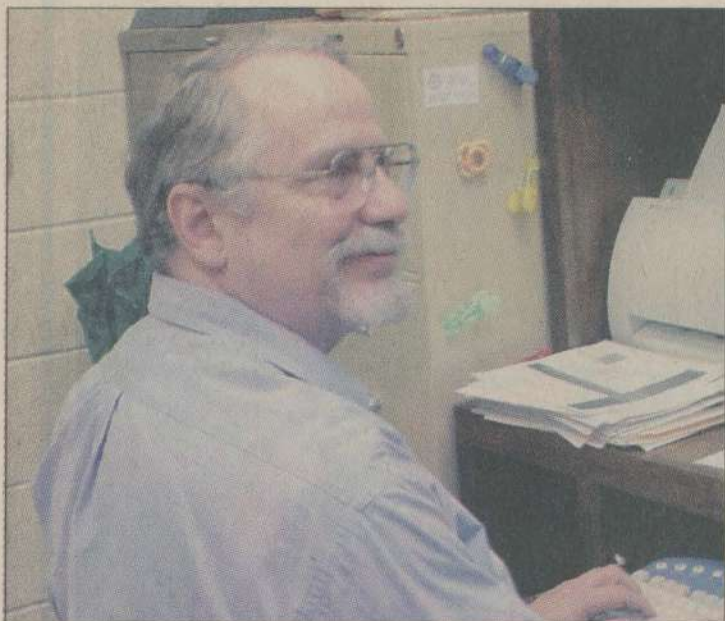
■ A request from Dr. Ashley Hinson, superintendent of Surry County Schools, to fund a mobile unit.

■ Discussion with Recreation Director Catrina Smith about a possible recreation foundation.

■ Wayne Black, director of social services, will talk to the board about the Work First Plan.

The remainder of the the meeting will be general county business and a closed session to discuss personnel.

Boyd writes sweet viticulture program at SCC



Submitted photo

Programmer and viticulture student Bill Boyd

DOBSON — When Dr. William Boyd enrolled in the Surry Community College in 2002 to explore post-retirement career possibilities, his goal was to learn as much as possible about the new viticulture and enology program.

He had no idea at that time that pursuit of his educational goal would open doors for him to apply skills built from 30 years of work experience in education and information systems to completely new ventures.

He did not know that in two short years he would provide a service to prospective grape growers; make formal presentations to the American Society of Enology and Viticulture and to the N.C. Grape Growers Association; see his work in print in the revised "Mid-Atlantic Winegrape Grower's Guide;" and serve as a consultant to the SCC

viticulture and enology program

Boyd began his studies in viticulture and enology with numerous degrees and a variety of work experience under his belt including a doctorate in psychology; a master's degree in library and information science; and extensive course work in statistics, computer programming and information systems.

In education and business he worked at Shepherd College in West Virginia, on ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education and at Appalachian State University, Northwest Regional Library, Shadowline Inc., Alba-Waldensian Inc., Lowe's Companies and Sara Lee Hosiery. He became accustomed to using computer technology to analyze needs, conduct research and feasibility studies and design computer programs and systems based on the research.

While involved in various viticulture and enology courses and activities, Boyd learned that budgeting and cost analysis are on the minds of prospective grape growers. He learned that individuals who contemplated this business venture needed to know the "what ifs" facing them.

Not only do they need to be able to evaluate costs such as land, equipment, supplies and labor and project a return on their investments, they need to be able to look at variables of individual budgets including the "what ifs" common to agribusiness. Boyd discovered that resources available to address these needs include a few guides on cost projections and budgeting issues (all were written several years ago) and a

See BOYD, page 2

2-The Mount Airy News Monday, October 4, 2004

BOYD: Program helps growers predict profits

Continued from page 1

spreadsheet developed for grape growers in Australia.

He realized that these resources are not very adaptable to current needs of local grape growers.

When he learned that a project was required for one of the viticulture courses, Boyd decided to use his technical skills to address these budgeting concerns. The project he chose included developing an Excel spreadsheet that would help individuals who wish to grow winegrapes in North Carolina look at costs and variables. What he developed is a new, unique tool customized for this geographic region.

Word spread quickly and Boyd began to receive invitations to speak and present his work to various profession viticulture groups such as the N.C. Grape Growers Association and the American Society of Enology and Viticulture.

Additionally, he received an invitation from Dr. Tony Wolfe, associate professor and viticulturist at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, to submit the spreadsheet for in-

clusion in the revised "Mid-Atlantic Winegrape Grower's Guide."

While Boyd was sharing the new budgeting tool with professional associations, Surry Community College used funds from the Golden Leaf Foundation to hire him as a consultant in the viticulture and enology program. He works with current and prospective grape growers in developing the budget component of their business plans.

At the end of this academic year, Boyd will have attained his original goal for attending Surry Community College, which was to explore the possibility of growing winegrapes by learning as much as he could about viticulture and enology.

Additionally, he will have earned an associate in applied science degree in viticulture and enology, become a consultant for the program, and developed the most current budgeting tool for grape growers in North Carolina and the southeastern United States.

For more information about the SCC viticulture and enology program, telephone 336-386-8121 or visit www.surry.edu.

MAN 10-4-04

Decision on winery rezoning request delayed by board

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

PILOT MOUNTAIN — The absence of two county commissioners called away on business led the county board to once again delay a vote on a rezoning request to allow construction of a winery in State Road.

The request from Grassy Creek Vineyard was delayed last month after an outcry from members of Grassy Creek United Methodist Church, which is about 750 yards away from the dairy barn that has been proposed for conversion to a winery.

Despite the fact that the public hearing on the rezoning was held two weeks ago, Vice Chairman Paul Johnson, who headed the meeting in his home district, allowed some comment during the open forum portion of the meeting, halting the comments when two of the speakers began to trade barbs.

"The issue isn't the winery, it's the location," said Willard Swift, lay leader of the church, addressing the potential economic impact and the fact that the vineyard has already obtained the necessary zoning for an adjacent tract. "Our position in opposition of this rezoning still stands."

County Planning Director Chris Knopf at the last meeting presented the basic plans for the property, which would involve converting a former dairy barn at the Klondike Dairy to a winery. The developer, Derrill Rice of R&R Properties, LLC, has an option to buy the property from Michael Van and Holly L. Hargett.

The property would be used in conjunction with four adjoining properties totaling over 200 acres, which comprise Grassy Creek Vineyards

He said the planning board recommended approving the request for a change from Restricted Residential to Rural Agricultural-Conditional because it is consistent with the surrounding area. The board also placed three stipulations: that Chatham Lodge Lane, on which the barn is located, shall only be used for agricultural purposes involved with the processing of wine and private, guided winery tours; no outdoor entertainment or festivals on the property; and no tasting rooms, gift shops, assembly areas, meeting rooms or dining and catering facilities.

After emotional discussion from neighbors, commissioners postponed their decision to Monday night to allow more members of the board to visit the area and give the church and Rice a chance to work out their differences.

As of Monday, those had not been resolved and Commissioners Fred O'Neal and Craig Hunter were both out of state on unexpected business.

Neighborhood resident Debbie Cain, who spoke two weeks ago as well, presented the board with a petition she said had 668 signatures on it opposing the winery.

Louise Neeves, a granddaughter of the Chatham who originally farmed the land,

See WINERY, page 3

MAN 10-5-04

Winery: Decision set for Oct. 12

Continued from page 1

read from her grandfather's will that the land should be used to farm in a progressive manner, which she felt the winery would be doing. "I can see it clearly from my house, and I still support the winery. I still support it going in."

Elkin realtor Deborah Swift of Swift Real Estate said she had been working on a land deal that fell through because of the controversy surrounding the issue. She also presented a letter from Dr. Bob Risner who spent \$1.2 million on his purchase of a part of the estate, urging that the rezoning request for property adjacent to his be turned down.

Swift also asked the board to

take a closer look at the issue of zoning and wineries and define different types and levels of wineries so that communities could better determine impact.

"When there is nothing about production, we don't know how much the production will affect traffic. We also don't know how the aroma of the fermenting wine will affect people."

When Neeves began to question Swift about the deal that fell through, Johnson stopped the discussion saying he could not allow debate.

Commissioner Jim Harrell Jr. said he felt much of the problem could have been avoided if the church had been notified when the process be-

gan, and he encouraged property owners to discuss plans for development with their neighbors.

"Our task is to make a decision based on legalities," he said. "From an economic development view, whether it goes in the white barn or not, the winery is not going away."

After Harrell said he could not be at the meeting in two weeks, the board decided not to adjourn Monday's meeting but to recess it until Oct. 12 at 5 p.m. at the government center to vote on the rezoning request and other items of business that may need to be handled at that time. That meeting time is contingent upon the other two commissioners being able to attend.

MAN 10-1-04

Wine produced at Stony Knoll for the first time

By JULIE PHARR
Staff Writer

Stony Knoll Vineyards sits in mouth of Yadkin Valley looking back up the valley between the Brushy Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains — a prime location for growing grapes for high-quality wines.

Vineyard owners, Van and Kathy Coe, are one step closer to realizing their dream of winemaking and securing the family farm. The Coes are currently processing wine for the first time at their onsite winery.

“This is the first crush to be processed on site at Stony Knoll Vineyards,” Van Coe said. “Last year, RagApple Lassie made our wines from 100 percent Stony Knoll grapes. The year before, the grapes were sold to RagApple Lassie and Hanover Park.”

Stony Knoll Vineyards is producing five varieties of grapes: cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, chardonnay, syrah and niagara. The cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay and niagara have been harvested, and the cabernet franc and syrah are still maturing on the vine.

Stony Knoll Vineyards consists of five acres of grapes that will generally have 20-ton production.

“This year maybe a little more because of the good growing conditions,” Coe said. They have harvested 15 tons of grapes with six to eight tons waiting to be picked this year.

The vineyards’ name came from a piece of property across the street from the winery that is riddled with rocks and stones.

“We happen to think that the minerals from the rock and stones will be very good for our wines,” Coe said.

The Coes starting growing grapes in April of 2001 on the gently rolling terrain of the farm. The property also includes a 1943 feed barn, a 1947 house, a to-



The owners of Stony Knoll Vineyards are processing grapes at their onsite winery for the first time. The winery is located in the Rockford area of Dobson. Van Coe explains the wine making process.

Julie Pharr/Mount Airy News

See STONY KNOLL, page 3A

STONY KNOLL: Produces first wine in its history

Continued from page 1A

bacco pack house built in the early 1960s and an old log structure built during Civil War, which is listed on the Surry County historical register, Coe said.

"We decided to try to perpetuate the property and keep it in the family for many, many more years. We saw grapes and wine making as an avenue to be able to retain ownership of the property over time," Coe said. "We didn't realize that we could grow such a high quality of grapes here. The fruit that is coming from these vineyards are of very high quality. We can make a high-end wine for consumption regionally maybe someday even internationally."

The property has belonged to his wife's family since 1896 and was recently designated as a Century Family Farm by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture's program to recognize families who have owned or operated a farm in North Carolina for a 100 years or more.

About 58,000 farms exist in North Carolina, but only 1,300 have the distinct honor of being a N.C. Century Family Farm. The Coes are one of 10 families in Surry County to have this designation. The other families are: T.W. Anderson and Thelma Anderson, Anna Pell Broadwell, Grady Cooper Jr., Irene H. Dobbins, Charles Simpson Foster Jr., Mary Francis Frye, Vester F. Jackson, Brenda O. Mabe McDaniel and Robert G. Snow, according to the www.agr.state.nc.us/paffairs/century/Scounties.htm

Coe went to Surry Community College for three years taking classes in the viticulture program along with his brother-in-law, Lynn Crouse, who is the winemaker at Stony Knoll. Crouse is a plant manager for

Hanes Dye and Finishing in Winston-Salem and an engineer by trade.

"He has really taken an interest in this," Coe said. "He has a good chemical background and has a good working knowledge of the chemical process and how wine reacts with other chemicals and how we have to use different chemicals as far as the wine making process. He is doing a wonderful job, a fantastic job of making the wines here. He has different blending ideas — a lot for the area to look forward to in the future."

Coe has found that the wine industry can pose some challenges for new owners.

"It's an immense amount of knowledge. It's incredible how much knowledge that you have to be exposed to," he said.

Owners need to learn how to deal with regulatory agencies on the local, state and federal level.

"You think you can plant some vines and be in business. That's just not the tip of the iceberg," Coe said. "But, it's a lot of fun. It's very rewarding. It's amazing that you could grow something that can be marketed internationally."

Coe sees the wine industry taking off in the future.

"Wine is internationally known as one of the greatest beverages on earth. It's very healthy for you. Red wines especially," Coe said. "We are also looking at the market growing in the United States because of the aging of America. We have a more mature population who are interested in their bodies and interested in the biological systems. They are more interested in wine."

The Coes have been putting their final touches on the tasting/event room that can house about 160 people.

Native materials such as 1823 heart pine was incorporated into the tasting room bar, and No. 2 yellow pine was used on the floor.

The heart pine is from the floors of Freeman House in Dobson where Kerr Drug is now located. Franklin Freeman, Mike Easley's chief of staff, walked on that floor when he was a boy visiting his grandparents, Coe said.

The Coes have all ready booked a two-day, executive retreat even though the facility will not be ready to use until November. Some brides, one from Florida, are considering holding weddings there.

The Coes plan to be open on the weekends on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays, 1 to 6 p.m. and by appointment for case buyers. Stony Knoll wine costs \$15 per bottle. Currently, the winery is the only place to buy the wines, but Stony Knoll wines should be available at local restaurants and online at www.stonyknollvineyards.com in the future. The Coes are all ready planning an expansion before they have even opened to the public. A 1,200-square-foot warehouse

may be built in the near future.

Coe is active on the on the board of the Rockford Preservation Society.

"We are doing some things in Rockford to help create and make this area a destination point for visitors," he said. "We counted about 12 vineyards up and down Rockford road here."

Stony Knoll is located centrally between Shelton Vineyards and RagApple Lassic Vineyards.

"Eventually, you will see more public wine tasting areas here," Coe said. "We need more bed and breakfasts, more lodging and more RV campgrounds."

Coe and his wife have two children, Patricia, 16, and Ethan, 10. They live a couple of miles from the winery.

"We want to achieve great wine making within the next five years," Coe said. "We want to help the historical town of Rockford develop and this area become more of a tourist attraction."

For more information about Stony Knoll Vineyards, contact Van Coe at vancoe@rivercto.net or 336-374-5752.

Mount Airy Music and



When Richard Childress is not at the race track, he can be found in the vineyard which is his new passion."

Richard Childress had a passion to race cars from his earliest years, and at the age of 17, entered his first race. He drove for the next 20 years until 1981, when he made the decision to retire as a driver and focus on being a team owner. Fortunately, he chose as his replacement driver a young fellow named Dale Earnhardt, and the rest is North Carolina and NASCAR history.

As Richard traveled around the country, particularly in California, he started to develop a passion for wine. As his interest increased, as with most wine lovers, he began seeking out better quality wines to collect and his thoughts turned to getting more involved with the business aspects. As we know from his racing career, Richard doesn't do things half-way. So when he decided to get involved with wine, he planned to do it in a big way. As a life-long resident of Lexington, he decided to plant a vineyard around his home and see what could develop. The 30 acres he initially planted mark the beginning of a major involvement in the Yadkin Valley wine industry. With the purchase of a 90-acre site at the crossroads of Routes 52 and 64, Richard and his partner Greg Johns, who also had planted a vineyard around his home, announced to the world that Childress Vineyards would become a major player in the Yadkin Valley wine appellation and along the East Coast.

A PASSION FOR RACING AND WINE

By R. Bruce Heye

SIGNATURE SERIES



Childress
CHILDRESS
Vineyards

2003
 RESERVE CHARDONNAY

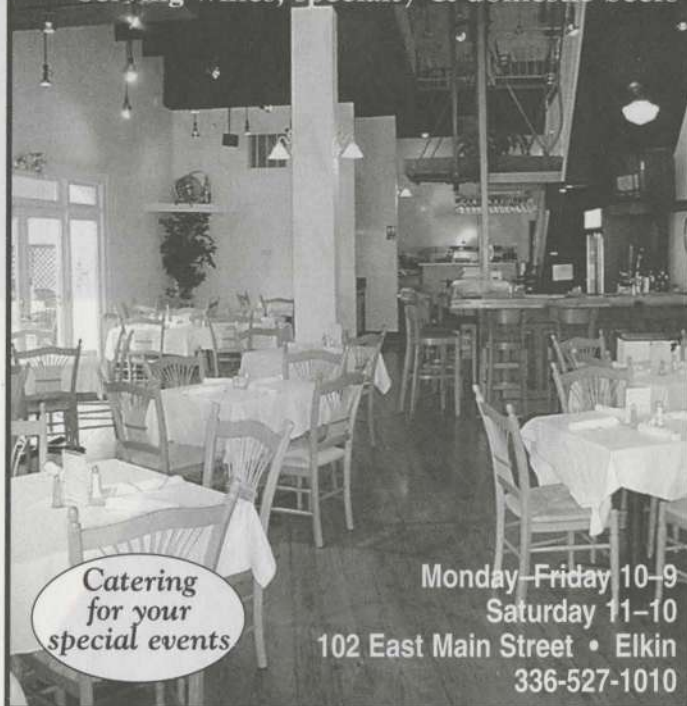
Richard Childress

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With the assistance of wine consultant Joyce Rigby, they began to plan the layout and development of the winery and to make the major hiring decisions. The first piece in the puzzle was to hire a vineyard manager to oversee the planting and development of the vineyard. They went to Virginia, which has a similar soil and climate conditions to the Yadkin Valley, and interviewed Matt Chobanian, who had worked in Virginia vineyards for 15 years and, coincidentally, was a racing fan. It was a good match. Matt was hired to begin planting in the spring of 2003: the white varieties of Chardonnay and Viognier and the red varieties of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot—the 5 grapes blended in the red wines of Bordeaux—as well as Syrah and Sangiovese. Additional plantings of small amounts of other grapes have been added on an experimental basis.

The next step, and the most important, was finding a first-class winemaker to oversee the entire operation. Richard and Greg were referred to Mark Friszolowski, the winemaker at the 650-acre Pindar Vineyards that is the largest premium winery on Long Island in New York State. Long Island is a relatively new wine-growing region which, like North Carolina, has shifted from one crop (potatoes) to wine. Mark is a native of Long Island and held a wide variety of positions at Long Island wineries, working for the past 15 years at Pindar. His Pindar wines have received world-wide recognition for their quality. In addition to his Long Island duties Mark has been involved as a consultant to wineries around the world, including Soviet Georgia, South Africa, Argentina, Italy and New Zealand. His breadth of experience and his passion to produce award-winning wines made him the obvious choice to lead the Childress Vineyards.

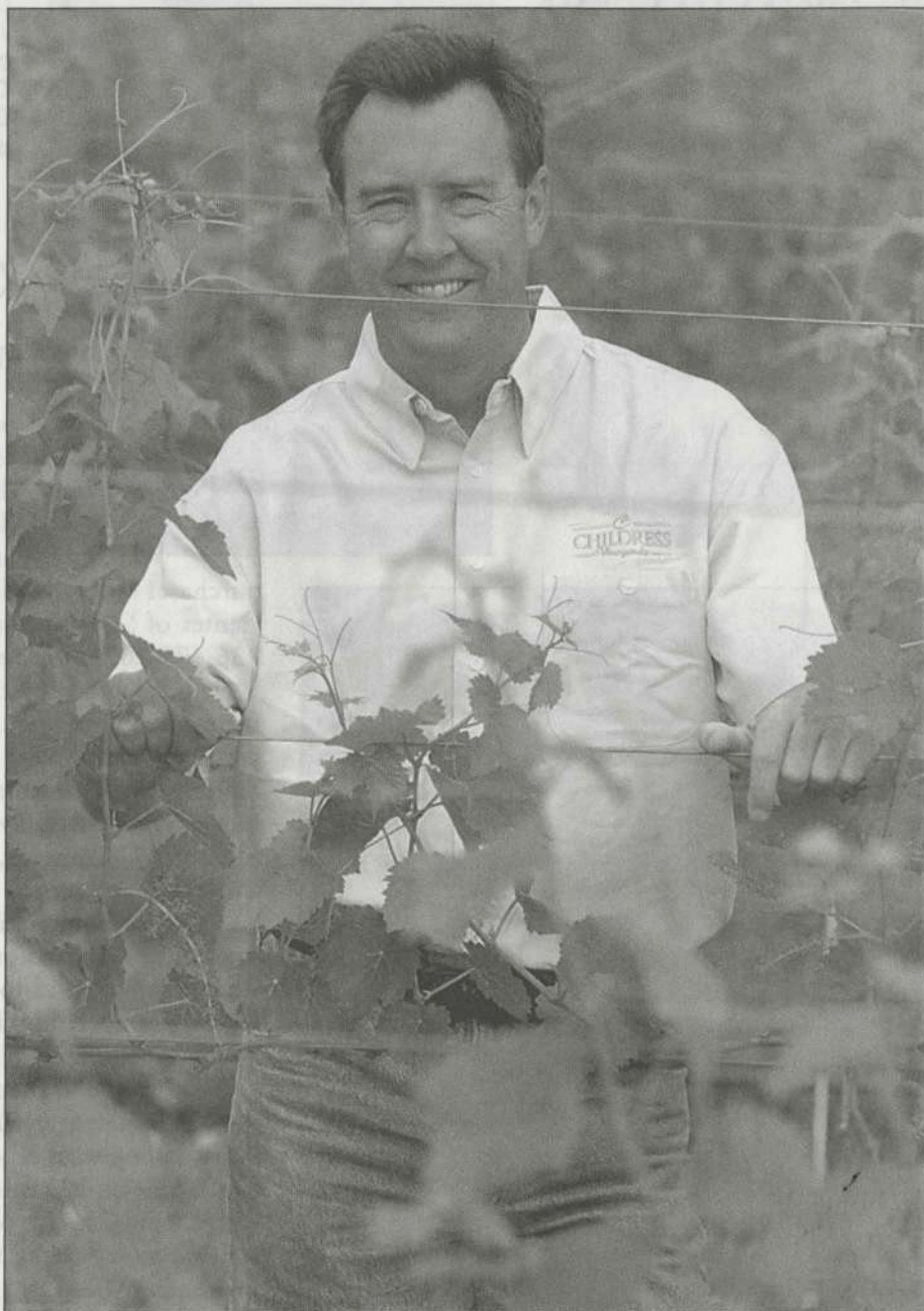
Once Mark understood Richard and Greg's plan to build one of the finest winery complexes on the East Coast, he signed on as general manager and winemaker in the summer of 2003. Fortunately, he joined early enough in the planning stages to be able to influence the design of the 35,000-square foot building. The exterior of the building will be in an Italian renaissance style reminiscent of Tuscany but designed to provide easy access for the visitors to see how the Childress wines are made. A waterfall in one of the barrel rooms will be a part of the tours and will add ambience for intimate winemaker dinners. The complex will also contain a bistro for visitors to enjoy light foods with the Childress wines, a full-scale commercial kitchen for catering special wine dinners, and an amphitheater for evening and weekend concerts. In 2005 construction will begin on a hotel and shopping area on the property to encourage additional tourism in the Lexington area. The Italian renaissance motif of the winery will be carried through with all of the other build-

ings added to the complex.

With the opening of the complex, scheduled for October, the winery will be offering 8,500 cases of wine in three categories. The first will be their house blends of table wines including a red, white and a blush. Then there will be the Childress varietal wines with an initial offering of Chardonnay, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Finally, Mark has selected the best lots of grapes and made a Signature Series of Chardonnay, Merlot and a red blend called Meritage. These wines are being aged in 100% French oak barrels. In the next three years Mark expects to increase the annual output to over 30,000 cases and to begin making the only Yadkin Valley sparkling wine.

Childress Vineyards will be the southernmost winery in the Yadkin Valley and is destined to become a major tourist attraction. Along with the promotion of the winery, the Richard Childress Racing Museum, only 5 miles north of the winery complex, offers another opportunity to observe the passion for Richard Childress. The opening of the Childress Vineyards will prove to be a very special occasion for both racing and wine fans.

Mark Friszolowski, general manager and winemaker inspects the grapes for the 2004 vintage.



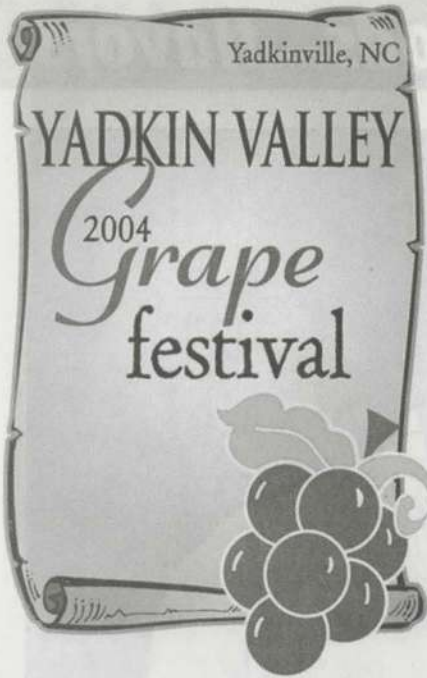
Look for your copy the week of October 25 at your favorite pick-up location. For the most recent list of magazine distribution spots visit www.yadkinvalleyliving.com.

To give a subscription to the magazine for the holidays, turn to page 46 of this issue for an easy to fill in order form.

Coming in November...our annual foods issue
It's filled with holiday cooking ideas, food tips
and shopping adventures

Yadkin Valley Living[™]

www.yadkinvalleyliving.com



Top to bottom: At last year's festival RagApple Lassie's Frank Hobson, Jr. discusses how wines are made. Yadkin Chamber staff members, Stacy and Jamie Johnston welcome you to the event and check those age IDs. Carolina Harvest wines from Old North State Winery, one of the participating wineries.

On October 23, the town of Yadkinville will welcome folks to the second annual Yadkin Valley Grape Festival.

Young festivals are always extra fun because of new ideas and if you're interested in participating in a chili cook-off, this is your event. The cooking will be done on site and there will be local judges. Of course, there will be chili to

purchase! Proceeds will go toward a scholarship to the Yadkin Center of Surry Community College. Call Jennifer Fontana, 336-679-2091, for details.

Help celebrate another grape harvesting season with wines from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. from the following Yadkin Valley vineyards: Buck Shoals Vineyards, Hanover Park Vineyards, Laurel Gray Vineyards, Old North State Vineyards, RagApple Lassie Vineyards, Raylen Vineyards, Round Peak Vineyards, Shelton's Vineyards, Westbend Vineyards, Windy Gap Vineyards and more.

Surry Community College and the Yadkin County Agricultural Extension Office will be on hand with educational displays and to discuss the viticulture program. Deep Creek Friends Church will offer great food options. Enjoy live music along with quality arts and specialty vendors.

Admission and plentiful parking are free. If you decide to do wine tasting, a \$10 ticket is available in advance or at entry, (along with proof of age), and that will gain you access to the vineyards' tasting tables and purchasing. A commemorative wine glass is yours to take home.

It's easy to get to Yadkinville: take new 421 and take the 601/Yadkinville exit, go under 421 bridge, head north, the festival will be on your right as you enter the downtown area.



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Yadkin Valley Grape Festival

Saturday October 23

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Downtown Yadkinville

for information (336) 679-2200

www.yvhf.com

*For info on the Chili Cook-off
Jennifer Fontana, 336-679-2091*

HomeGrown

Grape growing spreads into eastern Piedmont

By CARLA BAGLEY
Special to AP

GREENSBORO — North Carolina's grape-growing industry is spreading its tendrils into the eastern Piedmont, driven by an increase in the number of wineries buying grapes and farmers who want to diversify their crops.

The state now boasts 300 commercial vineyards and 40 wineries. Half the wineries were established in the past two years, according to the N.C. Grape Council in Raleigh.

Five wineries are open or will open in the next few months in Alamance and Guilford counties, and at least a dozen farmers in Guilford and Rockingham counties are growing grapes.

Others are clearing land for

"Grapes are the only thing with which you can replace tobacco, dollar for dollar."

**Larry Somers
N.C. Winegrowers Association**

vineyards in Rockingham, where more than 100 people have indicated an interest in growing grapes, said Kathryn Holmes, horticulture agent with the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service in Wentworth.

"It's a hot topic," she said.

The number of commercial vineyards may increase if Congress passes a bill to buy out farmers' tobacco allotments, said Larry Somers, a Reidsville grower who helped start the N.C. Winegrowers Association in 1985.

"A lot of these farmers are going to be sitting around getting nice checks over the next five or 10 years, and they are going to want to do something with that money," Somers said.

"Grapes are the only thing with which you can replace tobacco, dollar for dollar."

The industry will range east to Interstate 85 and west into the lower mountains, he said. Its center will continue to be the Yadkin Valley, northwest of Winston-Salem, which already has been named an American Viticulture Area because of its combination of temperatures, rainfall and soil.

Grapes won't replace tobacco as the state's cash crop, but they offer another opportunity for farmers to diversify, said Margo Knight, executive director of the Grape Council.

Grapes demand a sizable investment in time, money and patience. They are finicky about where they will grow well and don't yield a full harvest for about four years. Vineyards also cost \$10,000 to \$12,000 an acre to establish.

Nonetheless, the prospect of growing grapes has residents peppering Extension Service agents for advice and signing up for new viticulture classes at Rockingham Community College in Wentworth.

Anne Lanning, the college's occupational extension coordinator, received 20 phone calls about the class before the fall brochure hit the streets.

Lanning even plans to take the class herself — if there's room.

Rockingham growers don't seem to be interested in opening wineries now. But Lanning thinks that when enough farmers grow grapes, wineries will come, just as they have in the Yadkin Valley.

As of 2002, the latest year available, the 21st century has a new...

lion into North Carolina's economy.

North Carolina wineries attracted about 1 million tourists in 2002, and every 100 tourists generates 134 jobs, the Grape Council says.

"People with some money are going to say, 'We have grapes in this county,' and that's another economic opportunity for us," Lanning said. "They are going to be the ones who start the winery."

Count among them the owners of four new wineries in Alamance County and Max Lloyd, 40, of Chapel Hill, who is building The Grove Winery in northeast Guilford County, about two miles south of the Rockingham County line.

Lloyd plans to invest \$500,000 in the winery and bottle up to 6,000 cases of wine by 2005.

In addition to the six acres of grapes he grows, Lloyd is buying grapes from farmers such as Bryce and Sara Richardson of Mayodan, who grow niagara and lambrusca varieties.

The Richardsons harvested 3,500 pounds of grapes from their half-acre of vineyards this month and sold them to Lloyd and to the Germanton Winery north of Winston-Salem, which makes a light, sweet wine from the niagaras.

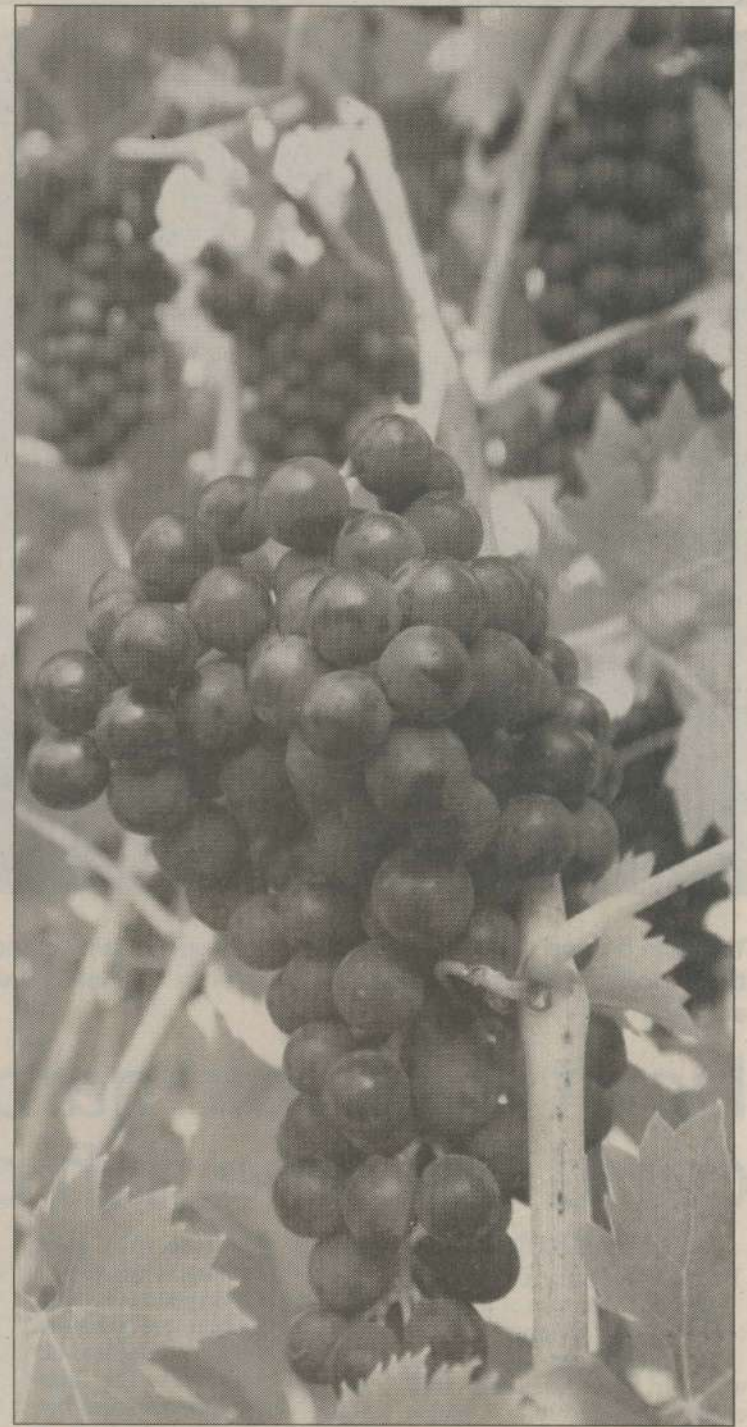
"All the little white-headed ladies like to buy it," Sara Richardson said.

A successful vineyard can yield three tons of grapes an acre for up to 40 years, and good grapes can bring up to \$4,500 a ton, said Somers, who has been growing grapes since 1991.

Matt Cardwell, 31, recently put in an acre of grapevines on the 1,500 acres he and his father farm west of Stoneville. The Cardwells, whose ancestors began farming in the 1700s, raise about 60 acres of tobacco, as well as corn, watermelons and tomatoes.

Cardwell turned to grapes because his rolling land, like much of that in Rockingham County, is well suited for a vineyard.

Don't fret over providing ex-



The AP
The number of commercial wineries around the state are increasing, especially in the eastern Piedmont.

invest in more grapes, perhaps getting out of tobacco farming altogether.

"This tobacco business is like a cloud over our heads that we just really can't get out of," Cardwell said.

which has opened a winery in Mount Airy.

Helping the farmers grow better grapes is one goal of the Upper Piedmont Research Station near Reidsville, where North Carolina State University is demonstrating vine training systems and testing management practices to speed up production and get better yield.

"If a grape is going to fail, it needs to fail here and not at a farm," said superintendent Joe French, who is tending 45 varieties of wine grapes.

The researchers want to know what varieties grow best in a warm, humid climate, which are least susceptible to cracking and rot, and which yield the best balance of sugars and acids, research technician Rocco Schiavone said.

The tannat grape may be successful here, said Scott Lawrence of Greensboro, a psychology professor, grower and winemaker who is bottling wine from some of the test grapes.

The heavy, rustic grape makes a flavorful, strong wine and seems to withstand humid weather better than Bordeaux grapes, Lawrence said.

If vineyards, wineries and research all come together, the grape industry could help keep farming alive in a region with a long tradition of it.

"We want to keep our land... Maybe these grapes are one way to do it," Cardwell said.

Grapes can have many uses

By DEAN FOSDICK

For AP Weekly Features

NEW MARKET, Va. — Just when you think you've figured out how many products you can squeeze from a grape, along comes some others.

Several California growers are selling zinfandel vinegars, chardonnay-teriyaki marinades and black truffle-grape seed oils with their bottled wines. That's in addition to the more traditional culinary products: jellies and unfermented grape juices, raisins, and grape leaves used for wrapping around such things as rice and lamb before cooking. (Look for Dolma recipes on the Internet.)

Landscapeers also recommend grapes for their ornamental value. Train vines to climb arbors, porches and pergolas and you're rewarded with cooling shade in the summer and colorful foliage in the fall.

"(Arbors) increase our awareness of the changing seasons as the vines on them grow, flower and fruit," writes Chip Sullivan in his book, "Garden and Climate" (McGraw-Hill). "Watching the shadows dancing on the ground makes one more aware of the movement of the air from even the most gentle of breezes."

Lon Rombaugh, a grower from Aurora, Ore., likes grapes as table fruit, of course, but also for the sweet scent of their flowers.

"I love to go out to my vineyard when they're in bloom because they're so fragrant. Some (varieties) more so than others," says Rombaugh, author of "The Grape Grower: A Guide to Organic Viticulture."

Historians believe grapes pre-dated man, eventually becoming one of the first cultivated crops. Early growing regions were in Mesopotamia (6,000 B.C.), Egypt's Nile Delta, Greece and then Rome, where growing and processing were refined through pruning, improved filtering and storage, the National Grape Cooperative says.

Winemaking may have started by accident, perhaps after some grape juice fermented when left too long in a clay pot. Soon grapes were going from bower to bottle until wine became a staple and evolved into something of an art form for many cultures.

Wild grapes were abundant in North America when the Vikings came calling in the 10th century. They didn't call their discovery "Vinland" for its mushrooms. Yet many vari-



Kelly Pace/The AP

Clusters of Nesbitt Backcross grapes are shown on the vine Aug. 25 at the Upper Piedmont Research Station at in Reidsville.

eties were so tart that they required special handling before becoming even an acquired taste. "Wine was one of the first things you could produce that you could keep (preserve)," Rombaugh says. "But the colonists had to do some interesting things; boil the grapes or add salt, for example." It wasn't until development of the Concord in 1854 — it's still America's predominant juice grape — that vines began appearing in millions of backyards.

"It was quite an improvement for the day," Rombaugh says of the early ripening, purple-black Concord variety.

Grapes prefer well-drained soil along with plenty of sun

and good air circulation.

"Plant the right varieties in the right place and the plants should bear long enough to provide your great-great grandchildren with fruit," Rombaugh says. "A grapevine can live for centuries. If you go to Hampton Court, in England, they have a famous old vine that has been growing from Victorian times. It's an immense thing, an enormous greenhouse grape. It's been pruned and managed so much it looks almost like a tree."

Grapes should be pruned annually and while they're dormant because fruit forms only on those buds formed during the previous year's growth. Shop around for varieties hardy

to your area and resistant to known diseases.

Beware insect attacks, particularly from leaf chewing Japanese beetles, aphids and mites. Rake up grape leaves in the fall to discourage overwintering plant pests. When harvesting table grapes, trust your taste buds rather than your eyes. Grapes don't ripen after they're picked, so sample a few before cutting off any bunches.

Apples, strawberries, grapes, oranges and peaches in that order made up 69 percent of the value of all U.S. fresh market fruit production in 2001, the U.S. Department of Agriculture says. More than half of the nation's commercially grown grapes become wine, while another one-quarter are made into raisins, the USDA says. The rest are destined for juice, canning and the dining room table. California grows more than 90 percent of the nation's grapes. Washington is second, with 2 percent. While wine grapes can yield some \$1,800 an acre for established vineyards compared with \$270 an acre for corn, \$221 an acre for cotton and \$77 an acre for wheat, their cultivation poses many challenges, the Texas Department of Agriculture says.

"Establishing a vineyard costs anywhere from \$10,000 to \$30,000 an acre, depending on size, location and improvements and that's not including the piece of land and equipment," the agency says. "Intense weather conditions and the presence of pests and disease can create headaches, crop losses and vine death."

Rombaugh dismisses as sour grapes, however, allegations that viticulture is too demanding for the home gardener. "You're limited only by your imagination," he says. "Grapes are among the most adaptable of plants. I know of one person who trained a vine to grow up the side of a three-story building from a hole cut in the pavement. It produced a half-ton of fruit. "I also know of a fellow who trained his grapes to grow over the top of his house. He claimed it kept his house cooler although I can't imagine how he was able to pick them."

On the Net:

For more about growing grapes in the home garden, click on the University of Minnesota Extension Service Web site: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG1103.html>.

MAN 9/2/2004

Church objections lead board to reject rezoning request

By ANGELA SCHMOLL
Associate Editor

DOBSON — The emotional pleas of members of Grassy Creek United Methodist Church convinced the Surry County Board of Commissioners not to approve a rezoning request to locate a winery in a former dairy barn located nearby — instead postponing a vote on the issue for two weeks.

Commissioners want to use the extra time to visit the area and look at the relationship between the barn and the church and the location of roads, trees and other barriers.

"Grassy Creek United Methodist Church tried to be a good neighbor and we did not complain when he put a vineyard next to the church.... when he named the vineyard Grassy Creek Vineyard.... when we learned he was putting in a win-

ery," said church member Donna Collins. "When it was brought to our attention that the winery would be put in a white barn visible from the church, we feel it is time to take a stand. We're concerned for the future."

County Planning Director Chris Knopf presented the basic plans for the property, which would involve converting a former dairy barn at the Klondike Dairy to a winery. The developer, Derrill Rice of R&R Properties, LLC, has an option to buy the property from Michael Van and Holly L. Hargett. The property would be used in conjunction with four adjoining properties totaling over 200 acres, which comprise Grassy Creek Vineyards

"The church is adjacent to the vineyard, but not the tract that is proposed for the winery,"

said Knopf.

He said the planning board recommended approving the request for a change from Restricted Residential to Rural Agricultural-Conditional, because it is consistent with the surrounding area. The board also placed three stipulations: that Chatham Lodge Lane, on which the barn is located, shall only be used for agricultural purposes involved with the processing of wine and private, guided winery tours; no outdoor entertainment or festivals on the property; no tasting rooms, gift shops, assembly areas, meeting rooms or dining and catering facilities.

"Why is this not a bona fide agricultural use?" asked board member Craig Hunter.

"It is considered manufac-

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10-12-6
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allow towns, cities and counties to borrow money without the approval of voters. The financing could be used to pay for a

ments. Technically, they are right. But their logic depends on smart decisions by local government

the ballot measure as job creation. But what kind? In other areas of the country, tax-increment financing has

itics and the legislature for the Capitol Press Association. His e-mail address is smooneyh@ncinsider.com.

COMMUNITY VOICES

United Fund needs angels' help to meet the community's needs

KATE
APPLER

United Fund
of Greater
Mount Airy



ny before being included in that list. All of these agencies are extremely worthy. And none of them can survive without the support of good leadership, volunteers and money. It is angels that are involved all the areas of these agencies, but we also need the other kind of angel, the messengers.

United Fund needs support from all of you in order to fund our agencies. Their requests total over \$600,000. Our goal for fundraising is \$390,000. You see the problem. We can't begin to meet the needs that have been requested of us and that are only a part of the budget needs for these agencies.

I get calls almost every day from people who are desperate, looking for ways to pay their rent, or their light bill, or for prescription drugs. My response is that they need to call some of our member agencies. But by the time they call me they have checked with those agencies and the agencies are out of money to meet those needs. What is



development as part of what their mission. They meet a lot of needs.

However, our needs are great here in Surry County. Times have changed. The mills that people worked in for three or four generations are now non-existent or have a greatly reduced work force. People need new skills; they need to fit into a new world. All of us angels need to help get them over the rough times between those worlds.

The Mount Airy News is being a literal angel and giving the United Fund the chance to inform the community about what our member agencies are about. The agencies are much more than facts and figures. They are real people dealing with real situations that are not always easy or that have straightforward answers. Each Tuesday in the coming weeks, there will be one agency telling its story, giving you a little window into what it

What is an angel? Most people think that it is something that you can't see, that lives in Heaven, has wings, and maybe plays a musical instrument. That's a safe assessment of the particulars of an angel. Others have a more definite idea of what an angel looks like, acts like and its purpose in relation to us humans. The literal translation of angel from the Greek word *angelos* means messenger.

The United Fund of Greater Mount Airy's theme this year is "Angels among us." I happen to think that it's a wonderful theme

Vineyard proves bountiful

By GERRI HUNT
News Editor

Editor's Note: This is the first in a three-part series on the grape industry in western Rockingham County.

Although it's been just a couple of years since Sara and Bryce Richardson started transforming their old cornfield into a vineyard, they've already reaped their first harvest.

"The growth has been a little faster than expected, but it's been a lot of work," said Sara.

The Richardsons planted 12 rows of American Lambrusca grapes, a "very vigorous cluster grape," said Sara. They will eventually be made into Niagara wine.

When the couple first decided to grow grapes — after nixing turkey and chicken farming, and planting blueberries that could be turned into sweet wine — they had to determine whether the land was suitable for the crop.

"We had to have the soil tested to make sure there wasn't a lot of nitrogen, not like regular crops," said Sara. "And the drier the soil, the better. They don't like wet feet."

After concluding the soil was good, the Richardsons lucked out in timing their first planting.

"As wet as last year was, it wouldn't have been good," said Sara. "But it's been dry this summer."

Since putting 42 dozen plants in the ground in April, the couple has stayed very busy.

"We've pruned them, trained them to get shoots where we want them and sprayed a lot of things for bugs and disease," said Bryce. "We've been mowing, weed-eating and netting them — the whole nine yards."

"And praying over them a lot," added Sara.

For this year's harvest, the major work began in February.

"We did one or two prunings, and bud break came at the end of March," said Sara. "And then we've been working all of the time."

But it's all been worth it, as the Richardsons supplement their regular income with what they make from their land.

Their first truckload of grapes



PHOTOS BY GERRI HUNT/THE MESSENGER

Kelsey Richardson, above, packs up grapes at her family's farm on Peach Orchard Road, so they can be trucked to Germanton Winery in Stokes County. Bryce Richardson, at left, deftly uses his wife's clippers to cut a bunch of American Lambrusca grapes from a vine at their Mayodan farm. The high elevation of their land is conducive to a thriving vineyard.

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Vineyard

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— one whole ton in all — was bound for the Germanton Winery in Stokes County.

"The winery came and tested them. They checked the pH and sugar," said Bryce. "They told us to pick them Friday. It's a partnership with whoever you work with."

"The grapes tell you when they're ready," added Sara.

Grove Winery in Brown Summit was also interested in the Richardson's grapes — but had to wait for the second

truckload.

"We took 2,000 pounds of grapes over to Germanton," said Sara. "They de-stem them, juice them and they go into a vat with additives."

Once the vines are depleted of their fruit, the Richardsons will take preliminary measures for next year.

"We'll work on the vines to train them, and spray them for the fall,"

said Sara. "We're actually putting them to sleep. And next year, we'll have double what we had this year."

Next week: How does Rockingham County measure up for a vineyard industry?



Audith Chapman

BRIDAL

son, NC

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Grape expectations

SURRY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In 2002, there were 25 wineries in the state, according to the North Carolina Grape Council. By year's end, the number may jump to as many as 40 — a good portion of which is in the Yadkin Valley, North Carolina's first federally recognized American Viticultural Area. Within the heart of the valley is **Surry Community College**, which began offering courses in viticulture (grape cultivation) and enology (wine making) in 1999.

Those who come to class often have already set up their own vineyards or wineries and are looking for further instruction. According to Gill Giese, one of the program's two instructors, nearly all of the 50 growers in the Old North State Wine Growers Cooperative have taken instruction in the program. Some of the vintners were looking to make a career change, and some had an eye towards retirement. Other students were drawn by agricultural shifts,

COURTESY OF SURRY COMMUNITY COLLEGE



particularly in tobacco.

"There is a tradition in this state of having a small holding of land like a tobacco plot and being able to support their families, so the mindset here is very different than a lot of places," says Giese. "They truly believe they can make money off a small farm, and grapes are about the only thing left in agriculture that's going to pay out high enough to make that really happen."

Still there are now students using the program as a starting point to a

Above: In Surry's viticulture program, Mitchell Ramaker and Anne Holcombe test their new skills at the root of the program.

career in the industry, whether as an employee at one of North Carolina's wineries or in more distant locales.

Classroom learning is augmented by on-site instruction at the school's own five-acre vineyard, wine-making facilities, and barrel-aging room, where students create a product that Giese says is "drinkable."

Unto the hills

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

There is a difference between being a good rock climber and having the skills to lead a group of people on a rock-climbing trip or run a business that provides such services. It is this important distinction at the heart of **Southwestern Community College's** Outdoor Leadership program. The western part of the state is home to numerous outdoor adventure companies that offer hiking, climbing, rafting, and the like. Although these companies need employees who are technically competent, they also need those employees to have interpersonal,

managerial, and business skills. Southwestern's program teaches much more than how to rock climb, hike, or maneuver a raft through Class V rapids.

Learning the technical stuff is easy, says Paul Wolf, the program's director and a veteran of a number of outdoor adventure organizations such as Outward Bound; it's working with people that's hard.

If the true measure of a community college course's success is how employers react, Wolf's program is a keeper. He says the response from local business has been "overwhelming," and there are

"way more inquiries than I have students."

Part of the good response is, no doubt, the result of the close working relationship between the program and the area businesses that lend equipment, expertise, and guest lecturers. The skills are portable and carry over not just to those camps and companies in the mountainous western part of the state but also can make a graduate a desirable commodity across the country or abroad. The great thing about the community college curriculum is that students can accept a job and be "ready to walk right in" and do it.

The Mount Airy News is dedicated
to the principles of openness, fairness,
honesty and integrity

Editorials

A toast to grapes

September is Grape Month.

That fact might cause some to yawn and say: "Great, another month, another fruit."

But we should take grape month seriously.

Why?

Because that little fruit is becoming an economic stimulus for Surry and surrounding counties.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the American Vintners Association, North Carolina ranks 12th nationally in grape production and 12th in wine production. Last year, growers harvested 2,800 tons of grapes in the state and produced 538,000 gallons of wine.

More than 300 growers cultivate better than 1,250 acres of vineyards in North Carolina, supplying grapes for wine, juice and fresh-market sales.

The estimated revenue is approximately \$3.3 million in grapes and \$30 million in wine, according to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

The NCDA&CS also estimates that vineyards bring more than 1 million tourists a year to our state to visit wineries and you-pick vineyards.

Why does all that matter to Surry County?

We are part of the seven-county Yadkin Valley American Viticultural Area, a designation made on Feb. 7, 2003, that "recognizes the area as a sound and distinct grape-growing region and will allow growers and winemakers to establish Yadkin Valley branding for their products," according to the NCDA&CS Web site.

This is the first AVA in North Carolina. It encompasses all 1.4 million acres of Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties along with parts of Stokes, Forsyth, Davie and Davidson counties.

Think San Joaquin Valley and Napa Valley in California.

The grape and wine industry is an emerging boon to our economy.

Not only are the grapes and wine already marketable, but the tourists who come here to visit Shelton Vineyards, Old North State Winery, RagApple Lassie Vineyards or the others in the Yadkin Valley AVA will have to stay somewhere. They will have to eat somewhere. By promoting this sector of our economy, we can spark other areas.

We should promote the vineyards. We should promote Surry Community College, which has a viticulture program that teaches wine making from grape to bottle.

We can be a leader in North Carolina and the South in production and promotion of grapes and the wine industry.

We should encourage farmers to think about grapes as one of their crops.

Surry Community College is hosting a one-day seminar in October entitled "The Grape and Wine Industry: Is it for me?" Individually, it might not be for everyone. However, this is an industry clearly on the rise and we are right in the middle of it.

With the disappearance of traditional factories that employ hundreds and sometimes thousands, we need to look at ways to diversify our economic base. This is a unique opportunity.

That's why people in our area — from Mount Airy to Pinnacle to Elkin and everywhere in between — should fill a glass (need we suggest an appropriate product?) and give a hearty toast to grape month.

"There are a lot of layers of possible successes or failures. Another layer is winemaking."

Sean McRitchie, an owner of McRitchie Associates, a wine consulting firm

WSJ 8-30-04



JOURNAL PHOTO BY DAVID ROLFE

Bob McRitchie and Patricia McRitchie sample a raw red wine being aged by one of their clients at the viticulture building at Surry Community College.

Aging Artfully, Gracefully

Transplants from West Coast would like to see wine industry take root in Yadkin Valley

By Sherry Youngquist
JOURNAL REPORTER

DOBSON

In growing grapes and in making wine, there is a lot of room for individuality and failure.

As more vines are planted each year in the Yadkin Valley, there has been an increasing need for a source of expertise for some small growers.

People often get into growing grapes, and they don't fully understand how much work goes into it, Sean McRitchie said.

McRitchie, an Elkin winemaker, left his job as general manager at Shelton Vineyards this summer to begin a wine consulting firm called McRitchie Associates.

"Grapes are tricky," he said.



SEAN MCRTICHIE

who heads the viticulture program at Surry Community College.

The McRitchies, who were once a part of the winemaking success in Oregon, left the vineyards there about five years ago to move to the Yadkin

"It could be site specific; the variety.

"The choice of what you planted can determine success or failure.

"There are a lot of layers of possible successes or failures. Another layer is winemaking," said McRitchie, whose firm includes his wife, Patricia McRitchie, a lawyer, and father, Bob McRitchie,

Valley. Sean McRitchie helped develop and install Shelton Vineyards.

Patricia McRitchie, who had previously worked for Shelton, assisted the vineyard with regulatory issues and marketing.

One of the family's goals in moving to North Carolina was to see another fledgling wine industry take root, and it was their dream to start their own consulting firm to help other growers, they said.

When Sean and Patricia McRitchie left Shelton Vineyards, they had already acquired 30 acres in the Thurmond community along U.S. 21 and planted three acres of grapes. Now, they see themselves running the consulting firm full time and

VINEYARD

Continued From Page B1

enjoying their own vineyard, which may be expanded to as many as 10 acres of planted grapes and may soon have its own winery.

Some growers come to the McRitchies needing a one-time consultation. Others are looking for someone to pick the site, plant the vines, harvest the

grapes and make the wine, Patricia McRitchie said.

"Sometimes we get a call that a vineyard isn't producing," she said. "We get calls from people who have family land and people who are looking at putting in a vineyard.... We can do the whole spectrum, from site selection to marketing and sales strategies."

People fall in love with the idea of planting grapes, and think that they could manage a

vineyard by themselves, Bob McRitchie said. But they don't realize how much work there is.

"One of my students came in after a full day in the vineyard and said that if he ever had even an acre of grapes, he would need help," he said. "It's very labor intensive."

■ *Sherry Youngquist can be reached in Mount Airy at (336) 789-9338 or syoungquist@wsjournal.com*

VOTING

Continued From Page B1

because it is not considered a public building as required by state law, Cooper said.

The three sites that the board considered last week would have cost more than the sites already approved, she said.

Elections officials would have had to lease more voting equipment, she said.

The cost would have been about \$23,000 a site for the three additional one-stop voting sites, Cooper said.

The sites at the Clemmons, Kernersville and Reynolda Manor branch libraries, and the Anderson Center will cost about \$18,000 a site, she said.

Forsyth County will pay for

the sites at Clemmons and Kernersville, Cooper said. The state will pay for Reynolda Manor and the Anderson Center, she said.

The county would have had to apply to the state to pay for the three additional sites, she said.

■ *Michael Hewlett can be reached at 727-7326 or at mhewlett@wsjournal.com*

8-13-04 MAN



Wendy Byerly Wood/The Mount Airy News

Dana Theis, owner of Black Wolf Vineyards and The Wolf's Lair Restaurant, points out where different things will be located in the new winery being built at the vineyards.

Black Wolf Vineyard getting close to producing own wine

By WENDY BYERLY WOOD
Staff Writer

DOBSON — Since Black Wolf Vineyard opened in Surry County 13 years ago, its grapes have been traveling a long way from the vine to the bottle.

For the last 12 years, the grapes harvested at Black Wolf have been sent to a winery in Wake County to be processed, but this year will be staying closer to home.

While the grapes will still be sent to another site to be processed, the wine will be made in tanks owned by Black Wolf. By next year, the process should take place in a new winery at the vineyard on U.S. 601.

"We had been sending them to a winery in Wake County and some difficulties arose, so we decided to build our own winery, which was going to happen eventually anyway," said Dana Theis, owner. "The idea came about last summer, and it has taken a lot of preparation and design."

Builders arrived and began preparing

"We had been sending them to a winery in Wake County and some difficulties arose, so we decided to build our own winery, which was going to happen eventually anyway."

Dana Theis, owner of Black Wolf Vineyard

the site for the winery in June.

"It will be an approximately 4,000-case winery, but it probably won't be done until the end of the year," said Theis, who said he was hoping it would be done in time for this year's harvest so equipment had already been ordered and had to be shipped to Buck Shoals Winery in southwest Yadkin County since Black

Wolf's won't be ready.

"Buck Shoals will do a custom crush for us," he said, but the winery will use Black Wolf's tanks and equipment. "We will assemble it there and use it and then disassemble it and bring it here to be re-assembled."

The new winery, which will not be open to the public, will be a metal Butler building with a galvanized steel roof. "It is totally utilitarian," said Theis. "We don't have room to be open to the public. Eventually, if we expand, we could open to the public."

"We have a tasting room and wine shop in the restaurant," he said.

Theis said there will probably be five red wines and six white wines made on site.

"The 2005 vintage will actually be the first made in the winery here," said Theis. "When it opens we will have a wine-maker, who is Anne Holcombe, and an assistant. It will be private and quiet, so

See WINE, page 3A

8/13/04 MAN

WINE: 2005 vintage to be the first

Continued from page 1A

they can get a lot done."

Prior to building the winery, Black Wolf has had to load the grapes with a forklift onto a refrigerated tractor trailer and then haul them to Wake county to be processed.

"It was 300 miles round trip," said Theis. "Just the inconvenience of it all will be prevented in the future with the new winery."

When Theis bought the 50 acres (now 55 acres) that hold the vineyards, restaurant, spring house, his log cabin and the secret garden, there were only 3,000 vines and a shed with no electricity or water available.

Now there are 20 acres of vines that make eight varieties of wine, and about 15,000 vines.

In 1996, Theis built his log cabin and moved onto the property permanently from Randolph County.

In May 2001, the 5,000-square-foot Wolf's Lair Restaurant opened.

"What I learned in the first two years, which were very hard, was that no one knew where we were, so we had to put a lot of money into advertising. I also found out my main business is on the weekends, and I have to have more than just good food to bring people from the big cities here," said Theis.

Now, Theis offers live music — jazz, blues and usually folk — on Friday and Saturday nights from 7 to 10 p.m.

There is also an annual festival on the grounds called the

N.C. growers say this year's grape crop looking good

RALEIGH — The start of North Carolina's muscadine and scuppernong grape season is just around the corner, and this year's crop is looking good at this stage of production.

That was the consensus from growers at the 31st annual N.C. Muscadine Grape Association meeting held recently at Hinnant Family Vineyards in Pine Level. That could mean good news for shoppers who are likely to find plenty of fresh scuppernong and muscadine grapes by around mid-September when the fruit starts showing up at roadside markets, pick-your-own vineyards and grocery stores.

North Carolina produces more than 1,200 tons of muscadine grapes a year for fresh consumption, wine and supplements. The total fall value of the grapes is \$374,000 annually.

"Muscadine grapes provide additional income for our farmers and represent an ongoing diversification of the state's \$62.6 billion agri-

culture and agribusiness industry," said Agriculture Commissioner Britt Cobb. The meeting drew more than 140 members, and provided participants with updates on the latest research, production and vineyard management innovations, disease identification and treatments and new health studies involving muscadine grapes.

Dr. Diane K. Hartle, keynote speaker and a University of Georgia pharmacologist, discussed her work regarding the nutraceutical potential of muscadine grapes. Dr. Hartle's research reveals promising developments involving the anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties of muscadines.

"The science and art of grape production is continually changing so there is a need for growers to continue to learn new techniques in order to achieve higher grape quality and make production more profitable," said Margo Knight, executive director of the N.C. Grape Council.

"Grape Jam Wine and Music Festival," which will be held on Sept. 18 featuring Peter Turk formerly of The Monkees, James Lee Stanley, AURA, Barbara Martin and Mac Walter, Stanley/Allred Project and

the Lotus Garden Dancers. Tickets will be \$10 in advance and \$15 at the gate.

Black Wolf Vineyards can be reached at 374-6164, or Wolf's Lair can be reached at 374-2532.

Grape group launches \$200K ad campaign

BY JESSICA PRITCHARD THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

The N.C. Grape Council is beginning a \$200,000 statewide ad campaign to promote Triad vineyards and state wines, council officials said.

The program, the council's largest expenditure of the year, involves offering billboards for rent to the vineyards at a discounted price of \$400 per month. Regular billboard rental fees can run as high as \$2,000 per month depending upon location and market demand, said George Denka, president of Shelton Vineyards and a participant in the new program.

"This is really cooperative advertising that the grape council is doing with about half of all North Carolina wineries," said Margo Knight, president of the N.C. Grape Council.

All wineries were offered the chance to participate, but Knight said everyone will benefit regardless of whether they rented billboard space or not. The council is using extra money to post generic

billboards reading "Wine Country is our Country" and "Discover NC Wines" with grape council information.

Denka said the program has increased the amount of billboard advertising Shelton has been able to do this year.

"It's a great way for any winery to stretch its advertising budget and I'm really happy to see the grape council more involved in the marketing aspect of the business," Denka said.

This is in contrast to the agritourism signs, Knight said, that can be expensive for a small vineyard. Agritourism signs are a program that began last August. For vineyards, they are the white signs with the grape clusters located on highways and roads near vineyards.

Other agritourism businesses such as nurseries or Christmas tree farms may also buy the signs, which range in price from \$1,005 to \$6,770.

Reach **JESSICA PRITCHARD** at (336) 271-6539 or jpritchard@bizjournals.com.

Boomers' love of wine propels U.S. industry

By LISA SINGHANIA
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — When Gregg Wurdeman wants a glass of wine with dinner, he has a big selection at his fingertips. His new custom-built house includes a special wine refrigerator that holds up to 175 bottles.

The 51-year-old business consultant spent more than \$2,000 on a high-end, glass-doored wine cellar, which can store everything from \$15 bottles of merlot to \$100 bottles of champagne at the precisely correct temperature.

"It's part of our life and reflects my love of wine," said the suburban Dallas resident. "This way the wine is right there, and I don't have to go out in the garage to get a bottle when friends come over."

Baby boomers like Wurdeman account for the bulk of serious wine

drinkers in the United States, according to industry and research groups. The generation, which consists of those Americans born between 1946 and 1964, first began drinking wine as young adults and their interest — as well as consumption and spending — has increased since then.

People in their 40s drank an average of 14 bottles of wine in 2000, while people in their 50s consumed 16 bottles, according to MKF Research, a wine industry research group. Outside the boomer demographic, people in their 60s consumed an average of 15 bottles, and people in their 30s drank an average of 10 bottles.

"Boomers came to wine as much as a reaction against the three-martini lunch of their parents as to create a statement of their own," said John Gillespie, president of the Wine Market Council, a nonprofit industry trade

group. "Virtually every taste and lifestyle choice made by the boomers in the 1970s was something to set them apart from their parents ... whether it was bellbottoms, flower power or wine."

Vic Motto, an investment banker and founding partner of MKF Research, said that until the boomer generation, wine drinking was relatively unusual in the United States and confined mostly to European immigrants whose cultures embraced the practice. He said boomers' interest in other cultures and their desire to experience things unique have made wine-drinking more popular.

"Baby boomers tend to have a taste for handcrafted products, for premium products. They're willing to spend," Motto said. "And, of course, with wine, any price you want to pay or quality level exists. We make wine

from \$2 to hundreds of dollars per bottle."

Those tastes translate into a market for top-of-the-line wine gadgets.

"Boomers are the core of our business," said Jody Tullos, a spokeswoman for International Wine Accessories, which sells wine cellars starting at \$200. "They tend to be connoisseurs who want to protect their investment."

Wine also has healthy living appeal. Some researchers believe moderate red wine consumption can improve heart health, and many boomers say wine is just easier to drink.

"It just seems to me you can have a glass or two of wine and not feel like you've consumed too much," said Hollis Hope, a 45-year-old communications coordinator in Boulder, Colo. "I think I also believe the European philosophy that a glass of wine is probably helpful to your health, though

that's not the main reason I drink it. I drink wine because I enjoy it."

Wurdeman, who did not grow up in a wine-drinking household, says he occasionally drank the beverage when he was younger, but really became interested in wine in his 40s.

"What changed was my education and disposable income," he recalled. "When I was younger, I didn't drink wine that much. I tended to drink more hard liquor and beer."

Today, his budget per bottle has increased, and he'll occasionally splurge on a \$100 bottle of wine for a very special occasion. But most of the time, he spends far less.

"It's become a fun game for me. I find the best wines I can find, whether they be cabs, merlots, pinot noirs, or whatever, for under \$25," he said. "That forces me to educate myself and to try different wines."

Childress Vineyards set to open in October

By VIKKI BROUGHTON
HODGES

The Dispatch of Lexington

LEXINGTON (AP) — When the Childress Vineyards complex opens this fall during the harvest season, it will not only bring a touch of Tuscany to the area with its Italian Renaissance-style winery, but it's also expected to create some jobs and draw a large number of tourists.

Richard Childress, president of Richard Childress Racing Enterprises in Welcome, and business partner Greg Johns of Greensboro are developing an approximately 65-acre tract at the intersection of Highways 64 West and 52 for a 34,000-square-foot winery now set to open in October.

The multimillion-dollar winery was originally scheduled to open in August, but as Childress pointed out during a recent visit to the huge construction site, "It's a lot more complicated than racing."

Mark Friszolowski, the winemaker and general manager of Childress Vineyards, said the construction process that began with a groundbreaking ceremony in September has been a major undertaking, but one he believes will attract the attention of tourists as well as serious wine drinkers.

"From the tourist standpoint and from the wine-making standpoint, this is going to be among the best," said Friszolowski, an award-winning winemaker who came here from a 17-year career with Pindar Vineyard and Winery on Long Island, N.Y., the largest premium winery on the East Coast. He also worked as a consultant to wineries.

"I've set up many wineries, and this is as nice as anything in Australia, New Zealand or Napa (Valley)," he said. "Everything is designed for quality."

Sitting atop a ridge, the winery looks out over a large manmade lake, part of the irrigation system for the property, and about 25 acres of vineyards.

Designed in the style of a Tuscan villa by Winston-Salem architect Kyle Troxell, the winery features a stone and stucco exterior with a terra cotta roof.

The interior, designed by Wolf Designs in Atlanta, features solid oak interiors, a fountain, tile, stone, stained glass windows and wrought iron details.

The winery, which is being built by Samet Construction, includes a banquet hall that can accommodate 300, a bistro that will serve lunch only, as well as a wine tasting room and gift



AP Photo

Mark Friszolowski, left, winemaker and general manager of Childress Vineyards, and Richard Childress, winery owner, stand in the fermentation room of the winery in Lexington. Visitors taking tours will be able to watch the wine-making process from the walkway above.

shop.

"We're already working with some local artists to make things like wood wine racks, ceramic wine coolers, grape-motif jewelry and handmade corkscrews for the gift shop," Friszolowski said.

"We're trying to get as many local artists involved as we can," he said, adding that the winery will likely host art shows in the future, as many wineries do.

Lexington's most famous artist, Bob Timberlake, is also going to be involved in some projects, including possibly designing some wine labels for special limited production releases. He and Childress are also collaborating on a cookbook featuring pairings of food and wine that will be sold in the gift shop and at Timberlake's gallery.

Wright of Thomasville is producing

the Childress Vineyards wine labels.

Friszolowski said the winery will employ about 30 people initially, with the vineyards requiring another 10 workers. Right now, there are 50 to 100 workers on the construction site at any given time.

Matt Chobanian, Childress' vineyard manager, has overseen the planting of about 25 acres at the winery site itself, including chardonnay, viognier, cabernet sauvignon, merlot, petit verdot, cabernet franc, sangiovese, syrah and malbec grapes.

Friszolowski said 11 wines will be produced in three tiers initially: three proprietary house blends in red, white and blush; five varietals - chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot and syrah; and three reserve signature wines - merlot, chardonnay and a red blend.

Production will begin at the winery

in about 30 to 60 days, Friszolowski said, with the wine-making equipment arriving this week. He said about 8,000 cases of wine will be produced at the winery this year, made with grapes from Childress' 26-acre vineyard adjacent to his home in northern Davidson County near Clemmons as well as several other growers in the area.

Future vintages will be produced from a combination of estate-grown and purchased grapes. Within several years, the winery is projected to produce 40,000 cases of wine.

In addition to helping grow the burgeoning wine industry in this part of North Carolina, Friszolowski said the winery should also help boost local tourism development efforts.

"We want to help make this area a destination," he said, noting that winery tours will be given daily. "I think every business community in this area

ready called me."

Of course, devout NASCAR fans already make pilgrimages to the RCR Museum and Gift Shop in Welcome just a few miles away.

Some of those same fans will likely be interested in seeing the NASCAR team owner's winery, as well as those simply interested in wine and how it is produced.

"I'd really like to see this be a little wine education center and agricultural education center," said Friszolowski, who is already teaching a continuing education course on wine appreciation through Davidson County Community College.

He previously taught wine-making courses with the State University of New York.

The veteran vintner said he plans to offer special wine seminars and wine tastings at the winery through the Childress Vineyards Fast Track Wine Club. Membership in the club will also give members opportunities for special wine dinners, purchases of limited production wines, discounts on wine and merchandise and other benefits.

An amphitheater near the lake is also planned for concerts, Friszolowski said, and walking trails will wind around the estate.

"We've already had calls about benefits and fund-raisers, weddings and corporate events," he added.

Some of the infrastructure to help grow the tourism business is still in the works, Friszolowski said.

About 15 acres of the winery site closest to the highway intersection are still available for a hotel, restaurant and retail shop space to be known as Vineyards Crossing, which would be constructed in the same style as the winery.

"We're still talking to a lot of people," he said. "We'd like to see a hotel up there, moderately priced, but in the same architectural style as the winery."

Robin Bivens, chairman of the Lexington Tourism Authority, said she expects the winery to be a major boost to the local economy.

Bivens, who is also the marketing director for the Bob Timberlake Gallery, said with the winery on the west side of town, the Timberlake Gallery on the east side and the shops uptown in between, as well as the RCR Museum in nearby Welcome, the Lexington area can become a true destination.

"I think this winery is going to be a very good thing for Lexington because a winery is not only big business but a big tourist attraction," she said. "Anytime a community has several attractors, it makes the community as a whole more attractive."

NEWS

Guilford to get its first winery

By **JESSICA PRITCHARD** THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

BROWNS SUMMIT — Guilford County is poised to join the Triad's growing wine-making industry with the construction of a new winery.

The Grove Winery, located in Browns Summit about 30 minutes northeast of Greensboro, will produce its first vintage this year and open to the public in 2005, said owner Max Lloyd. Until now, all area wineries were west of Winston-Salem.

The grapes have been growing on 6 acres in Browns Summit for three years and construction on the winery began this summer. Also, the winery will use grapes from a 2-acre vineyard in Virginia, also owned by Lloyd.

Guilford County was chosen as the location for the winery as part of an effort to avoid Pierce's Disease, which typically affects vineyards in the eastern half of North Carolina, he said.

Guilford officials said they welcomed the addition of a winery to the county.

"Anyone who's ever been to the North Carolina Wine Festival knows our wine industry in this state has become more and more visible and important," said Jeff Thigpen, a Guilford commissioner and member of the Guilford County Economic Development Council.

"Regionally, this is one more value-added industry that makes the Piedmont unique, both for the people that live here and tourists. Won't it be great that people can come to our community and go up to a winery after going to a park."

The winery is on 44 acres and when finished, Lloyd said, he hopes it will become a destination for Guilford County.

"We'd like to have it available so people could use it for anniversaries, weddings or alumni events," he said.

Thigpen said tourism is vital to Guil-

THE GROVE WINERY

Top executive: Max Lloyd

Mailing address: 7360 Brooksbridge Road, Gibsonville 27249

Web site: www.grovewinery.com

No. of employees: Two full-time, two part-time

Opening date: 2005

ford County.

"Tourism is one of those things that will bring revenue into a community from the outside, and those are crucial to helping build our economy."

Currently Lloyd is the CEO of Viasic, a Triangle company that makes software for the design of semiconductors and has two full-time employees at the vineyard.

JESSICA PRITCHARD can be reached at (336) 271-6539 or jpritchard@bizjournals.com.



**Wineries
scheduled to
appear at the
Yadkin Valley
Wine Festival:**

Shelton Vineyards

Dobson

RagApple Lassie Vineyards

Boonville

Westbend Vineyards

Lewisville

RayLen Vineyards

Lewisville

Hanover Park Vineyards

Yadkinville

Windy Gap Vineyards

Ronda

Stony Knoll Vineyards

Stony Knoll

Black Wolf Vineyards

Dobson

Carolina Harvest

Mt. Airy

Laurel Gray Vineyards

Hamptonville

Raffaldini Vineyards

and Winery

Rhonda

Round Peak Vineyards

Pine Ridge

Surry Community College

Dobson

Chatham Hill Winery

Morrisville

Movin' On

**Foothills
ARTS COUNCIL'S**

WINE DOWN PARTY

Joe Robinson

Enjoy the beautiful early 1900s Victorian house that is home for the Foothills Arts Council when you attend the Winedown Party directly after the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival, on May 15, from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$20; seating is limited to the first 300 reservations. Contact Foothills Arts Council (336-835-2025) for your tickets for a casual evening of wine, food and music to wrap up the day's events.

There will be restaurant samplings from 10 establishments in the area. Enjoy live jazz music with the Triad's own Joe Robinson Quartet with vocals by Janice Price. Clemmons trumpeter, Robinson has been a long-time jazz leader in the Winston-Salem scene. Listeners buy his CDs for his rhythm and blues fluid and smooth Miles Davis sound.

As a producer, playwright and musician, Janice Price is the owner of Price's Artistic Studio and Montage Showcase Ensemble. Originally from Walkertown, Price has performed throughout the country and is currently working on a film whose subject is blues artist Billie Holiday.

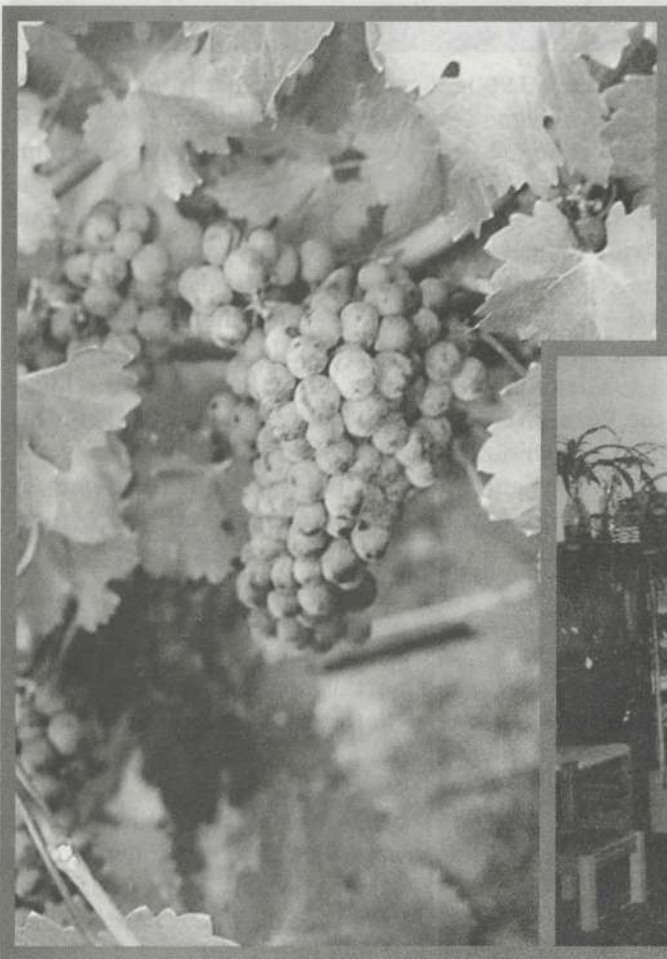
"Images 2004," a juried photography contest, is this year's Winedown show on display in the Foothills Arts Council house. The exhibit will be on display through early June. Entries for this competition will be May 11 and 12. Call or stop by the arts council office for further information. An additional exhibit presented by the newly organized Yadkin Valley Craft Guild will also be displayed during the Winedown.

The evening excitement continues at the drawing for two raffle contests: 50/50 raffle where half of the collections are awarded to the drawn winner and the other half of the proceeds benefit the Foothills Arts Council and second, a raffle sampler offering mixed cases of Yadkin Valley wine and baskets of wine related items from downtown Elkin merchants.



Top: Amy and Michael Helton with their dog, Cabernet. Bottom left: Grapes from the Hanover vines. Bottom right: Inside the 1897 farmhouse at Hanover Park.

Hanover Park Vineyard



Hanover Park Vineyard is all about the senses. Ambling up the aged oak tree-flanked path to the front porch of an 1897 farmhouse elicits the feeling of stability. The house and its surrounding land are once again alluring and productive because of the foresight of owners Michael and Amy Helton.

Candles fill an antiquated hearth; the original plank floors are light and smooth. Salvaged porch boards make rustic interior window shutters that block the direct afternoon sunlight from shadowing way the

many state, national and international medal-winning bottles of wine.

Amy and Michael's Hanover Park Vineyard is the second oldest vineyard/winery of the Yadkin Valley Appellation. In 1999, it became the first bonded winery established in Yadkin County since prohibition days.

At the time they signed the deed for their 23 acres in 1996, both Heltons were teaching art in Winston-Salem. A month-long honeymoon in the south of France totally changed their opinion of wine—a part of all Europe's daily diet. The medical world is currently proclaiming the positive results of studies that see the health value of one or two glasses of wine per day, no more, no less.

Eight of the acres were cleared to farm. Michael grew up with family who farmed, so he was accustomed to hard work. Today he has four-and-a-half acres of producing



vines. The first harvest yielded 385 cases of wine; now 2400 cases are in the warehouse.

"The wine industry is so new and growing so very, very quickly. It would take 10 to 15 years in Europe for this type of growth to occur," says Michael. His own plans for the next few years include planting 10 additional acres and completion of a new storage "barn."

Michael respects the earth. He likes the vineyard but loves the winery and dedicates his focus on creating Hanover Park's one-of-a-kind tastes. He makes his wine, like his art, a passion. "My concern is that folks enjoy wine," admits Michael. "No one takes a class to learn to drink iced tea. If it tastes good, enjoy it."

In the business of creating world-class wines, the Heltons feel it's important to enter competitions. One season, Hanover Park entered eight wines in an American Wine Society's event and six winning wines earned Hanover Park the notoriety of earning the most awards for any single winery entered.

The Hanover Park Vineyard Wine Club offers its members amenities of wines, discounted and shipped directly, winemaker notes and recipes, and member gatherings at the vineyard. The wine list includes Viognier—fruity and light; Chardonnay—crisp green apple with a slight citrus overtone; Barrel Fermented Chardonnay—apple, vanilla and oak, a rich, well balanced white wine; Mourvedre—medium bodied red wine blended with Syrah; Chambourcin—rich, deeply colored, aromatic wine; Cabernet Franc—medium red wine with cherry and blackberry flavor; Cabernet Sauvignon—aromas and full flavors of black currant and blackberry jam; Michael's Blend—2001, deep, full flavored red wine; Rosé—semi-sweet with hints of cherry, spice and peach; and Early Twilight—sweetness matched with wonderfully high acid.

From tasting corks, supervising the farm crew, creatively designing a tasting bar of halved barrels, marketing and consulting—Michael smiles as he says, "It has been the hardest work I have ever loved!"

Hanover Park Vineyard
1927 Courtney-Huntsville Road
Yadkinville
336-463-2875

www.hanoverparkwines.com

Hours: Thursday, Friday, Saturday 12-6 p.m.

Sunday 1-5 p.m.

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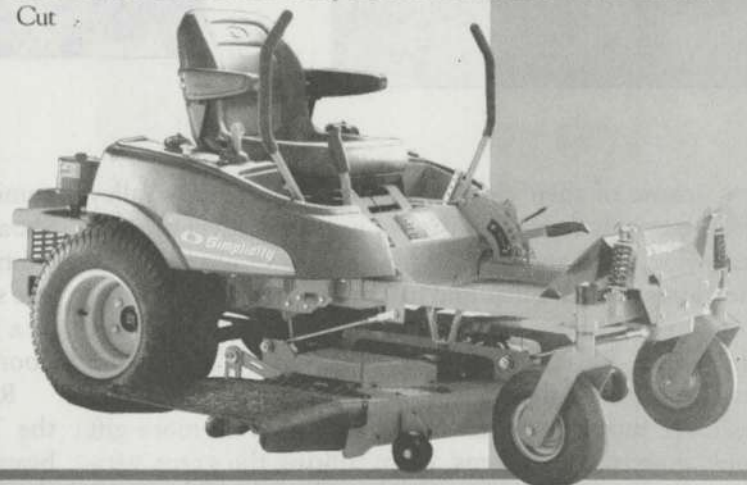
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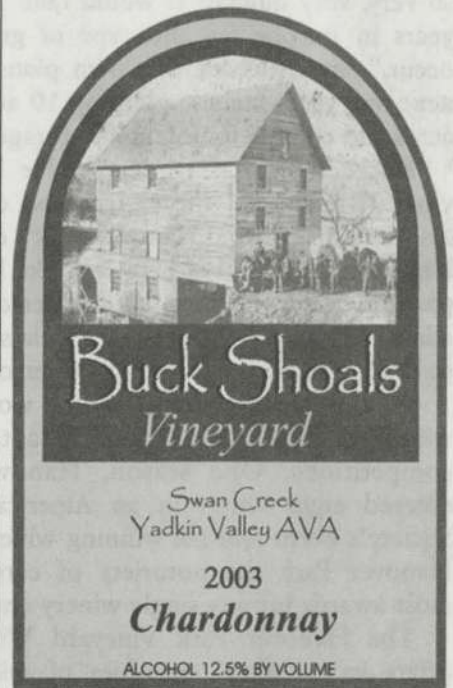
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Swan Creek Vineyards in the Yadkin Valley



Left to right: Allen and Sandra Hinchey's Windy Gap label, tasting room and gift shop; Terry Crater in the Buck Shoals vineyard and the Buck Shoals new label.

Because of their close proximity, four Yadkin Valley vineyards create a cluster of potential adventure for wine, food and fun. All four vineyards are in a five-mile radius of each other and can be leisurely toured within one to two hours. Buck Shoals Vineyards, Laurel Gray Vineyards, Raffaldini Vineyards and Windy Gap Vineyards are exhibiting a joint effort to offer their visitors more music, more authentic winemaking, more gift shops, more tasting rooms, more touring the grape varieties, more picnic areas—simply “the mostest of the bounty of the vine,” so to speak.

The scenic foothills have been enhanced with the new passion for rows and rows of abundant vines nestled in the heart of the Yadkin Valley. Within easy driving distance from anywhere, each vineyard within the Swan Creek area of the Yadkin Valley AVA is unique with their own individual charm.

Laurel Gray's tasting room and gift shop is a 1930s milking parlor which owners Benny and Kim Myers have lovingly restored. Enjoy outdoor seating overlooking manicured vineyards, rose gardens and a beautiful farm pond.

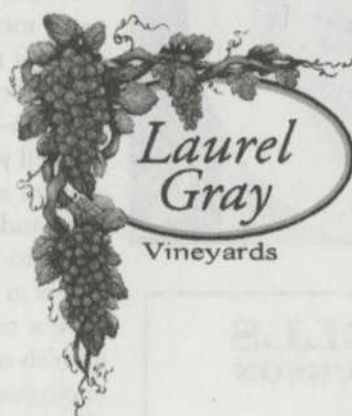
Terry and Joann Crater decided to preserve history by

naming their new vineyard and winery for the old Buck Shoals Mill that existed during the late 1800s not far from the current location of their vineyard. Opening in late summer, Buck Shoals will feature a beautiful log cabin as a tasting room and gift shop with a large winery next door.

Raffaldini Vineyards and tasting room are designed in the Tuscan style with a romantic garden walk through beautiful roses, fish ponds, seasonal flower and herb gardens. The Raffaldini family, along with business partners Stephen and Susan Lyons, have worked tirelessly to bring a taste of Italy to the hills of North Carolina.

Windy Gap Vineyards was the first vineyard within the Swan Creek area and features both French and American hybrid wines. Enjoy Allen and Sandra Hinchey's outdoor wine patio or browse the large gift shop. You may even get to meet the basset hounds featured on many of Windy Gap's labels.

A visit to all the Swan Creek vineyards will allow you to make friends with the owners while enjoying the beautiful rural countryside of the Yadkin Valley.



Top to bottom: Stephen and Susan Lyons toast the Raffaldini Vineyards; Kim and Benny Myers with their Laurel Gray Vineyards bottled wine, label and tasting room.

Swan Creek Vineyards

Buck Shoals Vineyard

Log cabin tasting room
Opening late summer
info@buckshoalsvineyard.com

Laurel Gray Vineyards & Tasting Room

- French Vinifera Wines
- Vineyard Tours
- Handcrafted Gifts
- Homebaked Goods
- Picnic Area

Open April-September:

Thurs. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.,

Fri. 9 a.m.-9 p.m.,

Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sun. 1-5 p.m.

336-468-8463 (GOT VINE)

5726 Old Hwy. 421, Hamptonville

www.laurelgray.com

Raffaldini Vineyards and Winery

Italian wines

Italian and French varietals

Hours:

Thurs. noon to 5 p.m.

Fri. noon to 6 p.m.

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And by appointment

Opening May 16

Fax 336-835-9330

E-mail info@raffaldini.com

450 Groce Road

Ronda, NC 28670

Windy Gap Vineyards and Winery

- Tours: Vineyard and Winery
- Tasting
- Gift Shop
- Picnic Area

Hours: Open Year-Round

Tues.- Fri. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun. noon -5 p.m.

336-984-3926

656 Pardue Farm Road, Ronda

www.windygapwine.com



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Pouring Forth

About 25 of the state's wineries will be pouring wine at Tanglewood Park in Clemmons from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday for the 4th Annual North Carolina Wine Festival.

The festival also will include food, music and crafts.

Tickets, which include tasting and a souvenir glass, cost \$14 in advance, \$20 at the gate.

Tickets are available at participating wineries and at Lowes Foods stores.

For a complete list of participating wineries or other information, visit www.ncwinefestival.com

North Carolina had 34 wineries at the end of 2003, and more are in the works, according to the N.C. Grape Council.

First-time wineries or producers at the festival will include Old North State Winery of Mount Airy, Old Stone Vineyard & Winery in Salisbury, Garden Gate Vineyards of Mocksville and Innovative Winery of Morrisville.

Several newcomers have planted roots in the Yadkin Valley, the state's only American Viticultural Area (AVA). These include Raffaldini Vineyards in Ronda, Laurel Gray Vineyards of Hamptonville and Round Peak Vineyards in northern Surry County.

Like many of those who have come before them, these vineyards draw people from different walks of life who want to make different kinds of wine for different reasons. Here are their stories.

Stories by Michael Hastings

PIONEERS: Italian varietals taking root

RONDA — The Old World and the New World come together at Raffaldini Vineyards.

Founder Jay Raffaldini is a first-generation Italian-American who can trace his family roots back to the 14th century in Mantua, a town near Verona in northern Italy, where his relatives still make wine for local consumption.

"Living in the United States, I wanted to take the knowledge we learned over there and use it in this country," said Raffaldini, a portfolio manager who lives in Greenwich, Conn.

Raffaldini's dream of making wine led him to North Carolina, where about two

dozen Italian grape varietals, some rarely grown in this country, have taken root at the foot of the Brushy Mountains, just down the road from the home of NASCAR legend Junior Johnson.

Raffaldini owns more than 100 acres here in a partnership with his sister Barbara Raffaldini; wife, Maureen Stitt; and Stephen Lyons, who also is the vineyard manager.

The first planting in 2002 included 27 acres of such Italian grapes as sangiovese, the grape in chianti, and primitivo, pinot grigio, barbera, dolcetto and nebbiolo as well as such French ones as chardonnay, viog-



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE
DIFFERENT FLAVOR:
Stephen Rigby will make Italian styles of wine.

See RAFFALDINI, Page E4

ROOTED: Vineyard sprang from farm

HAMPTONVILLE — Ben and Kim Myers started Laurel Gray Vineyards not only out of an interest in making wine, but also out of a love of the land.

"Benny's family has been farming land around here for 10 generations, since they came from London in 1773," Kim Myers said.

When the Myerses bought the 84-acre tract in 1994, they didn't know they were about to go into the wine business. They were just investing in good farmland.



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE

GRAPE'S END:

Laurel Gray's Kim Myers with visitor Mike Adams in the tasting room.

It wasn't long before they became inspired by trips to vineyards in Europe and California's Napa Valley. When they realized that the Yadkin Valley's climate and geography could support many of the same vinifera grape varieties, they visited such area wineries as Shelton Vineyards near Mount Airy and Westbend Vineyards in Lewisville, and took viticulture classes at Surry County Community College.

They planted their first grapevines in 2001 and now

See **LAUREL GRAY**, Page E4

ROUND PEAK: Grapes thrive in Surry

Mount Airy — The way George Little tells it, Round Peak Vineyards began in a hot tub.

In October 1998, Little and his wife, Susan, visited the Napa Valley with their friends Lee and Janet Martin and Joe and Joyce Neely.

They ostensibly went to Napa to visit the Martins' son, a sous-chef at the Domaine Chandon winery.

While relaxing one day during the trip, the conversation naturally turned to wine.

"It comes down to three guys sitting around a hot tub debating the merits of the wine business and whe-

ther it would work here," George Little said.

The Neelys came home and soon established RayLen Vineyards near Mocksville. George Little and Lee Martin, whose friendship dates to their undergraduate days at Davidson College, joined forces and, with their wives, eventually decided on a 33-acre parcel in northwestern Surry County just a few miles from Shelton Vineyards.

Named after a modest mountain that stands in the distance from the vineyards, Round Peak planted its first vines in 2000. It harvested its first wine

See **ROUND PEAK**, Page E4



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY MEGAN MORRIS

AWARD-WINNERS: Three Round Peak Vineyards wines won several prizes in 2003.

ACCENT

RAFFALDINI

Continued From Page E1

nier, syrah, merlot, cabernet sauvignon and semillon.

More recently, Lyons has planted such rarer vines as aglianico, malvasia nera, malvasia bianco and aleatico. The planted acreage now totals about 36 acres, and Lyons expects to increase that to more than 40 acres and an eventual output of 12,000 cases of wine a year.

Right now, Raffaldini Vineyards has a temporary tasting room. In two to three years, that will be replaced by a much larger, villa-style building with a balcony for sipping wine and enjoying the views of the Brushy and Blue Ridge mountains. Jay Raffaldini also envisions moving to North Carolina within five years and establishing a restaurant on the site.

Raffaldini is building its winery at nearby Buck Shoals Vineyard, which has not yet opened.

Raffaldini and Buck Shoals will share the winery, which should be completed next month. Raffaldini's winemaker, Stephen Rigby, who has worked at Westbend Vineyards in Lewisville and Old North State Winery in Mount Airy, will also make wines for Buck Shoals.

"It's two wines in the same winery, but never the twain shall meet," Rigby said, explaining that Buck Shoals and Raffaldini wines will have distinctly different styles.

Buck Shoals does plan at least one Italian-style wine and a new one to North Carolina, Amarone, which involves a special process of air-drying the grapes to produce rich, raisiny wines.

Rigby came on board in March. Linda King at RagApple Lassie in Boonville made Raffaldini's first vintage in 2003. It consists of six wines. The whites are Bianco, a blend of pinot grigio and viognier, and Chardonnay. The Rosato is an off-dry rose, and the reds are Sangiovese, Dolcetto and Bella Misto, a blended wine.

The 2004 vintage probably will consist of the same wines, plus perhaps ones made from montepulciano, malvasia bianco and montepulciano.

"We plan to take some of these grapes and use (Italian) blends as models," Rigby said. "But that all depends on how the grapes turn out here."

Jay Raffaldini said that the goal is to produce wines that are similar in profile to Italian wines. In particular, he wants wines that are food-friendly and affordable.

"Italians drink wine every day," he said. "The wines are meant to be lighter. They won't be massive, high-alcohol wines."

If anyone can find the place to produce Italian-style wines in North Carolina, it might be Stephen Lyons. For years, he has served as a vineyard consult-

ant, helping such wineries as Shelton Vineyards, RagApple Lassie, Round Peak and Laurel Gray evaluate plots for soil content, climate, drainage and all the other factors on which successful grape harvests depend.

Lyons said he scouted 55 parcels of land for Jay Raffaldini before they chose the land for the vineyards.

RAFFALDINI VINEYARDS

450 Groce Road
Ronda, NC 28670
(336) 835-9463
www.raffaldini.com



■ **Hours:** Thursday noon to 5 p.m., Friday noon to 6 p.m., Saturday noon to 5 p.m., and Sunday 1 to 5 p.m., or by appointment.

■ **Available**

Wines: bianco, chardonnay, rosato, sangiovese, bella misto and dolcetto.

■ **Directions:** From Winston-Salem, Take U.S. 421 North. Just past I-77, take Exit 267 (Windsor Road). Turn right off ramp and go 1/30 of a mile, then turn left on Old 421 for 1.4 miles to stop sign. Turn right on Swan Creek Road. Go 2.6 miles to Clingman Road. Turn left and go 1.1 miles to Groce Road. Turn left. Vineyard is 1/4 mile up the road on the right.



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE

DARING VIEW: The deck off the tasting room of Raffaldini Vineyards (above) offers sweeping views of the vineyard and the Brushy Mountains. Steve Lyons (below left), manager of the vineyards, and winemaker Steve Rigsby check chardonnay vines.

"This has a great aspect," he said, "because it faces east and gets the early morning sun."

That gives the grapes a good start in the spring with an early bud break.

Lyons also likes the soil, which is filled with mica, which can add desirable mineral notes to the taste of wines. "The Brushies are 3 to 5 billion years old," he said. "The older the soil, the better."

The land also has good drainage, which helps develop flavorful fruit, and a consistent breeze that helps lower disease by keeping leaves and fruit clean and dry.

"And then there's just the beauty of it, with the Blue Ridge in the distance."

Lyons discovered another benefit of the site, too. Once Buck Shoals opens later this year, the area called Swan Creek will have four wineries that are close together, which offers opportunities for wine tourism. Right in the heart of the Yadkin Valley, Swan Creek encompasses the new Laurel Gray Vineyards and the established Windy Gap,



where Allen Hincer has been producing such wines as viognier, chambourcin, the Fat Bass red blend and the semi-sweet Three Dawg Nite for several years.

"We have the largest cluster of tasting rooms (in the state) within 10 miles of each other," Lyons said.

Jay Raffaldini said he's excited about challenge of introducing people to the Italian style of wine that he grew up drinking out of jelly jars in his youth.

He's also excited about becoming part of the blossoming wine industry in this state.

"The choice was West Coast or East Coast," he said. "We decided, let's not go to California. The opportunity to do something in an area that's just forming is very powerful."

Part of Raffaldini's pioneering spirit comes from his family's motto, *Audentes Fortuna Iuvat* in Latin, taken from Virgil's *The Aeneid*.

"A lot of this is our family's history and the motto 'Fortune favors the daring,'" Raffaldini said. "The reward goes to the pioneers."

LAUREL GRAY

Continued From Page E1

have five acres planted. It's a small vineyard, sized for a family operation.

Benny Myers works in Winston-Salem as a trucking manager for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. He spends his evenings working in the vineyard as well as tending to the family's cattle, and wheat and soybean crops.

"Benny has always done farming," his wife said. "It's what he does for fun."

Kim Myers, a graphic artist by training, now devotes her time to Laurel Gray, whether it's pruning the vines in the vineyard or pouring wines in the tasting room, a restored milking parlor left over from the 1930s-era dairy farm.

The Myers named the vineyard after their two children, Ashley Laurel and Taylor Gray, who help out when they are home from college.

The family operation shows Kim Myers' creative touch everywhere. She designed the Laurel Gray logo and has painted watercolor landscapes featured on some of the bottle labels. She imprinted grape leaves in the sidewalk. She converted a barn door into a coffee table on a patio that overlooks the pond. She made window treatments using tobacco sticks, a reference to the time when the farm grew "the biggest tobacco around here," she said. In the tasting room,



JOURNAL PHOTO BY DAVID ROLFE

GOT WINE? The

wine-tasting room at Laurel Gray started as a milking parlor.

she sells cakes and pies baked by her mother.

Laurel Gray's first vintage, in 2002, of just 160 cases includes Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2003 vintage includes those as well as Viognier, Syrah and Scarlet Mountain, a red blend.

The 2003 Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon won't be bottled until next month. The semi-sweet Scarlet Mountain, made predominantly from cabernet franc, with smaller amounts of merlot and cabernet sauvignon, has quickly become Laurel Gray's best seller.

The Myerses have not built a winery, because their small operation doesn't justify the expense. Instead, Kim Myers assisted Michael Helton of Hanover Park Vineyards in Hamptonville in making Laurel Gray's 2002 wines. Helton also made the 2003 whites and the Scarlet Mountain. The dry reds are being made at Ragapple Lassie in Boonville.

"Michael has been teaching me," Myers said of Helton. "Everything that was done to

the grapes, we've been a part of. So if we ever decide to build a winery, we'll have some idea of what we're doing."

The 2004 wines will be made at nearby Buck Shoals Vineyard after its winery is completed this summer.

Like nearby Raffaldini Vineyards, Laurel Gray benefits from the mineral-rich soil of the Brushy Mountains, and it's part of the

LAUREL GRAY VINEYARDS

5726 Old U.S. 421
Hamptonville, NC 27020
(336) 835-8463
www.laurelgray.com

Hours:

Thursday and Friday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 5 p.m.

Available

Wines: chardonnay, viognier, cabernet sauvignon, Scarlet Mountain.



Directions: From Winston-Salem, Take 421 North. Just past I-77, take Exit 267 (Windsor Road). Turn right off ramp and go 1/10 of a mile. Turn right on Old 421 and go about 1/10 of a mile. Laurel Gray Vineyards will be on the left.

Swan Creek trail, which, along with Buck Shoals and Windy Gap Vineyards, should help draw tourists to the area.

Kim Myers said that though they have plenty of land, they plan to keep the vineyards small for the time being. That way, the two of them can manage it by themselves with occasional outside hired help and that of their kids.

Ashley Myers, 22, studies plant pathology at N.C. State University and has received a scholarship from the American Wine Society to study grape diseases. Taylor, 20, studies financial planning at Appalachian State University.

Whether they join their parents in the wine business remains an open question.

"They're young," Kim Myers said. "What they want out of life now may not be what they want later."

But, she said, "Ashley loves the business. Taylor is beginning to like it more all the time."



JOURNAL PHOTO BY MEGAN MORRIS

GENTLY, NOW: George Little, an owner of Round Peak Vineyards, tucks grape vines into a wire trellis.

ROUND PEAK

Continued From Page E1

in 2002 and opened its tasting room late last year.

Round Peak produced a total of 460 cases of chardonnay, merlot and sangiovese in its first vintage. Because that stock has almost sold out, Round Peak will not be at the 2004 N.C. Wine Festival on Saturday.

But Round Peak plans to bottle its second vintage in July. Little expects that to total about 1,100 cases, and it will include Nebbiolo, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Merlot and sweet and dry rose wines made from sangiovese.

Round Peak expects to build a winery in time for the 2005 harvest. In the meantime, the vineyard is relying on winemaking talent from area wineries. Steve Shepard, the winemaker at RayLen, made the 2002 wines. Linda King, the winemaker at RagApple Lassie in Boonville, made the 2003 wines.

King will make the wines of the third vintage, too, Little said. "And we'll make the fourth."

Round Peak has 12 acres planted with vines. In addition to the varieties already mentioned, they have planted viognier, one of only two whites.

The most acres planted consist of cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot and sangiovese.

"We decided from the beginning that this would be primarily reds," Little said. "That's our preference, and it's market-driven. That said, Chardonnay is our best-seller."

Round Peak made rose wine from the 2003 vintage, because the weather prevent-

ROUND PEAK VINEYARDS

765 Round Peak Church Road
Mount Airy, NC 27030
(336) 352-5595
www.roundpeak.com

Hours:

Thursday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m., or by appointment.

Available

Wines: chardonnay, merlot and sangiovese.



Directions: From Winston-Salem, take U.S. 52 North, then veer left onto I-74. Take Exit 6 onto N.C. 89 West. Go left, west toward Low Gap, about 1 1/2 miles, passing under I-77 bridge. At top of the hill, turn right onto Round Peak Church Road. Go 1 1/2 miles and vineyard is on the left.

ed them from letting the sangiovese grapes ripen to make a quality red varietal wine. But that wine will be back, along with other Italian varieties.

Little has especially high hopes for nebbiolo. "I think we're the first to plant nebbiolo in the state," he said.

Nebbiolo makes the famous Barolo and Barbaresco wines but is difficult to grow even in its native Italy.

"Nebbiolo's our ringer," Little said with a smile.

"Everybody says it can't be done."



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Pouring Forth

About 25 of the state's wineries will be pouring wine at Tanglewood Park in Clemmons from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday for the 4th Annual North Carolina Wine Festival.

The festival also will include food, music and crafts.

Tickets, which include tasting and a souvenir glass, cost \$14 in advance, \$20 at the gate.

Tickets are available at participating wineries and at Lowes Foods stores.

For a complete list of participating wineries or other information, visit www.ncwinefestival.com

North Carolina had 34 wineries at the end of 2003, and more are in the works, according to the N.C. Grape Council.

First-time wineries or producers at the festival will include Old North State Winery of Mount Airy, Old Stone Vineyard & Winery in Salisbury, Garden Gate Vineyards of Mocksville and Innovative Winery of Morrisville.

Several newcomers have planted roots in the Yadkin Valley, the state's only American Viticultural Area (AVA). These include Raffaldini Vineyards in Ronda, Laurel Gray Vineyards of Hamptonville and Round Peak Vineyards in northern Surry County.

Like many of those who have come before them, these vineyards draw people from different walks of life who want to make different kinds of wine for different reasons. Here are their stories.

Stories by Michael Hastings

PIONEERS: *Italian varietals taking root*

RONDA — The Old World and the New World come together at Raffaldini Vineyards.

Founder Jay Raffaldini is a first-generation Italian-American who can trace his family roots back to the 14th century in Mantua, a town near Verona in northern Italy, where his relatives still make wine for local consumption.

"Living in the United States, I wanted to take the knowledge we learned over there and use it in this country," said Raffaldini, a portfolio manager who lives in Greenwich, Conn.

Raffaldini's dream of making wine led him to North Carolina, where about two

dozen Italian grape varietals, some rarely grown in this country, have taken root at the foot of the Brushy Mountains, just down the road from the home of NASCAR legend Junior Johnson.

Raffaldini owns more than 100 acres here in a partnership with his sister Barbara Raffaldini; wife, Maureen Stitt; and Stephen Lyons, who also is the vineyard manager.

The first planting in 2002 included 27 acres of such Italian grapes as sangiovese, the grape in chianti, and primitivo, pinot grigio, barbera, dolcetto and nebbiolo as well as such French ones as chardonnay, viog-



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE

DIFFERENT FLAVOR:

Stephen Rigby will make Italian styles of wine.

See RAFFALDINI, Page E4

ROOTED: Vineyard sprang from farm

HAMPTONVILLE — Ben and Kim Myers started Laurel Gray Vineyards not only out of an interest in making wine, but also out of a love of the land.

"Benny's family has been farming land around here for 10 generations, since they came from London in 1773," Kim Myers said.

When the Myerses bought the 84-acre tract in 1994, they didn't know they were about to go into the wine business. They were just investing in good farmland.



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE

GRAPE'S END:

Laurel Gray's Kim Myers with visitor Mike Adams in the tasting room.

It wasn't long before they became inspired by trips to vineyards in Europe and California's Napa Valley. When they realized that the Yadkin Valley's climate and geography could support many of the same vinifera grape varieties, they visited such area wineries as Shelton Vineyards near Mount Airy and Westbend Vineyards in Lewisville, and took viticulture classes at Surry County Community College.

They planted their first grapevines in 2001 and now

See **LAUREL GRAY**, Page E4

ROUND PEAK: Grapes thrive in Surry

Mount Airy — The way George Little tells it, Round Peak Vineyards began in a hot tub.

In October 1998, Little and his wife, Susan, visited the Napa Valley with their friends Lee and Janet Martin and Joe and Joyce Neely.

They ostensibly went to Napa to visit the Martins' son, a sous-chef at the Domaine Chandon winery.

While relaxing one day during the trip, the conversation naturally turned to wine.

"It comes down to three guys sitting around a hot tub debating the merits of the wine business and whe-

ther it would work here," George Little said.

The Neelys came home and soon established RayLen Vineyards near Mocksville. George Little and Lee Martin, whose friendship dates to their undergraduate days at Davidson College, joined forces and, with their wives, eventually decided on a 33-acre parcel in northwestern Surry County just a few miles from Shelton Vineyards.

Named after a modest mountain that stands in the distance from the vineyards, Round Peak planted its first vines in 2000. It harvested its first wine

See **ROUND PEAK**, Page E4



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY MEGAN MORR

AWARD-WINNERS:

Three Round Peak Vineyards wines won several prizes in 2003.

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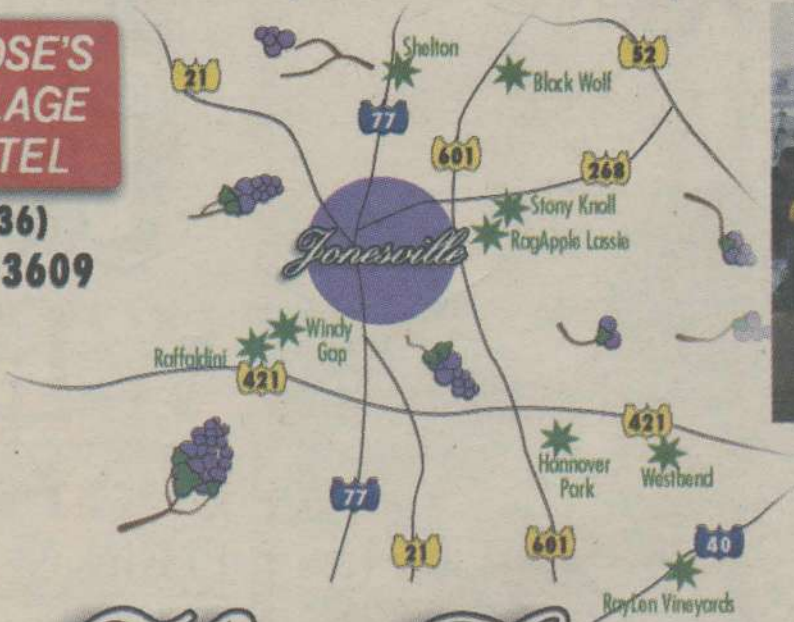


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Visit Soon!

A heartfelt welcome . . .

On behalf of the new Yadkin Valley Chamber of Commerce and our presenting sponsor, Yadkin Valley Bank, let us welcome you to the third annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival, a celebration of our rapidly developing viticulture industry.

Few could have anticipated the amazing grape-growing and wine-making boom sweeping our region. Vineyards are being planted and new wineries being planned and brought online at a rapid pace. At this festival we have added four new vineyards pouring their wines, a 50 percent increase over last year's festival

And more importantly, the fruits of this labor are some really fine wines, many of which have won awards at regional and national events.

This wine festival is a celebration of those wineries and vineyards in the Yadkin Valley Appellation, the only American Viticultural Area in the state. It includes all or parts of seven northwestern North Carolina counties that share unique agricultural and geological characteristics. We look forward to the day when "Yadkin Valley" on a wine label will connote to the connoisseur a consistent level of quality the equal of any wine region in the world.

This Saturday's festival will be an opportunity for you to sample and purchase a variety of wines, both red and white, made from grapes grown in our appellation. The staff of Surry Community College's viticulture and enology program is here to help those who want to learn more about growing grapes and making wine. There are also a number of select food, crafts and equipment vendors with interesting offerings, and two fine musical ensembles will provide entertainment throughout the afternoon.

We particularly want to thank the Town of Elkin for providing such a beautiful and appropriate site for our festival.

Should you need assistance during the festival, please come to either of our registration areas or just ask anyone wearing the distinctive khaki-colored Yadkin Valley Wine Festival shirt.

Please remember to taste responsibly and consider using a designated driver.

Enjoy yourselves as you lift a glass in a toast to the Yadkin Valley.

Derrill Rice
Festival Chairman

Crissy Branch
Special Events Coordinator

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Festival weekend has plentiful activities

Hospital Foundation's Wine Auction will kick off festivities

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

The Yadkin Valley Wine Festival offers a weekend full of entertainment and activities. Two social events bookend the wine festival and a bike ride begins early Saturday morning.

Friday evening the second annual Yadkin Valley Wine Auction will benefit the Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital Foundation.

Held in the Holiday Inn Grand Ballroom in Jonesville, the auction will feature art objects, furnishings and decorative items as well as wine, all donated to help expand the hospital's surgery department.

A Drawdown will be held for a Caribbean Cruise for Two including airfare. Tickets for the Wine Auction are \$50 per person. Drawdown tickets are \$100

each. For tickets contact the Chamber at 526-1111 or the Foundation at 527-7457.

Saturday evening, the Foothills Arts Council will hold its special "Wine Down Party" at the arts council building, 129 Church Street, Elkin. Local restaurant specialties from 10 kitchens will be served along with Yadkin Valley wines from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Live Jazz will be performed by the Joe Robinson Quartet, featuring vocalist Janice Price. Tickets are \$20. Call 835-2025.

Saturday morning, the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival Tour de Vino bicycle ride will begin at 8 a.m. in Elkin and wind through the Yadkin Valley wine country. To benefit the Surry County Chapter of the American Red Cross, cyclists can choose two different rides.

Both will end in Elkin in time to enjoy the wine festival. Participants will leave

from Elkin High School football field and wind through Yadkin County over to the RagApple Lassie Vineyard. The shorter route will then head back to Elkin and will be a Half-Metric Century, or 31 miles.

Those who are looking for more of a challenge will leave RagApple Lassie and head up Rockford Road through Surry County. Bikers will continue to Shelton Vineyards and past historic Kapps Mill before heading back into Elkin. This route will be a Metric Century. Registration opens at 7 a.m.

The registration cost will be \$35 and will include a T-shirt (as long as they last), food, supported rest stops, SAG support, and a winetasting ticket for the festival. For more information or to pre-register: Hattie Brintle or Luke Horton at 336-786-4413 or 526-4384, or online at dawgdodgers.com.

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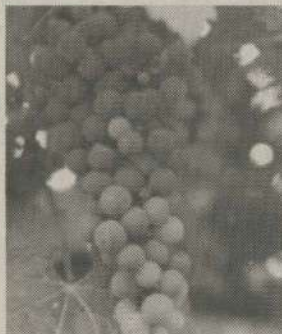
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For more information:

Viticulture: Gill Giese gieseg@surry.cc.nc.us or 336-386-3461
Enology: Dr. Bob McRitchie, mcritchier@surry.cc.nc.us or 336-386-3408

Visit our website:
<http://www.surry.edu/grapes/>

Shelton sets the pace in the Yadkin Valley

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

DOBSON — Brothers Charlie and Ed Shelton have had a catalytic influence on the Yadkin Valley, its vineyards and wineries. One after another, vineyardists and winemakers have followed the example of Shelton Vineyards, a premier vineyard and winery and the largest estate winery in North Carolina.

Five years ago, when the Sheltons broke ground on their 383-acre property, only Westbend Vineyards was producing its own wines in the Yadkin Valley. But the brothers had a keen interest in viticulture and wine-making, and knew viticulture could have a major economic impact here.

Using their construction backgrounds, the Sheltons built a gravity-flow winery and then brought in Sean McRitchie to develop the vineyard.

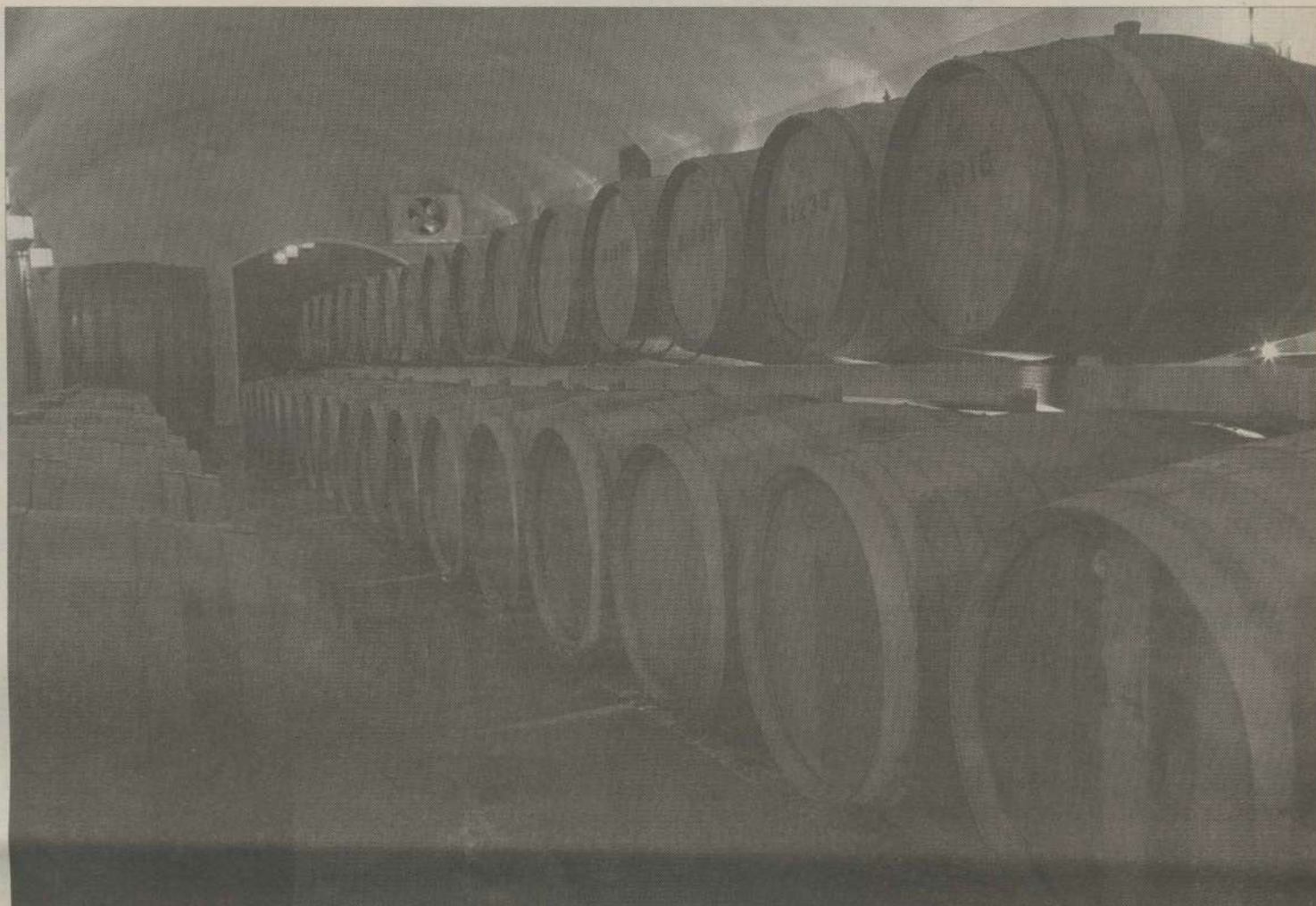
Sean oversees 200 acres planted in 12 different vinifera grapes. These include Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Chardonnay, Riesling and Mourvedre. Shelton will add three new grape varieties this year—tannat; malbec, a red blending grape; and a different clone of white riesling, which is an early ripener.

The grapes are harvested beginning in late summer and brought to the beautiful 33,000 square-foot Shelton winery where Winemaker Matt Dyar takes over.

Shelton's barrel program is an important aspect to winemaking. Part of Matt's job is to choose the type of wood and cooper (barrel maker) for a particular wine. Ten different coopers are represented among Shelton's barrels. Each cooper contributes a unique characteristic to the finished wine.

The centerpiece of Shelton Vineyards is the winery set into a hillside. The grapes begin the winemaking process at the top level. Gravity eliminates the need to pump the product through each step.

Gravity-flow minimizes pollutants, such as stems and seeds, in the wine and ensures the production of the highest quality wines possible. Some of the wines offered are 2002 Yadkin Valley Chardonnay and Viognier, 2001 Yadkin Valley Family Reserve Claret, 2001 North Carolina



The barrel cave at Shelton Vineyards evokes Old World charm.

Cabernet Sauvignon, 2001 North Carolina Merlot, all of which have won medals at regional and international wine competitions.

New for the summer will be limited productions of two wines in June or July. A 2002 Sangiovese and 2002 Pinot Noir will be available to Shelton Wine Club members first, then offered for sale at the Gift Shop.

George Denka, president of Shelton Vineyards says, "Pinot Noir is a temperamental, thin-skinned grape that we had used before for blending. This is the first year its quality was fine enough for our standards to be a varietal wine. I believe the '02 reds are

the best wines we've produced."

Tastings are offered daily at Shelton Vineyards' tasting bar, located in the visitor center, where tours of the winery are also offered. Visitors can view each step of the winemaking process, from crushing to bottling.

Nothing goes better with a bottle of Shelton wine than a wedge of cheese, and Shelton Cheeses offers a large selection of artisan cheeses from regional producers at its cheese shop. Located next to the visitor center, Shelton Cheeses also offers a spreadable fresh chevre which is flavored on site.

Picnicking is encouraged on the beauti-

fully landscaped grounds—picnic supplies can be purchased at the cheese shop.

A full schedule of outdoor performances are featured from May to September at Shelton at Sunset Concert Series. Everything from folk rock to beach music can be enjoyed at the monthly concerts. The June 19 concert features Lee Greenwood. Tickets can be purchased by calling the winery. Individual and season tickets are available. Shelton Vineyards is open Mondays through Saturdays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sundays 1-6 p.m. For more information, call 336-366-4724. Web site: www.sheltonvineyards.com.

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Black Wolf unveils plans for new winery

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

DOBSON —Black Wolf Vineyards, located on US 601, has been producing medal-winning wines off site for years. Its restaurant, Wolf's Lair, has recently earned AAA's 3 Diamond award. Now, owner Dana Theis has plans to build Black Wolf Winery on the grounds of this 55-acre vineyard.

The new winery will be constructed this summer south of the vineyard overlooking the Fisher River. Black Wolf's new winemaker, Anne Holcombe, received her degree in Viticulture and Enology Technology from Surry Community College this week. "Anne is one of our star graduates," says Professor Bob McRitchie.

The opening of the winery is scheduled to coincide with the fall harvest. Anne will produce Black Wolf's first estate wines, or wines made where the grapes are grown. The winery will produce 4,000 cases of wine this first year.

Five of Black Wolf's award-winning wines will be poured at the wine festival: Cabernet Sauvignon - robust, deep and full bodied, this is Black Wolf's pride and joy; Chambourcin; Sweet Wolf Red - light and mild. "a kiss rather than a bite;" Chardonnay - fruity, excellent bouquet, a 2003 Dixie Classic Fair Gold Medal Winner; and Pinot Noir, powerful and subtle, with an agreeable finish.

Other wines in Black Wolf's portfolio, such as Seyval Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Moonlight White and Blue Moon White, are available at the restaurant, Wolf's Lair.



Black Wolf's wines will soon come from their own winery.

Visitors arrive at the vineyard through a pair of gates set in stone columns. The entrance drive winds past rows and rows of French varietals toward the restaurant and tasting room. Its stone-and-log construction resembles a European hunting lodge. But there are also paths to explore a secret garden, complete with garden house, bubbling stone fountain and a stone spring house.

Wine sales and tastings are offered in the tasting room which is upstairs in the restaurant. Wine tastings are available Monday-Saturday 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., and Sundays, 2-4 p.m.

Downstairs, Chef Sean Wehr prepares enticing dinner entrees like Grilled Loin of Elk, New York Strip Steak, Lamb Osso Buco, or fresh Rainbow Trout from Alleghany County. Try a bottle of Black Wolf

Cabernet Sauvignon with the Pan-seared Filet Mignon.

Or choose one of Black Wolf's wine flights to go with your meal in one of two beautiful dining rooms. "Big Bad Wolf" is a flight of three whites, and "Red Riding Hood" is a flight of three reds. Who can resist with names like that?

Diners can enjoy meals served fireside in winter—The Wolf's Lair features a massive stone fireplace in one dining room. Stained-glass windows in another dining room refract light year-round through the Black Wolf crest. Reservations are strongly recommended for dinner, which is served Thursdays through Sundays.

Musicians perform live on Fridays and Saturdays beginning at 7 p.m.

"Our weekend menu offers full meals as well as lighter fare," says Kamara Wehr, Sean's wife and restaurant manager. This menu includes, starters, salads, sandwiches, and entrees and is available for Saturday lunch and Sunday lunch and dinner. The restaurant also serves lunch on weekdays.

The Wolf's Lair Restaurant is open for lunch Mondays through Saturdays 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and open for dinner Thursdays through Saturdays 5-10 p.m. It is open Sundays, noon - 8 p.m. serving lunch and dinner from the Weekend Menu. Private parties, rehearsal dinners, bridal luncheons can be arranged by the Wehrs at The Wolf's Lair. The restaurant telephone is 336-374-2532; web site: www.blackwolfvineyards.com. Black Wolf Vineyards/The Wolf's Lair, 283 Vineyard Lane, Dobson, N.C.



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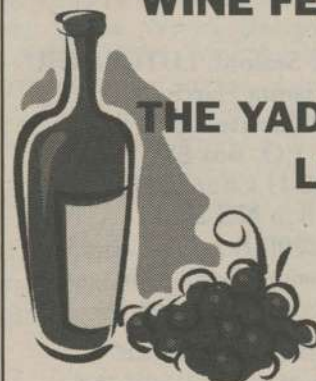


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RagApple — from leaf to vines

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

BOONVILLE — With the halcyon days of tobacco a thing of the past, farmer Frank Hobson, Jr. and his enterprising wife Lenna have smoothly segued their Yadkin County farm into RagApple Lassic Vineyard. Their award-winning winemaker, Linda King, completes the picture.

Frank Jr. comes by this agricultural enterprise honestly. He's been farming his family's land all his life, growing tobacco, corn, wheat and soybeans. With tobacco's weakened future, the Hobsons looked for a crop to take up the slack.

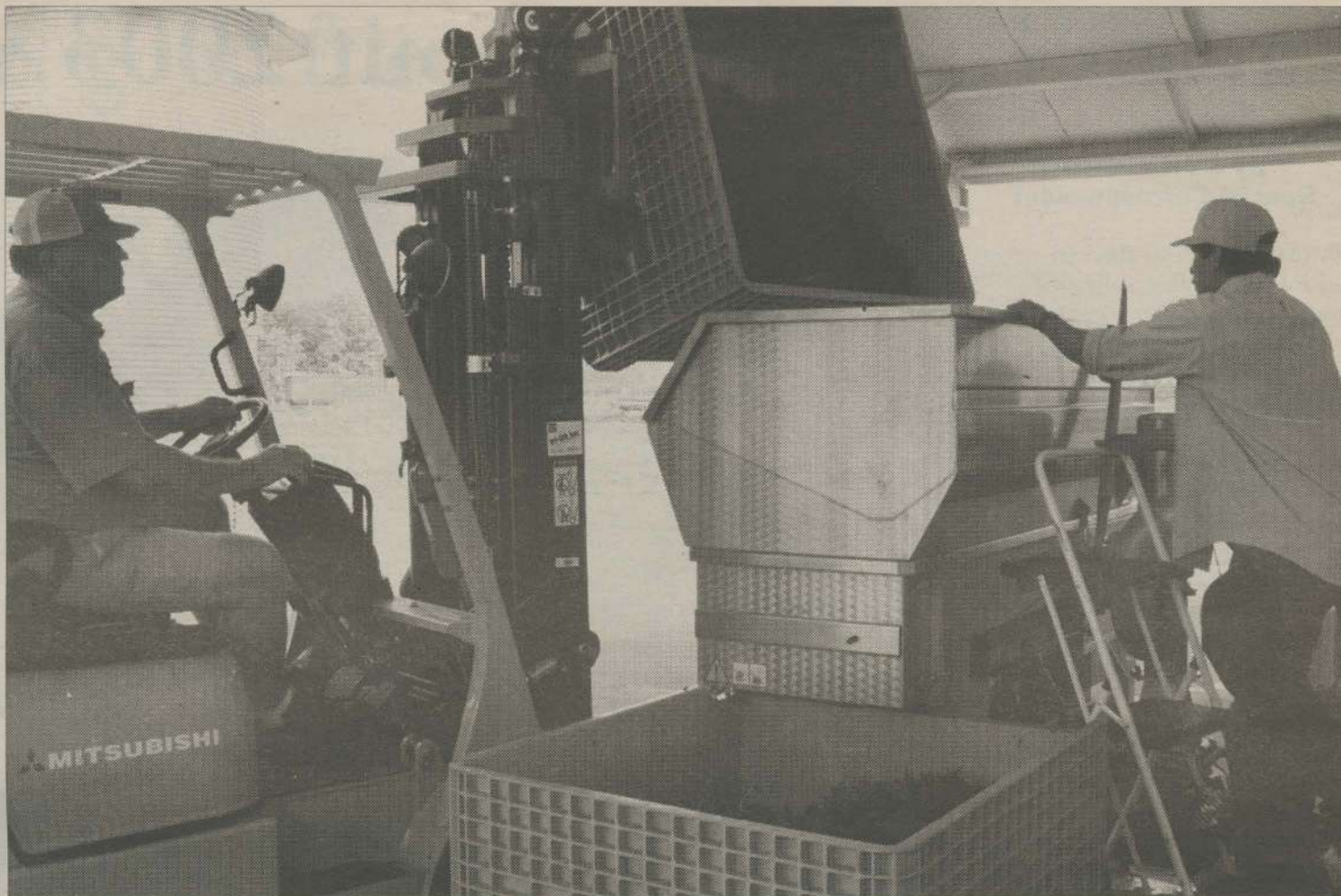
They learned that the 1,200-foot elevation, soil composition and micro-climates of the protected Yadkin River basin make this area one of the best for producing quality wine grapes.

Transitioning from tobacco to grapes is not such a stretch as one might think. Profit per acre from tobacco and grapes is similar. Profit per acre from grapes made into wine is significantly higher.

RagApple Lassic's winery, which opened last fall, will ultimately produce 10,000 cases of wine, some aged in French Oak casks. A portion of the building is constructed underground to take advantage of the earth's constant temperature.

A catwalk from the entrance allows visitors to view the fermentation tanks from above. Stairs lead down to the winery's lower level where there is a tasting room and gift shop.

The underground wine cellar has a



Frank Hobson unloads more of RagApple Lassic's grape harvest.

wall mural depicting classic vineyard landscapes.

The vineyards have site-specific plantings of Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Viognier, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Primitivo and Merlot. These grapes will produce the majority of RagApple Lassic wines. RagApple Lassic produced 3,000 cases of 2002 wines.

Linda is an internationally certified wine judge and is a member of the American Wine Society. She says, "I truly believe that 2002 was a grape-grower's year," referring to the near-perfect growing conditions. "I believe 2003 is going to be the year of the winemaker."

All of RagApple Lassic's premium

varietals have won international awards: Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Viognier. Two blends, Boonville Blanc and Rockford Red, are also award winners. RagApple Lassic's wine list also includes a dessert wine, Evening Sunset.

Evening Sunset will be marketed in 375 ml. bottles, just the right size to conclude a special meal. The other wines will be offered in 500- and 750-ml. bottles. "The 500-ml. bottle is perfect for the restaurant market," Lenna says.

Second Saturday Shindigs are special monthly events at the winery. June 12 features beach music by Breeze Band.

Visitors can also arrange for a hot-air balloon ride from RagApple Lassic Vineyards with Yadkin Valley Balloon Adventures. Veteran balloonist Tony Colburn will take passengers up in his 70-foot-tall balloon on weekends and holidays. RagApple Lassic wine club members receive a discount on balloon rides. Prices include a wine tasting afterward and a balloon-flight certificate.

RagApple Lassic's winery, on Rockford Road, is open Wednesdays through Sundays from 12 noon to 6:00 p.m.. For more information, call 336-367-6000 or 866-RAGAPPLE; web site: www.ragapplelassie.com. Yadkin Valley Balloon Adventures: 336-922-7207.

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RayLen confident about 2003 vintage

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

FARMINGTON — RayLen Vineyards, the Yadkin Valley's southernmost winery, makes an attractive start or finish to a tour along the Yadkin Valley Wine Trail. Orderly rows of vines and the winery's distinctive rooftop can be seen from Interstate 40, between exits 174 and 180.

With grapevines planted on 40 acres of a former dairy farm, the winery welcomes visitors to its wine-making facility and offers tastings and sales of its wines. Although it is located in a dry county, RayLen is a bonded winery and therefore permitted to bottle and sell its own product.

RayLen's owners, Joe and Joyce Neely, have developed their vineyard after years of interest and research. They named it for their daughters, Rachel and Len.

The Neelys snatched the 115-acre tract out of the hands of residential developers, confident that their dream of owning a fine vineyard complemented the agrarian nature of the property.

Steve Shepard is RayLen's winemaker. Hard work over the past five years has produced RayLen's European varietal grapes, including Chardonnay, Viognier, Pinot Grigio, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Shiraz. From these grapes, Steve has produced many double-gold medal-winning wines, including the 2001 Cabernet Franc and Merlot, at the N.C. State Fair last year.

"The 2003 vintage is going to surprise a lot of folks," Steve says. "The growing season was unusually wet. But the latter part of August and September was a dry period which enhanced the quality and flavors of the grapes. We're



The RayLen winery and tasting room overlook 40 acres of vines.

going to have some spectacular wines."

RayLen Vineyards has one of only 12 evaporators in the country. This equipment extracts the excess water from the wine, a definite advantage when making 2003's wines.

RayLen's wine list includes 2002 Chardonnay, Barrel-fermented Chardonnay, and Viognier white wines; 2002 Shiraz, Merlot and Pale Red. The winery has two blends—Yadkin Gold which is a blend of four white grapes: Viognier, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Riesling; and Carolinius Cabernet Blend of Merlot, Syrah,

Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Steve plans to double production every year, with a final capacity of 15-20,000 cases.

Tours give visitors a chance to understand the craft of winemaking. They get to see RayLen's cold fermentation tanks, aging rooms where wines are stored in French oak barrels, and the bottling room.

John Donnelly is tasting room manager. The tastings are offered at an attractive bar in the main reception area where RayLen wines and wine-related gifts are sold. Comfortable chairs and

tables complete the welcoming, relaxed atmosphere. Outdoors there are lovely picnic spots for sharing a glass of RayLen wine and a meal al fresco.

RayLen has lent its name to the RayLen Vineyards Collection of fine furniture. Pieces from the collection are on display at the winery. Also for sale are attractive furniture items made from recycled wine barrels.

RayLen Vineyards is open for tours and tastings six days a week, Mondays through Saturdays, 11 a.m.- 6 p.m. For more information, call 336-998-3100; web site: www.raylenvineyards.com.

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Good wine, good friends at Round Peak

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

LOWGAP — Two area couples, long-time friends, looked ahead toward retirement, and decided they'd like to trade their corporate, city life for wine country life. So they found a beautiful piece of land with a spectacular mountain backdrop, named it Round Peak Vineyards and began planting vines four years ago.

Already, owners Janet and Lee Martin and Susan and George Little are enjoying the satisfaction of making medal-winning wines from their 12 acres of grapevines. They will pour three wines at the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival: 2002 Sangiovese, Chardonnay and Merlot.

"We've had an interest in wines over the years," says Janet Martin. The four friends toured Napa Valley vineyards and wineries "and we were so taken with it." The search was on for a suitable piece of property. "George and Lee saw this land first, then brought Susan and me to see it. We thought it was a beautiful site for a vineyard," Janet recalls, "and our consultant, Stephen Lyons, agreed."

The Littles and Martins bought the 53 acres of hay fields in 1999 and have planted seven French and Italian varieties: Chardonnay, Nebbiolo, Merlot, Sangiovese, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Viognier. The vineyard is managed by Mark Golding.

"We've worked from the ground up. It has been challenging mentally



Round Peak's namesake mountain forms a picturesque backdrop for the vines in Lowgap.

and physically," Janet says, "but there's a real feeling of accomplishment."

The first grapes were harvested in 2002. "Harvesting is a big, fun time," Janet explains. "Our friends come up and we harvest the grapes and have a big lunch together." She and Susan also help with pruning and are back-up support for Lee and George. "They do the really heavy work."

Their first wines was released in 2003. The 2002 Chardonnay is barrel-fermented and tastes of crisp pear with a touch of tangerine; the 2002 Sangiovese has a spicy, peppery aroma with a cranberry flavor; the Merlot is classic with jammy blackberry and a silky finish. All

three of these wines won gold medals at the 2003 Dixie Classic Fair, and silver and bronze medals at the N.C. State Fair.

Round Peak plans to release this year the 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Nebbiolo, a dry rosé and a sweet rosé.

Round Peak Vineyards has an attractive tasting room open for visitors. Round Peak wines are available for purchase by the bottle or by the case, and native crafts are displayed for sale as well. The scenery outside makes the vineyard a perfect place for picnicking, too.

Susan is a classical musician and often has entertaining practice sessions with fellow musicians on the

porch of the tasting room. Round Peak has future plans to have events which feature traditional mountain music, like that of old-time fiddler Tommy Jarrell, a native of the nearby Toast community.

The tasting room was designed to have an adjoining winery, which Janet says will be built next year. The 5,000 square-foot winery will produce 2500-2700 cases of wine.

Round Peak Vineyard, 765 Round Peak Church Road, Mt. Airy, N.C., is open Thursdays through Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sundays noon to 5 p.m., or by appointment. For more information: 336-352-5595.

www.roundpeak.com.

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Chatham Hill featuring fruit wines

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

MORRISVILLE — Something special is coming from the Yadkin Valley by way of Wake County.

Chatham Hill Winery, located near Raleigh, will pour from its list of fruit wines at the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival. Blended with Sauvignon Blanc and Seyval Blanc, these sweet fruit wines come in four flavors: peach, blackberry, strawberry and blueberry.

"We are really emphasizing these fruit wines," says Paul Hensens, a co-owner and Director of Sales and Marketing. "We will also have our 2002 Merlot which is a step above last year's gold medal-winner. It has a rich, full-bodied character."

Chatham Hill, though located to the east, is part of the Yadkin Valley because so many of its wines are made from grapes grown in the appellation — wines like the 2000 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, and 2002 Chardonnay both of which won a gold medal at the Dixie Classic Fair and the N.C. State Fair last year.

The winery will pour those two wines as well as the 2002 Viognier, "our signature, or statement wine," Paul explains.

Begun in 1999, Chatham Hill is located in an industrial park near the Raleigh-Durham airport. "We don't grow our own grapes, but we closely follow the progress of the growers we buy from to make sure we get the grapes we want," says Marek Wojciechowski, Chatham Hill partner and winemaker. "Our mission is to make fine wines."

Marek will produce 5,000 cases of wine this year. Marek is a Research Triangle chemist with no formal training in wine-making. But then, winemaking is more than science. It is an art, he says, to create wine, "learning the effects of different blends and flavors along the way."

Marek's winemaking began in the family kitchen in Warsaw, Poland. Taking



Grapes from Black Wolf Vineyards are made into Chatham Hill wines.

grapes from his father's garden, Marek happily experimented with wine until a leaking container dripped through to the apartment below, staining the neighbor's belongings. Marek's winemaking efforts were abruptly grounded. Later, his Ph.D. in chemistry gave him the scientific background to begin Chatham Hill.

Paul notes that customers are now looking for wines with nice, rich complexity, but a smooth finish. "So we are aging our wines longer to soften the tannins," he says. "We age in barrels and tanks, as well as in the bottles."

To broaden Chatham Hill's customer base, Paul has recently signed with two North Carolina distributors who will place Chatham Hill's wines in restaurants and specialty shops and grocery stores across the state.

Twenty percent of Chatham Hill's sales are to its Wine Club members. Membership is free and benefits include a special offering of three wines each quarter, social gatherings which might feature barrel sampling of new wines, and mailings on new releases. Customers may join the Wine Club by filling out an application

on Chatham Hill's web site or at the winery.

Chatham Hill is open seven days a week. The new tasting room is now a generous 2,000 square feet. Brief tours of the winery conclude with a wine-tasting of as many as eight wines: four reds, four whites. There are wines to purchase, of course, and wine-related gifts.

Hours are Mondays to Fridays, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sundays, 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call 919-380-7135, or 800-808-6768. Web site: www.chathamhillwine.com.

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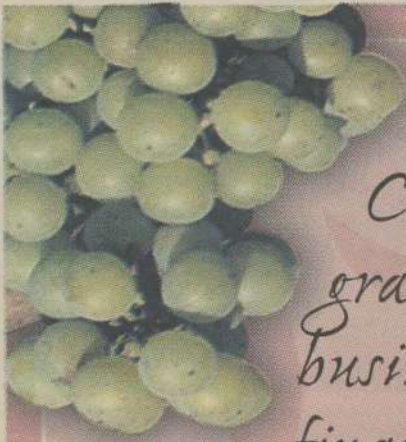
June 19th	Lee Greenwood Opening Act: The Mixed Emotions	\$30.00	6-9 pm
July 10th	General Johnson & The Chairmen of the Board	\$25.00	6-9 pm
August 7th	The Waller Family Proceeds Benefit the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society	\$25.00	6-9 pm
September 11th	The Band of OZ Proceeds Benefit the Children's Center of Surry County	\$25.00	5-8 pm
September 25th	The Embers	\$25.00	5-8 pm



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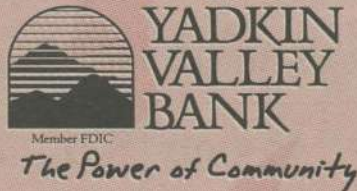


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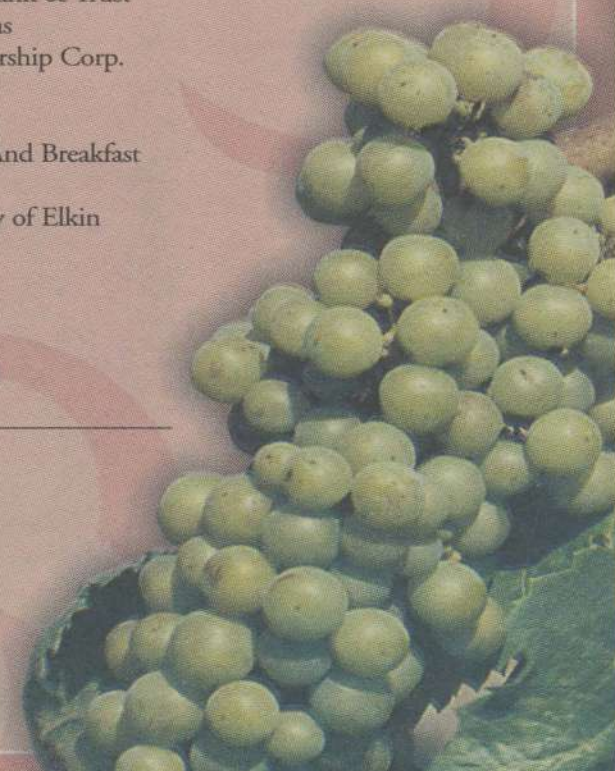
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Third Annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival Schedule of Events



Mixed Emotions

11:00 a.m.	Festival opens	Noon	Mixed Emotions
11:15 a.m.	Opening Remarks: Derrill Rice, Festival Chairman; Lestine Hutchens, Mayor Pro Tem of Elkin	2:00 p.m. 2:30 p.m. 3:00 p.m.	Grape Stomp Contest Sprint Long Distance Contest Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs
11:30 a.m.	Mel Jones and his Bag of Bones	5:50 p.m.	Closing remarks: Derrill Rice, chairma



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Laurel Gray's wines a hit from the start

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

HAMPTONVILLE — A pair of wines from young Laurel Gray Vineyards have certainly made enviable debuts. The 2002 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay and 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon won silver and gold medals, respectively, at the Mid-Atlantic Wine Competition last year.

Both these wines are ready to be tasted at the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival.

The Chardonnay is aged in neutral French oak and has flavors of pear, grapefruit and honey. The Cabernet Sauvignon is an unfinished French style with a smooth, chocolatey finish.

These wines are dramatic winners for owners Kim and Benny Myers. The Myerses are new to winemaking even though they are veteran farmers. In fact, Benny's family has farmed in the same area since 1773.

The couple realized they needed to adapt to changing agricultural uses and needs to keep the farming tradition going.

"We wanted our kids to have the option of continuing the farm and have a resource for living in the country, raising a family and making a decent living," says Kim. Laurel Gray is a combination of their two children's middle names.

Laurel Gray Vineyards is a small boutique wine producer with five acres of their former dairy farm planted in six varieties of grapes: Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Viognier, Syrah, Cabernet Franc



Laurel Gray's tasting room was once a dairy's milking parlor.

and Merlot.

Laurel Gray's wine list at the festival will also feature a 2003 Viognier and 2003 Scarlet Mountain, a semi-sweet red blend. "We've had a hole in our inventory with no sweet red and Scarlet Mountain will be our signature red blend," Kim explains. "It has a big cherry flavor from the Merlot, plus Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and two percent added sugar. It's for someone looking for something sweeter."

The great amounts of rain that fell on the Yadkin Valley last year dodged Laurel Gray. "We got 25

percent fewer inches than most of the other vineyards," Kim recalls. "And we have a lot of wind which dried the grapes. The tannins and sugar levels show good varietal characteristics."

Laurel Gray Vineyards will also offer a Syrah this summer.

The 1930s milking parlor was converted to a tasting room and opened in October. Inside is a gift shop with unusual hand-crafted items made by regional artists. Kim's mother makes sure that weekends offer a fresh selection of her homebaked cakes, pies and jellies as well as homemade sourdough

bread.

A side patio overlooking the pond and a comfortable front porch invite visitors to relax and enjoy the country life the Myers so love.

When the roses are in bloom, visitors can take a self-guided "Wine and Roses Tour." Laurel Gray has 70 tea roses planted in the vineyard, all with different colors and fragrances. Picnicking is encouraged. Laurel Gray Vineyards is open Thursdays, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Fridays, 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sundays, 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. For more information: 336-468-8463 (got vine) or www.laurelgray.com.

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Windy Gap keeps quality up, quantities down

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

CLINGMAN — Allen and Sandra Hinchler ensure high quality in every wine from their Windy Gap Vineyards by keeping the production limited. The boutique vineyard in eastern Wilkes County, though small by some standards, will process 30 tons of grapes this year into an extensive wine list. "We will harvest 22-23 tons of grapes from our seven acres," Allen says. "The rest of the grapes we plan to purchase."

Windy Gap will release its 2002 reds in early summer. "We are aging our reds two years before we release them," Allen explains. These will include unfiltered Cabernet Franc, Chambourcin, Merlot and two red blends: '02 Fat Basset, a sweet red, and '02 Tory Oak.

The Tory Oak is a Bordeaux-style blend of Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Locals will recognize the name as coming from Wilkes County's famous tree that stood at the Old Courthouse in Wilkesboro. A portion from each bottle's price will be donated to the Wilkes Heritage Museum, which is restoring the building.

The wine list for the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival will include 2001 Chambourcin, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and a Merlot-style Fat Basset; 2002 Viognier, and 2003 oaked Chardonnay.

The Hinchlers will also pour Frog Level Fling, a rosé; and their sweet white wine, Three Dog Night, a favorite which is a blend of Chardonal and Melody grapes. It is named for the family basset hounds.



Proprietor Allen Hinchler serves Karen Abernathy in the Windy Gap tasting room.

The label, designed by Elkin artist John Furches, pictures Buddy, Rita and Trouble howling around a campfire.

And if that isn't enough to satisfy your palate, they will have a homemade Sangria, made with Chardonal and fruit juices, which will be sold by the glass at the festival.

Windy Gap Vineyards has planted four types of premium grapes:


Cabernet Franc, Viognier, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. There are three French hybrids: Chambourcin, Chardonal and Melody.

The expanded tasting room at Windy Gap is half again as large as it used to be, so visitors can be easily accommodated at the tasting counter. The old tasting room is now a John Furches Art Gallery. Come browse John's examples of beautiful art after

a wine tasting. Stephanie Cooke is the new tasting room manager.


Visitors are encouraged to bring a picnic to enjoy on the deck with a bottle of Windy Gap wine. The Bassets might even keep you company.

Windy Gap is open Tuesdays through Saturdays 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Sundays noon - 5 p.m. For more information; 336-984-3926, www.windygapwine.com.



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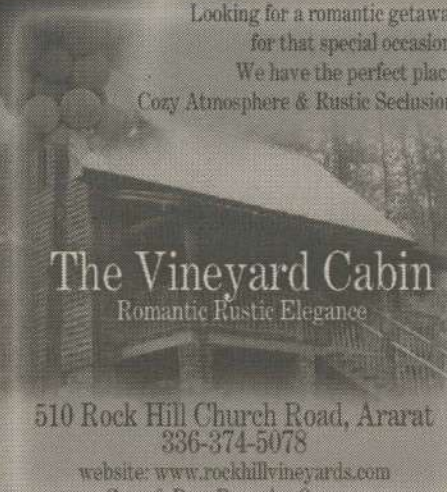


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Westbend pouring award-winning wines

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

LEWISVILLE —Among the wines Westbend Vineyards pours at the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival are two distinguished award-winners: 2002 Muscat Canelli and the 2002 Yadkin Fumé. The Muscat Canelli, a spicy and fruity white varietal, won a Double Gold and Best in Show/Winegrowers' Cup at the N.C. State Fair. The Fumé, a light, versatile dinner wine blending Seyval Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc, won a Double Gold at the Wines of the South competition and Gold at the Dixie Classic Fair.

These awards illustrate why Westbend Vineyards, the oldest vineyard in the Yadkin Valley, has been called "one of the best-kept wine secrets" by The Wine Advocate.

Tucked into the curving course of the Yadkin River, Westbend was begun in 1972 when Lillian and Jack Kroustalis ignored conventional opinions and planted their first vines. The Kroustalis trusted their judgment of the land's agricultural aspects and set a consistently high standard for all the vineyards that eventually followed. Westbend became a bonded winery in 1988 and released its first wines two years later.

David Morrison is winemaker at Westbend. He oversees 60 acres planted in 11 varieties and is responsible for Westbend's successful portfolio of wines.

"I'm very pleased at how the '03 wines are turning out, especially considering the weather," he says.



Westbend has been creating fine wines in the Yadkin Valley for 30 years.

"The reds are limited, though, because the harvest was down."

Besides the Yadkin Fumé and Muscat Canelli, David is particularly proud of Westbend's Viognier. A temperamental variety gaining in popularity, the Viognier vines demanded eight years of Westbend's patient cultivation before the wine could be produced. A specially-designed label was made for the delicate white wine vinted in the French style.

Westbend also has Barrel Fermented Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Chambourcin, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Two

blends offered are Carolina Cuvée, a red; and Carolina Blush.

Westbend produces Shallowford Cellars Table Wines. Each a creative blend of wines, the Rosé, Red and White Table wines of this label offer excellent value.

The label is named for the historic ford in the Yadkin at Westbend. This was the easiest spot for 18th century travelers to cross from Moravian settlements in Forsyth County to what was then part of Rowan County and is now Yadkin.

Saturday, June 19, Westbend will host Music in the Vineyard from 1-5 p.m. with Martha and the Mood-

swingers. Tickets are available at the gate.

Visitors are welcome at Westbend Vineyards. Tastings and wine sales are offered Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays 1-6 p.m. Tours of the winery are offered Saturdays at 1, 2:30 and 4 p.m., and Sundays at 2 and 3:30 p.m.

Tours at other times can be arranged by appointment. Westbend is located at 5394 Williams Road, Lewisville. For more information: 336-945-5032 or toll-free 1-877-901-5032; www.westbendvineyards.com; email: westbendvineyards@att.net.



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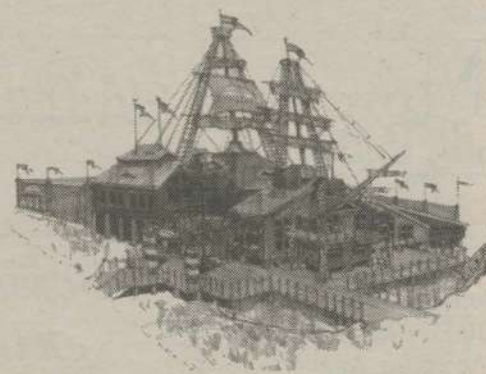
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Raffaldini is pouring its first wines

By Jeanette Driscoll
Editor, On the Vine

It was a good year, a very good year. The year 1348, that is.

It was then, in Mantua in the northern Italian province of Lombardy, that perhaps one of the finest secrets in wine was born, one seasoned through the ages and now springing forth for the first time in the Yadkin Valley.

Welcome to Raffaldini Vineyards, a scene right out of sunny Tuscany, where wine crafted with Old World methods is about to be poured for the first time from grapes grown on local soil. The combination of soil and the breezy climate provide a strikingly similar environment to grapes grown in central and southern Italy. Once-hilly pasture and woodland has been transformed into rolling vineyards — with a 180-degree panorama of the Blue Ridge Mountains — and the picturesque little Italian tasting room offers a true taste of Italy inside.

The first pouring of Raffaldini wines will take place at the 3rd Annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival in Elkin, North Carolina, on Saturday. The vineyard and tasting room will open to the public Sunday.

Splendor awaits you in every corner of the fields, with meditative fish ponds and gardens perfumed by central and southern Italian grapes, aromatic herbs — such as rosemary and lavender — and rhododendron and rose dells line the path from the parking lot to the tasting room. Drive or bicycle to Raffaldini, winding through beautiful backcountry roads, connecting four Yadkin Valley wineries (The Vineyards of Swan Creek Wine Trail—the first wine trail in our state).

The beauty lies not only in the landscape, but also inside the tasting room, which displays a gallery of paintings and sculpture collected by the Raffaldini family through the ages.

Stephen Lyons, the general manager and vice president of Raffaldini Vineyards, worked extensively in the industry before it came to “fruition” locally. In addition to being a partner in Raffaldini, his résumé includes working at Ravenswood of Sonoma Valley and also installing vineyards on George Lucas’ Skywalker Ranch in northern California.

Stephens’ wife Susan, Raffaldini’s director of marketing and tasting room manager, founded On The Vine, passing on the legacy as her growing



Stephen and Susan Lyons will toast you at Raffaldini.

Photo courtesy of Will & Deni McIntyre

responsibilities with Raffaldini became “all-consuming.”

“It’s been very exciting to be involved in projects in the wine industry and now be able to work together on our own project which expresses our love for the location, fine wines and for the Raffaldini Family,” she says.

Winemaker Stephen Rigby is “very much looking forward to working with this worthy team. Stephen and Susan bring many years of combined experience in this business to the effort and the Raffaldinis not only bring a sense of tradition, but also a vision and insight. I hope to be a positive component to the team, and working with grape varieties that, though they are traditional in some areas of the world (particularly in Italy), are totally unique and new to our part of the winemaking world. Also included in the vineyard

are some of the more ‘traditional’ international varieties that many of us have worked on for years that will allow the perennial challenge of developing these into better wines.”

The Raffaldinis are well acquainted with the process that goes hand in hand with crafting increasingly superior wines able to stand the test of time. The family had made the decision to share their centuries-old winemaking legacy after a painstaking search for the location that would reflect their heritage and hold the promise of making true Italian wines. Most of these wines are entirely new to the region, as well as the East Coast, and some are even new to the United States. The venture in itself is redolent of the family motto: “Audentes Fortuna Iuvat,” meaning “Fortune Favors the Daring.”

On their website you’ll learn how

Raffaldini Vineyard’s founding principles are “deeply rooted” in Virgil, the great Italian poet and philosopher whose home has been the Raffaldini’s Mantua farm for 700 years. It was Virgil’s belief that vineyards would only produce grapes of exceptional quality if one worked with the land, with a deep respect for the land, understanding its essence and sense of place, rather than seeking to change it. This “sense of place” was exactly what the family was searching for and found within the Yadkin Valley.

An Old Italian proverb rings true: “The land that the farmer rejects is the land that the vineyard accepts.” This “rejected” land holds the key to fine wine, with grape vines that struggle for survival and thrive on minerals unique to their vineyard.

The vineyard, meticulously sculpted by Stephen Lyons, possesses an “indescribable sense of totality and energy that only comes from a complete union of spirituality, energy, and historical legacy,” the tale continues.

Stephen and Susan smile like proud parents when they boast: “We are creating a destination through the beauty of this landscape. A lot of heart has been poured into the bottles, and our baby is about to be born! Our gift is good wine, good food and good family!”

There are plenty of nooks within the vineyard to retreat with a glass of wine, some crusty Italian bread and cheese and condiments, and just simply breathe in all the surrounding nature. You just might be tempted to pick a grape or two off a vine and taste a little Italy. What’s growing ahead are graceful Italian native plantings, striking Tuscan-style murals, Italian imported delights and, a few years down the road, an Italian villa style tasting room and restaurant overlooking the vineyard.

New releases about to burst forth are Chardonnay, Dolcetto, Bianco, Bella Misto, Rosato, and of course, the backbone wine of Chianti, Sangiovese.

Raffaldini is sharing wine production facilities, equipment, and winemaker Stephen Rigby with neighboring vineyard Buck Shoals utilizing an alternating winery permit, but each will create its own brand of wines. This distinctive arrangement has resulted in a perfect blend, giving the Swan Creek area of the Yadkin Valley two remarkable gifts in wine.

Teachers learn winemaking at Hanover Park

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

COURTNEY — What started as a wedding trip through the wine region of France eight years ago, has become a lifestyle for Amy and Michael Helton, owners of Hanover Park Vineyards.

Since 1997, when the pair of teachers planted their first vines, the couple has turned an old farm in Yadkin County's Courtney community into a successful vineyard and winery by learning and doing it themselves. While Michael has left teaching to become Hanover Park's full-time winemaker, Amy still juggles teaching duties with those of tasting room manager and special events coordinator at the vineyard.

Their first harvest, in 1998, was completed with the help of friends, students and their parents. This produced about 500 cases of wine. The 2002 vintage, still produced largely by themselves, yielded 2400 cases.

Hanover Park now has five and one-half acres of vinifera grapes planted on the 23-acre farm including a recent acre's planting of Viognier, Mourvedre, Chambourcin, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Cabernet Franc are some of the grapes the Heltons harvest from their own vines. They also buy the equivalent of nine or 10 acres of Merlot and Viognier grapes for blending.

Located in a notoriously dry county, Hanover Park has received encouragement and support from the community as the old farm has come back to life as a bonded winery. The Heltons sell their product and pour samples for visitors in the tasting room. And the nearby town of



Amy and Michael Helton with their dog, Cabernet, welcome you to Hanover Park Vineyards.

Yadkinville now allows wine sales at grocery stores. Hanover Park wines now show up on local retail shelves, as well as retail outlets and restaurants throughout the state.

The tasting room and winery are in the 100-year-old farmhouse on the property which the Heltons restored after decades of neglect. They've gone to the trouble of preserving the original feeling of the simple country homeplace.

When the flooring on the front

porch had to be replaced, Michael recycled the boards into shutters for the front of the house. The tasting countertop is a 17-in. wide board salvaged from a barn that was razed. Michael built the front of the bar from flooring elsewhere in the house.

Behind the bar, a shelf displays bottles of each Hanover Park wine, many medal-winners. Tastings may include Hanover Park's Barrel-Fermented Chardonnay which is aged in oak casks and an unoaked

Chardonnay which is aged in stainless steel tanks. There are also Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Rose and Chambourcin wines to taste, as well as the dessert wine called Early Twilight. Hanover Park's double-gold winning Viognier is also available.

Michael is most proud of his Bordeaux-style "Michael's Blend." He says, "This 2001 vintage is our number-one seller, with the classic three wines blended—Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot." It is a silver medal-winner but Michael likes to emphasize its popularity with his customers. "I'm really interested in what our customers enjoy drinking." Those are the judges Michael likes to listen to.

Hanover Park's expansion plans this year include a storage barn to hold all the winery's barrels and bottles, filled and unfilled. That will clear the winery's space for more wine production. Coming off a wet 2003, Michael's wines promise a fine vintage. "Some of my whites are spectacular. We had rains, but also cool evenings, which is really good for white wines," he says.

Visitors are encouraged to bring a picnic to enjoy under the shade trees. There are rocking chairs on the porch of the farm house. And the Heltons are never far away in case you want to learn more about what it takes to make a good wine.

Hanover Park Vineyards is open for tours and tastings Thursdays-Saturdays, 12 noon-6 p.m.; and Sundays, 1-5 p.m. It is a few minutes west of Westbend Vineyards and just a few north of RayLen Vineyards. 336-463-2875; www.hanoverparkwines.com.

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Unique education available at Surry CC

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

DOBSON — You love the idea, you've got the land, you've even got the time to develop your own vineyard, maybe even your own winery. Where's the know-how? Here, at Surry Community College's Viticulture and Enology Program, one of the few campuses on the East Coast offering such an education.

Begun in 1999 by Dr. Bob McRitchie, the professor of enology is proud of how far his program has come. Bob moved to the Yadkin Valley from Oregon where he had been a commercial winemaker for 20 years. And for the first few years, he taught classes in both grape-growing and winemaking.

Two years ago, Professor Gill Giese joined the program and took over instruction in viticulture. He has a Master's Degree in Horticulture and was manager of the experimental vineyard at the University of Arkansas.

Bob continues to teach the enology courses. He has a doctorate from Rice University and has a background in academics, having taught at Wake Forest University at one point. His son, Sean, is general manager of Shelton Vineyards.

The campus vineyard is planted in four acres of 15 varieties of grapes, such as chardonnay, viognier, sangiovese, cabernet sauvignon. Hybrids like chambourcin and cynthiana are also planted.

The Viticulture and Enology Program also has its own winery which has the capacity for 2500 gallons or 1200 cases of wine. The winery is housed in an existing campus building and can handle 20 tons of grapes. The winery includes offices, a reading room, laboratory and classroom space, a fermentation room, barrel room and crushing space.

Students made a 2002 vintage under a federal experimental project. This wine was produced as a teaching tool and was later destroyed. "The project did not allow us to make that wine for consumption," Bob says. "We now are a bonded winery and can produce and sell our wines wholesale."

SCC students who are in a wine marketing program will help sell the wine to restaurants, retail shops and to wine distributors. SCC cannot sell their wine directly to the consumer and will not have a tasting room.

The winemaking process gives the students experience in the entire process—from planting vines to marketing wines, so it is important for the students to have a viable product to offer for sale. "Hopefully, the revenue from the sale of our wines can be turned back into the program," says Bob. "The revenue has to happen. We cannot live on grants forever. The potential to continue on our wine revenue is very



Vance Marion, in charge of vineyard maintenance at SCC, and Dana Acker, a student in the program, prune the vines.

good."

Students will soon bottle the 2003 wines. SCC graphics students will design the wine label.

The coursework is part of SCC's continuing education program. Students have a choice of three levels of study. Students may choose from a Viticulture and Enology Technology Degree, Diploma or Certificate. A certificate can be earned in two semesters. "That's the bare bones," Bob says.

A one-year diploma program includes two semesters and a summer of work and study. The degree program includes four semesters and a summer.

Gill says 52 students are enrolled in curriculum classes. "They are self-motivated and represent a wide range of ages and backgrounds," he says. Several students are starting their own vineyards and planning to build their own wineries. Many already have college degrees and some have graduate degrees. Students drive from as far away as Statesville, Greensboro and southwest Virginia to attend classes. "I've got two students moving here this fall from New York state," Bob says. Having out-of-state students move to the area happens often.

"We are now seeing the leading edge of another type of student," Bob continues, "the people who are looking for employment in the wine industry." One is Dana Acker of Mount Airy. Dana was laid off from his textile job and hopes to get a job in a local winery. "The only industry going forward is this [wine] industry," he says. "This will allow me to stay in the area. And wine is a lot more fun than textiles!"

Job placement within the wine industry is becoming available to students. He says

he's already getting calls from wineries who are looking for trained employees. One member of the program's Class of 2004 will become the winemaker for Black Wolf Vineyard's new winery. Anne

Holcombe received her degree this week in Viticulture and Enology Technology.

For more information, call Bob McRitchie at 336-386-3408 or 386-3269.



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Old North State opens winery, tasting room

By **EVIE GOOD**
Special Correspondent

Old North State Winegrowers Cooperative has a new wine portfolio, Carolina Harvest, and a new winemaker, Chris Johnson — two major accomplishments for the three-year-old association. The licensed agricultural cooperative represents 38 vineyards from nine North Carolina counties, 34 from within the Yadkin Valley appellation.

Formed to give small vineyard owners a means of making their own grapes into wine, the co-op has its own label — Carolina Harvest. As a member of the co-op, a farmer will not have to sell his grape harvest or pay for expensive custom crushing by another winery.

By using the co-op winery, vineyard owners can participate in the total process.

The wines poured at the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival are Chardonnay, a full-bodied wine made 100 percent from the chardonnay grape; Spring House White, a semi-sweet white blend of Chardonnay, Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc; Sangiovese, a Chianti-style blend that includes Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chambourcin grapes; Prelude, a lighter red blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Chambourcin; and Autumn Leaf Red, a sweeter blend of Cabernet Franc, Sangiovese and Merlot.

"The Cabernet Franc is a stand-out," says Gray Draughn, general manager of the co-op. He describes the Chardonnay as "oaked" in French and American oak barrels.

These are all 2002 vintages, of which Old North State bottled 4,000 cases. Gray plans on 7,000 cases of the 2003 wines, which will include Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chambourcin and another red blend.

Winemaker Chris Johnson joined the co-op in March. He moved from



Patti Guffey and Sheri Fields serve Sherry Boyd a Carolina Harvest wine at Old North State's tasting room.

California where he was in the wine-making business for over 28 years. He's becoming acquainted with the grape-growers and beginning to make plans for the 2004 harvest. "A co-op is more complicated because the logistics have to be well-timed, Chris says. "Gray will be working with me to coordinate the growers. They are wonderful to work with also."

The winery is located in downtown Mount Airy. The tasting room's rich, oak paneling is accented by a granite tasting

counter made from Mount Airy granite. Tastings include Carolina Harvest's 2002 wines as well as the best-selling 2003 Starlight White, a sweet white blend with a light golden appearance and a juicy palate of honeysuckle.

Attractive wine barrel tables and bar stools offer comfortable seating. Customers can also browse the home accents and wine accessories offered for sale. Jennifer Brittan is retail sales manager.

The co-op and Carolina Harvest

Winery employs nine full- and part-time individuals. Eventually, 25-40 employees will be needed to produce an anticipated 15-20,000 cases of wine each year.

Tasting room hours at Old North State Winery are Mondays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sundays, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m. For more information: 336-789-WINE (9463); www.carolinaharvestwines.com or www.oldnorthstatewinegrowers.com.



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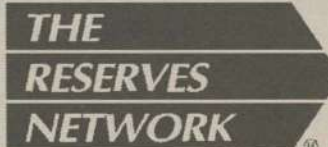
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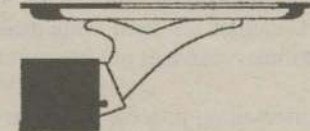
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Appellation is great marketing tool for the area

By Carrie Sidener
Staff Reporter

Yadkin Valley wines are starting to build a reputation for themselves.

Last year, wineries in the Yadkin Valley were granted the right to label their wines as coming from the Yadkin Valley, allowing buyers to better identify the qualities of wines from the region.

"It puts us on the map as far as being a cohesive industry," Patricia McRitchie, executive director of the Yadkin Valley Winegrowers Association, says. "It gives the wineries something to work toward to create an identity for the region. The wines have a specific style and quality in this region."

In January 2001, McRitchie, on behalf of Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, petitioned the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to establish the Yadkin Valley as a viticultural region.

She received notice of the application's approval December 2002 and wineries have been able to label their product as coming from the Yadkin Valley since February 2003.

The use of appellation, or name for a wine-producing region, is strictly controlled by the ATF.

The Yadkin Valley American Viticultural Area is the first in North Carolina and 146th in the nation, most of which are clustered in California, the Pacific Northwest and New York.

Once the petition was submitted to ATF, it had to be open for review and comment for 60 days before an internal review was performed. The process generally takes two years to complete.

"We have had a positive reaction from business people that think that this will have a positive influence," McRitchie said. "We have had a lot of positive input from people, not just congratulatory but thankful that we have it."

The original proposal encompassed all of Surry, Yadkin and Wilkes counties and parts of Stokes, Forsyth and Davie counties but was changed when some of the vineyards on

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6. RagApple Lassie	12. Raffaldini

Map by Kim Myers, Laurel Gray Vineyards

the southern side of the Yadkin River asked to be included in the appellation.

The AVA now includes all of Surry, Yadkin and Wilkes counties, as well as parts of Stokes, Forsyth, Davidson and Davie counties.

Beginning with the 2002 vintages, wineries in the area have been bottling their wines under the Yadkin Valley label.

"The winemakers really seem to be excited," McRitchie said. "There has been a lot of support. We haven't had anyone that is not pleased or that hasn't wanted to have the Yadkin Valley on the label."

The Yadkin Valley, located in northwest-

ern North Carolina, encompasses over 1.4 million acres. There are currently nine wineries and over 500 acres devoted to vineyards in the region.

"I think this will help us solidify this area as a provider of good vinifera wines," McRitchie said. "I don't know how to search for the words. We are so relieved to get this."

The labeling allows the consumer to know what distinct region the wine comes from. McRitchie said the designation is good news for both the grower and the consumer.

"It gives the grower a better voice and helps the consumer know what they are buy-

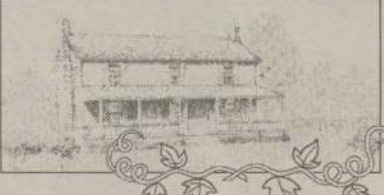
ing," she said. "It gives the area an identity — distinct and defining. It gives them a way to distinguish themselves."

Ed and Charlie Shelton, owners of Shelton Vineyards, are also thrilled with the approval of the AVA.

"The Yadkin Valley is unique in climate and soil," Charlie Shelton said. "We think the wines produced from grapes grown in the Yadkin Valley are distinctive and being able to put Yadkin Valley on our labels will help the consumer better identify the wines they purchase."

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Wine festival draws thousands

Wine lovers flock to Yadkin Valley event



Blair Harrison/The Mount Airy News
Gretta Price, left, and Ann Boiter look over the agenda for the festival as Price's friend and Ann's sister, Jean Boiter, buys tickets for the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival Saturday morning.

By **BLAIR HARRISON**
Staff Writer

ELKIN — Folks from Surry County and other parts of the United States came out to attend the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival at Elkin's Municipal Park on Saturday.

"This is my first time coming to the festival and so far I am having a great time," said Virginia Lawson of Stokes County.

Crissy Branch, special events coordinator of the festival and a member of the Yadkin Valley Chamber of Commerce, said that 12 wineries from the Yadkin Valley Appellation Wineries attended the festival. There were more than 30 vendors and three bands — Mel Jones and His Bag of Bones, Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs and Mixed Emotions — as well.

And the festival was well received.

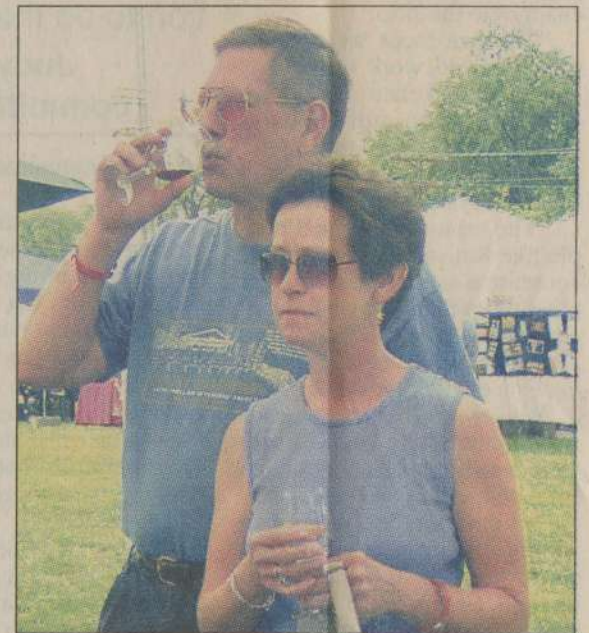
"This was our third time coming to

the festival, and we enjoy them every year. The Hanover Park wine of Yadkinville was very good," said Sue Rowe of Winston-Salem, who was at the festival with her husband, Bob.

"This was our first Yadkin Valley Wine Festival and our first time to be in Elkin. I love the Shelton Vineyard wine and the vineyard was gorgeous when we went up to visit it. I think Elkin is darling, but they need a B&B for people to be able to stay here," said Ceanna Crane of Athens, Ga. She was there with her husband, Baxter Crane.

"We have never been to the festival and we were very pleased with it and enjoyed it. I did not realize that there were so many booths here," said Elaine Nelson of Davidson County, who was there with her husband, Steve.

Branch said that there were more than 7,000 people who attended the festival this year.



Blair Harrison/The Mount Airy News
Bob and Sue Rowe taste wines from Hanover Park Vineyard at the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival Saturday morning.

The Mount Airy News

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May 25, 2004

50 cents

Board hears budget requests

By MARIA BEAUDOIN
Staff Writer

DOBSON— Surry County commissioners reviewed budget requests and heard from department heads in their first budget workshop on Monday night.

Five departments — including the sheriff's office, the library, the Department of Social Services, the Health and Nutrition Center and Surry County Emergency Services — presented their proposed budgets and offered justification for their requests.

Sheriff Connie Watson asked for eight more officers since there are currently only five officers available for each shift to cover the entire county. With more personnel, there could be seven officers on each shift.

"We're not covering the area as well as we should," Watson told commissioners.

Watson said that deputies are only able to handle responding to calls, and cannot perform routine checks on busi-

nesses as they would like.

Overall, Watson said that personnel expenses, which also included a 2 percent cost of living increase, rose \$75,000 from the previous year.

Other major requests included 11 new vehicles, increased gas costs and small equipment needs, like blue lights and radios.

"We are hurtin'," Watson said. "Since we have had the budget crunch, we have cut every corner known to man to make it work."

John Hedrick, of the Northwestern Regional Library system, told commissioners that fixed costs increased so dramatically this year, that if budget requests were not met, the system would have to consider closing operations at the libraries in Dobson and Lowgap.

"We are not going to continue to operate the way we have been," Hedrick said.

Overall, the library requested an increase of \$26,856 for a total of

\$344,765.

Hedrick cited drastic reductions in the book budget in previous years, a 20 percent increase in group insurance, a cost of living increase in salaries and a new requirement to pay rent to the town of Elkin as the major factors influencing the increase in budget requests this year.

Wayne Black, director of the Department of Social Services, requested

See BOARD, page 2

Sixth graders walk/run for their lives



The first group of runners of the day head up the hill in Fisher River Park for the "2.4k Walk/Run for Your Life," held by Surry County Schools. Almost 500 sixth grade students from the four Surry County middle schools participated in Monday morning's activities. Students rotated to stations that had "ice breaker" activities, group pictures, a health expo, a face painting booth, a getting to know each other booth, and, of course, the 2.4 kilometer trail.

Geni Funk/The Mount Airy News



Agriculture changing in Surry County

Tobacco decreasing; poultry, grapes on the rise in county

By GENESIS FUNK
Staff Writer

DOBSON — Like the rest of the nation, the face of agriculture in Surry County has changed dramatically over the past few decades.

Not too long ago, farms were much smaller and only produced one crop or commodity. Then, farming was done by the family and products were generally sold or traded locally, or at best regionally. As most people know, the biggest crop in Surry County, and most of North Carolina, was tobacco.

Now, farms are run more like businesses, said Brian Cave, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension agent in the Cooperative Extension Office in Dobson. They are larger than before and their products are shipped not only across the nation, but across the world.

"Because of the tobacco quota cuts going on now, farmers are taking a cut in their pay. Also, the mad cow disease outbreak in Washington is hurting the beef prices," he said. "Tobacco is no longer the largest crop grown here; it's poultry now."

"Also, while grapes are new, lots of people are really interested in them. As far as acreage in production, Surry is the largest in the state. It's still a growing industry here," Cave added.

While farming isn't as reliable as it once was, it is still a

"The average age of the farmers in Surry County is 56 or 57. There aren't a lot of young people coming into agriculture, because not many want to make the commitment to farms. Land values have sky rocketed so it's that much harder for young guys to get started."

Brian Cave,
extension agent

dependable means of making a living.

"It's not as much as it was historically. Historically, tobacco was what you relied on to bring in the money, but now farmers have lost 63 percent of the amount of tobacco that they could grow. If you think about it, that means that can only bring in 37 percent of what they could 20 years ago," said Cave.

"To survive now, farmers have to be more flexible, grow

See CHANGING, page 2

House budget-writers slash More at Four funding in half

RALEIGH (AP) — House budget-writers will propose ex-

The subcommittee will present its findings Tuesday to the

MAN 5/25/04

Festival will spotlight area's growing wine community

By **REBEL GOOD**
Special to Simple Pleasures

ELKIN — Organizers are looking for more than just corks popping at the third annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival on May 15 at Elkin Municipal Park.

The first two festivals were strong successes despite uncooperative weather and the Elkin Jonesville Chamber of Commerce, the festival's sponsor, is expecting a dramatic increase in attendance.

"When you couple the fine reputation we have built at the first two festivals with a near doubling of the participating vineyards and wineries, we could really see attendance 'pop,'" said Derrill Rice, the festival's chairman.

Rice expects at least 12 wineries and vineyards to be sampling and selling their vintages, compared to eight at the first two festivals. Newcomers are Laurel Gray, Raffaldini, Round Peak and Carolina Harvest. They join Shelton, RayLen, Westbend, RagApple Lassie, Windy Gap, Hanover Park, Black Wolf and Chatham Hill.

All but the last are located within the new Yadkin Valley Appellation. Festival

rules stipulate that all wines poured must be made from at least 75 percent grapes grown within the appellation.

The added vineyards have necessitated a complete revamping of the festival site. "We started planning for this year's festival as soon as we finished last year's," Rice said. "We had an engineer draw up various site plans so we could study the dynamics of crowd flow depending upon where we located vendors, wineries and food outlets."

The shift will allow a greater area for music lovers partaking of the tunes of Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs and Mixed Emotions, this year's acts.

The vendor area will be between rows of vine-

yard tents. Vendors will include an eclectic and upscale mix offering such items as gourmet cheeses, specialty silverwork and imported glassware.

There will be two entrances to the festival to ease any bottlenecks. While a good deal of parking will be available adjacent to the festival, plenty is available in downtown Elkin with a shuttle bus ferrying attendees.

Entrance to the festival is free, but there is a \$15 admission (\$10 in advance) for the winetasting. Tasters will be issued a commemorative glass, identifying wristband and site map. The festival opens at 11 a.m. and closes at 6 p.m. Tickets may be ordered in advance at www.yvwf.com or by calling the Chamber office at (336) 526-1111.

The festival is one of sever-

al activities in the community for the weekend. On Friday evening, May 14, the Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital Foundation will host its second annual Yadkin Valley Wine Auction. Among the items that will be knocked down are a California wine country cruise and bottles of the best wines of the Yadkin Valley vintners.

Details are available from Jeannette Hendrick, the foundation's executive director, at 336-527-7000.

The morning of the festival the Surry County Red Cross will sponsor a bicycle ride that will wind itself through the Yadkin Valley wine country, passing several vineyards. The ride will finish at the festival.

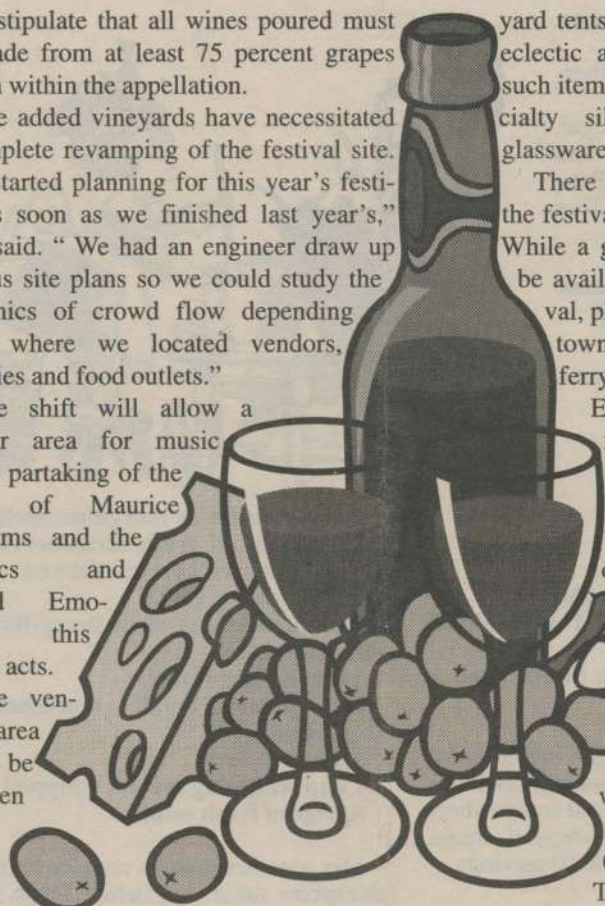
Cyclists wishing to participate should contact Hattie Brintle at (336) 786-4413.

Following the festival the Foothills Arts Council will sponsor its second Wine Down party at the council's headquarters on Church Street near the festival site. Details available at (336) 835-2025.

"We are looking to turn the Yadkin Val-

See WINE

Continued on page 17



Hospital Foundation - Chamber to host second annual Yadkin Valley wine auction

ELKIN — Joining in the newfound wine culture of our region, the Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital Foundation has partnered with the Elkin-Jonesville Chamber of Commerce to host the second annual Yadkin Valley wine auction, featuring a draw down for a trip-for-two to a destination to be announced.

Set for the eve of the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival on May 14th, the auction will be held at the newly renovated and refurbished Holiday Inn grand ballroom. The wine auction is a project that will advance healthcare in our community through an event that promises to be an evening to remember!

The wine auction will benefit the Foundation's 2004 campaign to expand and upgrade the hospital's surgery department, an \$8.4 million project which will double the hospital's capacity for surgery and bring all new state-of-the-art surgical equipment. These upgrades will ensure that Hugh Chatham remains in the forefront of health care and offers the region's best surgical services available, keeping our patients in close proximity to their homes.

Among the auction items to be offered at the event will be regional wines, rare wines, trips, jewelry, original art, furniture, clothing, fine dining, decorator items and many other savory gifts. Sure to become one of our community's finest annual affairs, you will not want to miss the opportunity to join in the excitement and contribute to the advancement of your community's healthcare.

Tickets are available at HCMH, 180 Parkwood Drive, Elkin, (336) 527-7094; and at Song's Treasures, 109 West Main Street, Elkin, (336) 835-7743. For ticket or other information about the event, contact Foundation Director Jeannette Hendrick at (336) 527-7457.

Wine

Continued from page 16

ley Wine Festival into a multi-day event," Rice said. "In future years we envision Elkin and the Yadkin Valley becoming a tourist destination where wine lovers can take vineyard tours, stay at local hotels and bed-and-breakfasts and enjoy a fantastic

festival."

The festival site is located close to downtown Elkin. Take Exit 82 off of I-77 and follow the signs.

Vineyards announce events

DOBSON — The Yadkin Valley, North Carolina's first American Viticultural Area (AVA), promotes wine through events at each of its wineries.

The Yadkin Valley encompasses 1,416,000 acres and includes all of Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties, and portions of Stokes, Davie, Davidson and Forsyth counties.

There are currently six wineries and more than 400 acres devoted to vineyards in the Yadkin Valley. Several more wineries are planned or are currently being constructed in the area. In addition, Surry Community College has the only degree viticulture and enology program on the East Coast.

All Yadkin Valley Wineries are participating in the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival on May 15.

Shelton Vineyards is located near Dobson. The 383-acre estate has nearly 200 acres of pre-

mium vinifera grapes and offers daily tours and tastings at its winery and cheese shop.

Shelton Vineyards has been open to the public since 2000 and its first estate wines were bottled in 2001.

Events being held this year include:

■ May 15: Yadkin Valley Wine Festival from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Elkin, N.C.

■ June 12: North Carolina Wine Festival from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Tanglewood Park in Winston-Salem.

■ Oct. 9-10: Great Grapes! Music and Wine Festival on Saturday from 12 p.m.-9 p.m., and Sunday from 12 p.m.-6 p.m. in Charlotte.

For more information, contact Patricia McRitchie at 336-366-4724 or by e-mail at www.sheltonvineyards.com.

Also, The Wolf's Lair Restaurant at Black Wolf Vineyards in Dobson is pleased to

announce live music (folk, jazz, blues) every Friday and Saturday night, starting at 7 p.m. Please call for information regarding musicians.

Events at The Wolf's Lair include:

■ Thursday Night Wine Special — All wines in the dining room are 1/2 normal price.

■ May 15: The Wolf's Lair Restaurant will be closed so we may participate in the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival in Elkin. See you there!

■ Sept. 18: Grape Jam at the Wolf's Lair — wine, music, crafts, a great day at the vineyard. Mark your calendar now and check back this summer for details.

Raylen Vineyards is one of Yadkin Valley Wines located at 322 Brix Lane in Mocksville.

Here are some upcoming events for Raylen Vineyards:

■ Yadkin Valley Wine Festival on May 15, in Elkin.

4/21/04 MAN

Wine weekend to be held with Yadkin Valley Wine Festival

DOBSON — Surry Community College, the Pilot Mountain Visitors Center and the Elkin-Jonesville, Greater Mount Airy and Yadkin County chambers of commerce are sponsoring "Yadkin Valley Wine Weekend — a Wine, Vine and Dine Experience" May 14-16.

The Yadkin Valley Wine Weekend, scheduled to coincide with the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival to be held on May 15, will give participants an opportunity to experience local culture while enjoying the festival. Participants will lodge in area bed & breakfast establishments, dine in local restaurants and enjoy the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival. Additionally, they will learn about various wines during a wine appreciation seminar and will tour local vineyards and wineries.

One dinner and the wine appreciation seminar will be at the Wolf's Lair Restaurant at Black Wolf Vineyard in Dobson, and another dinner will be at the Old North State Winery in Mount Airy.

The vineyard tour will include Shelton Vine-

yards, Hanover Park Vineyards, RagApple Lassie Vineyards and Old North State Winery. Lodging will be available in Mount Airy establishments including Andy Griffith's Homeplace, Maxwell House Bed and Breakfast, Mayberry Bed and Breakfast and Thomas House Bed and Breakfast; in Pilot Mountain establishments including Dr. Flippin's Bed and Breakfast, Scenic Overlook Bed and Breakfast and Pilot Knob Inn Bed and Breakfast; and in Dobson at Rockford Inn Bed and Breakfast.

Reservations for the Yadkin Valley Wine Weekend are required by May 1 and can be made by calling Surry Community College at 386-3244. The registration fee of \$130 includes two dinners, one lunch, a wine appreciation seminar, admission to the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival and tours of local vineyards and wineries.

More information can be found at www.surry.edu (Click on Continuing Education; then click on Wine Weekend).



Raylen Vineyards in Mocksville grows "Syrah" grapes, known for their spicy, peppery qualities. Call (336) 998-3100 or visit www.raylenvineyards.com.

Grapes Galore in North Carolina

Wineries and festivals throughout the state offer excursion options

By Tara Verna

The number of wineries across North Carolina has more than tripled over the past 10 years, with half a dozen new ones scheduled to open in 2004, bringing the total to 36. Why the sudden boom?

Well, thanks to fertile farmland and a mild climate, grapes have always grown well in this state. In recent years, farmers have been looking for alternatives to traditional crops, such as tobacco. And demand—\$30 million in state-produced wine sales and \$2.9 million in grape sales in 2002—has attracted others to the industry. Not to mention the 1 million tourists who visit N.C. wineries and vineyards annually.

"We may not be Napa or Sonoma Valley, but North Carolina has a strong potential to become a popular destination for wine lovers. You can pretty easily visit more than a dozen wineries in a long weekend," says Bob Hodge, webmaster of the Yadkin Valley Wine Trail™ (visit www.yvwt.com) and the North Carolina Winery Locator (www.ncwine.com).

Because they are located in relatively rural parts of the state, many wineries and vineyards are served by North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives.

Visit a Winery

Most wineries offer tours of their facilities and samplings of their wines

which range from free to \$5 and often include a souvenir glass (this fee is waived if you purchase wine). Many allow you to bring a picnic or purchase food on the premises to accompany your wine. The rural setting of most wineries and the fact that many grow at least some of their own grapes affords a picturesque setting appreciated by nature and wine lovers alike.

In addition to tours, tastings and wine sales, wineries offer all sorts of seasonal activities, some of which require extra fees. At RagApple Lassie Vineyards in Boonville, you can plant a vine in their vineyard, make a grapevine wreath, and go on a hot air balloon ride. Laurel Gray Vineyards in Hamptonville grows dozens of varieties of tea roses. Both Laurel Gray and West Bend Vineyards in Lewisville offer hayrides. Quite a few, such as Shelton Vineyards near Mount Airy, feature live outdoor music during the summer, plus Shelton makes its own cheeses. And others, like Silver Coast Winery near Ocean Isle Beach, hold themed festivals including the "Blue Grass Festival," "Purple Feet Festival," "Oktoberfest," and "Festa Italia." Be sure to call and confirm hours, events, fees and directions before you go.

Many of the wineries are still small enough to offer perks you might not find at bigger, more commercialized facilities.

You'll often be able to converse with owners, managers and other people directly involved in the grape growing or wine making process.

It's this uniqueness and diversity that Janet Martin, owner/manager of Round Peak Vineyards in Mount Airy, encourages people to discover for themselves. "All of the wineries are so different. They really reflect the personalities of their owners and the local area."

Follow the Yadkin Valley Wine Trail

There are 10 operating wineries and vineyards along the Yadkin Valley Wine Trail™, located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. In 2003, this region earned the federal designation of Yadkin Valley Viticultural Area in recognition of its unique features, ideally suited to growing high-quality grapes with the potential to produce world-class wines. The region is within an easy drive of Winston-Salem, Greensboro and Charlotte.

Pick your own

There are also 250 vineyards in the state. Vineyards produce grapes while wineries produce wine from grapes, some of which they may grow in their own

vineyards. Some vineyards offer pick-your-own options at grape harvest time in September and October. Thirty-six vineyards in North Carolina grow our nation's first cultivated wine grape—the scuppernong. These bronze-colored native muscadine grapes were first discovered in the Cape Fear River Valley in 1524. The scuppernong is North Carolina's state fruit. Purple or black varieties are simply referred to as muscadines.

After picking your own scuppernongs, you can turn them into juice, jelly, butter, ice cream, pies and more. Or savor the juicy grapes raw, using the proper technique. Visit www.ncwine.org/recipe.htm for recipes and to learn how to eat a scuppernong.

Frequent festivals

If you'd rather go to one place and taste-test the offerings of a number of different wineries, a festival may be the ticket. Some festivals charge a fee up front, while others, like the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival, cater to families by offering free admission and only charging for wine tasting. You'll find all sorts of fun at wine festivals including children's activities like face painting, live music, food, car shows, arts, crafts and more. Visit www.carolinacountry.com for a listing of festivals around the state.

To learn more

There's nothing like a hands-on visit to a winery or festival, but it may mean more if you brush up on the history of grape growing and wine making in North Carolina. Pick up "A Guide to North Carolina's Wineries" by Joseph Mills and Danielle Tarmey. The book features historical and wine making information, plus tours of 22 wineries by region to help narrow your options. Call

(800) 222-9796 or visit www.blairpub.com.

The majority of wineries have their own Web sites. Visit www.ncwine.com for links to and details on state wineries. The site www.yvwt.com provides information on wineries located in the Yadkin Valley Wine Trail™. Also, www.ncwine.org is the N.C. Department of Agriculture's site that covers a variety of topics including history, recipes, statistics, starting a winery and more. Find additional links and photos at www.carolinacountry.com.

The vineyards at Shelton Vineyards in Dobson. www.sheltonvineyards.com

Gary Maxey, dressed as "Bacchus" the Roman god of wine, samples wines at the 2003 Yadkin Valley Wine Festival. (Photo by Bob Hodge)

North Carolina's oldest winery, Duplin Winery, grows muscadine grapes known as "scuppernongs" in addition to others.



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Like Fine Wine

Charlie and Ed Shelton, united in business if not politics, built careers on principles that have stood the test of time

ONE prefers the beach, the other favors the mountains. One's a Republican, the other's a Democrat. One was prematurely gray before he reached middle age. The other's hair remains predominantly black, belying his status as a senior citizen.

Charlie Shelton's the silver-haired beachcomber who was campaign finance chair in Gov. Jim Martin's successful reelection bid in 1988. Four years later, Ed Shelton, a reformed golfer with a fondness for Banner Elk, was likewise successful for Gov. Jim Hunt.

BY KEVIN BRAFFORD

Truthfully, the Shelton brothers require no introduction in these pages. Anyone who's conducted business in North Carolina for any length of time is aware of their decades of accomplishments. Their story is the stuff of which dreams are made and books are written.

The book came along in 1994, a few years after the brothers moved the corporate offices of The Shelton Companies from Winston-Salem to Charlotte. *Work-*

ing Together: The Sheltons of North Carolina detailed their rise to prominence from modest means growing up in Surry County.

But while Howard Covington and Marion Ellis' entertaining read ended at 188 pages, the final chapters of the Shelton brothers' life in business are still being written. They sold Shelco Inc., their general contracting firm, to a group of the company's senior managers last Oct. 1, but still have their hands in a number of business ventures. Foremost is their highly regarded winery, Shelton Vine-

Chief Justice I. Beverly Lake Jr. has appointed a Task Force on the Future of the North Carolina Business Court, headed by Martin, that will make recommendations to Lake and the General Assembly.

While the discussions will run through this year, it is expected that the commission will recommend additional business courts, probably in Charlotte and Raleigh. In addition, the commission will discuss whether the court's jurisdiction should be expanded to include technology cases and whether the court should utilize alternative dispute resolution (such as arbitration or mediation) as a means to encourage settlement of disputes.

More Cases, Fewer Trials

Only about 12 percent of the cases filed in N.C. Superior Civil Court during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2003, were settled by judges or juries. More than half of the 26,030 cases filed were voluntarily dismissed. In 1995, about 16 percent were settled by judges and juries.

"Cases are settling — whether through mandatory mediation (which is required in all Superior Court cases), or through discussions between and among the parties," says attorney Joe Nanney of Wyrick Robbins Yates & Ponton. "The American justice system may be working because the threat of a trial forces parties to deal with each other."

Nanney says he's unsure of the societal implications but the trend seems to be that more and more cases are being resolved prior to trial. "Whether this is because of fear of the system, or costs of trial, I don't know. It's likely a combination of the two," he says.

There were 826 jury trials in Superior Court in 1995 compared to just 481 in fiscal year 2003. Also, in fiscal year 2003, there were 17 counties that saw no jury trials in Superior Civil Court at all. Another 16 counties saw only one jury trial. This is despite there being 5,637 more cases filed in 2003 than in 1995 — another trend that has seen the number of cases filed rise by an average of 400 cases over each of the past five years.

John Kennedy, director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, says that's likely to be a case of an increase in population and the amount of business being done in the state. "With the technology boom, especially the Research Triangle area, there is more business being done in North Carolina," Kennedy says.

There has also been an increase in the

number of cases disposed of by the clerk — 1,120 in 1995 versus 2,545 in 2003. This is an indication, Kennedy says, that in a down economy a lot of people are being sued who "don't have anything."

There also has been an increase in the number of cases being discontinued because officials can't find the defendant — from 180 in 1995 to 1,650 in 2003. It's anybody's guess what that increase means — theories range from people hiding from the law better to clerks and court

administrators pushing harder to get cases off court dockets.

Lastly, judges today seem more likely to throw out a case or make a judgment before it goes to trial. "Judgments without trial" rose from 2,504 in 1995 to 3,499 in 2003. Some of that difference may be simply due to more cases being filed but it appears that it also could be a reflection that there are more frivolous cases being filed (and thrown out) or that judges are more apt to consider a case frivolous. **NC**

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yards, founded in 1999 on 200 lush acres near Dobson.

"We stay as busy as ever," says Charlie, who at 68 is five years older than his brother. "Ed and I are constantly on the lookout for opportunities that suit us. We're far from being done."

THE Shelton family was entrenched in Surry County long before Charlie's birth on Mother's Day in 1935. Generations of Sheltons and Badgetts — the brothers' mother was the former Bertha Badgett — had farmed the rolling hills. After Reid and Bertha Shelton married, Matt Shelton gave his son an adjacent lot.

Reid Shelton was a barber at a shop just three doors down from the Snappy Lunch, which would become famous decades later as the inspiration behind the Mayberry Diner on the Andy Griffith Show. On several occasions, in fact, Reid cut the hair of a teenaged Andy Griffith.

Working Together notes how excited Charlie was when Ed was born in the summer of 1940. "When they came home and told me I had a brother," he says in the book, "I said, 'I am so tickled about that that I could rub my hands off.'"

Charlie and Ed grew up working on their grandparents' family farm. It was about a three-mile walk down a dirt road, but Charlie was known for finding shortcuts by cutting through Stewart's Creek. "I was making 25 cents a day when I was eight or nine years old," he says. "I got up to making 10 cents an hour when I was around 12, and that was big-time money. If you made \$50 in the summer working in tobacco, you'd had a good summer."

After several weeks of feeling weak and listless and having little appetite, Ed was diagnosed with ulcerated colitis in the summer of 1951. A rare condition in children, the illness kept him in the hospital for three weeks and housebound beyond that. He slowly regained his strength and by the following summer was earning his keep in the tobacco fields.

"The one thing you learned was that working in tobacco all of your life was not going to be an easy life," Ed says. "It certainly helped with your motivation. Our parents helped, too. Our dad instilled in us a work ethic that helped shape us. He said that if you wanted to own a big car, work hard enough to make the money to buy it. He didn't have any jealousy in his body for anybody."

Charlie was influenced by another fac-

tor — the lingering effects of the Depression. "Our mother had 10 brothers and sisters in her family and they all lived close by, except for one, in Surry County," he says. "Daddy's brother lived next door to us, and our grandparents were close by. When they'd get together, you'd feel the negative feelings a lot of them had toward things. It caused me to want to see what was on the other side of the hill — I didn't want to believe that the world was as bad as it was being made out to be."

At age 12, Charlie planted his first "cash crop," a field of cabbage. Three years later, he planted three acres of tobacco. He graduated from Franklin School — it was directly across the street from their house — and "my dad told me I needed to go to college. We decided I'd go to N.C. State and study textile engineering."

The events of that summer changed his mind. Reid Shelton got his oldest son a job at the Mount Airy Knitting Mill. "I pushed cloth boxes in the mill the whole summer," Charlie recalls.

"The windows were painted blue and I couldn't see the sun. I decided right then and there that I didn't want to be in textiles in any way."

Charlie drove to Raleigh and got his deposit back from N.C. State. "I told my daddy that if he'd lend me \$5,000, which is what it was going to cost to go to school, that I'd build myself a house — I already owned a little tract of land. Our grandfather had been a builder, and I really liked working with my hands."

He went into business for himself for the first time when he and a former classmate, Dee Meadows, started Blue Ridge Enterprises in the fall of 1958. They built a makeshift office on the side porch of the Shelton's home, and Charlie's mom chipped in as time allowed, handling the two-way radio calls from the various job sites.

LIKE Charlie, college wasn't for Ed. He attended Lees-McRae for a semester, then moved with a close friend, Tommy Hennis, to South Florida in search of fame and fortune. They didn't find fortune in the few months they were there, but Ed had brief touches with fame when he would pick up singer Perry Como at the West Palm Beach airport in Como's car and drive him home.

Back in Surry County, Charlie encouraged Ed to study for his real estate broker's license. But there was a small

roadblock — Ed was only 20 and the licensing board required him to be 21. So Charlie wrote a letter attesting to a personal bond until his younger brother came of age, and the board agreed.

Ed doesn't profess to be great in remembering dates, but he well remembers Aug. 1, 1962. That was the night a friend set him up with Dotti McLaurine, a striking 22-year-old who worked in the business office at Baptist Hospital. "He was so cute," Dotti says in *Working Together*. "He had a crooked little smile. I knew that I wanted to marry him (she didn't share those sentiments that night) and I knew we would get married. He was very ambitious. He told me he wanted to be a millionaire before he was 25."

They were married 10 weeks later and honeymooned for four days near Asheville before Ed went back to work. That December, he and Charlie went in business together for the first time, forming Fortis Enterprises. The name was Dotti's idea; she had studied Latin in high school and remembered that "fortis" meant strength. Charlie and Ed built houses one at a time as money allowed, and they begged and borrowed and gradually made a success of the company.

"My wife kept the books for the first year," says Ed. "We had a little basement office near Baptist Hospital. I think we built three houses the first year and about 15 the second year."

At the request of a friend, Charlie spent parts of 1963 and 1964 managing a construction company in the Bahamas, leaving the daily operations of Fortis to Ed. But he never strayed too far from the company, and when he returned for good the two delved into their first big project. Colony West was a development on the west side of Winston-Salem, and construction on the first phase would eventually include 31 ranch and split-level houses.

"Charlie talked a man into selling us the land for nothing down, then we traded a lot or two to a grading contractor who put the streets and the water lines in," Ed says. "We were in business basically with nothing down."

That kept a bad situation from being catastrophic when the economy took a turn for the worse. Colony West was in dire straits, but the Sheltons refused to surrender. "I believe that you never give up," Charlie says. "I never had before and I wasn't about to then."

Charlie visited bank after bank, and

continued

First National Bank of Mount Airy and NCNB agreed to a \$40,000 loan — with one stipulation: Reid Shelton had to sign for the note. He did, and the Sheltons were liquid again. The loan helped satisfy some of their obligations, and Charlie and Ed negotiated non-cash settlements with some of their subcontractors to satisfy the rest.

With each step they learned something about their business. They already had broken with traditional construction companies by hiring subcontractors for specific jobs in house building rather than employing large crews of their own. Charlie and Ed treated their subcontractors well, maintaining close contact and paying them promptly to keep jobs on schedule.

It's said that those who make the most spend the least when it comes to money, and Charlie was that way when it came to business. In *Working Together*, Betty Baker, Fortis' first bookkeeper, remembers Charlie ordering her to turn adding machine tapes over to use their reverse sides.

At age 32, Charlie, heretofore a confirmed bachelor — when you're working 14 hours a day, who has time to date? — met the woman of his dreams. Sandy Graham was a petite graduate student at Appalachian State Teachers College in the spring of 1966 and the daughter of the sheriff of Surry County.

They tied the knot on the last day of 1966 at First Methodist Church in Kernersville and after a short honeymoon in the Bahamas, she returned to school and he to work. They moved their belongings to one of the unsold houses at Colony West, where they lived just around the block from Ed and Dotti.

MUCH of the brothers' energy turned to a new project, the Yorktown subdivision in Kernersville. But after a promising start, a series of bad breaks, coupled with a slow economy, left them with a pile of bills. In the fall of 1967, Ed wasn't surprised when he took a call from Northwestern Bank. A \$250,000 note was due.

"They wanted to foreclose," Charlie remembers. "We told them that we could save them a lot of money, that if they would just send over some deeds we'd give the property to them and save all that legal work of foreclosing. On the other hand, if they saw fit to give us a little more money to keep us alive, we'd try to keep both of us out of trouble. And since

Resumes

Charles M. Shelton
R. Edwin Shelton
Shelton Vineyards Inc.
The Shelton Companies

Business Address: 4201 Congress Street, Suite 470, Charlotte, N.C., 28209; phone, 704-557-2222; fax, 704-557-2260.

Born: (Charlie) May 12, 1935, in Mount Airy; (Ed) Aug. 26, 1940, in Mount Airy.

Family: (Charlie) Wife, Sandra Graham Shelton; daughter, Amanda Shelton Houser, of Charlotte; son, Charles M. Shelton Jr. of Charlotte; four grandchildren; (Ed) wife, Dorothy McLaurine Shelton; daughters Jennifer Shelton Egues of Charlotte, Winifred Lillian Shelton of Atlanta, and Lydia Shelton Surles of Charlotte; four grandchildren.

Career Milestones: The Shelton brothers established Shelton Vineyards Inc., a vineyard and winery located in Dobson, in 1999. They are general partners of The Shelton Companies, a private investment firm founded in 1978 with corporate offices in Charlotte. Other companies founded by the Sheltons include Shelco Inc., Fortis Homes, King Sash and Door Co., and Carolinas' Distribution Services.

Charlie Shelton's Civic and Community Affiliations: He has served on the following boards: Medical Center Board of Visitors of Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center; North Carolina Grape Council; First Union Corporation; University of North Carolina Healthcare System; University of North Carolina at Charlotte; University of North Carolina at Charlotte Foundation; Arts and Science Council of Charlotte; North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center; N.C. Department of Transportation; Wake Forest University; Davidson College; Winston-Salem Business Inc.; and Winston-Salem Foundation Inc. In 1988, he served as State Finance Chairman of Gov. James G. Martin's gubernatorial re-election campaign.

Ed Shelton's Civic and Community Affiliations: He has served on the following boards: NCCBI; N.C. Economic Development Board; Babcock School of Management; Queens College; and the Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce. In addition, he has chaired the Tryon Center for Visual Art (McColl Center for Visual Art); the 1999 Annual Fund Drive for the Arts & Science Council of Charlotte; Entrepreneur Circle at the McColl School of Business; and Advantage Carolina. In 1992, he served as State Finance Chairman for Gov. James B. Hunt's gubernatorial campaign.

the last thing they wanted at the time was real estate, they extended our line of credit."

Near the end of the decade, Fortis took off. "We developed a process of building starter homes efficiently," Ed says. "Instead of running the houses through an assembly line, we were running the assembly line by the house."

In short, the Sheltons streamlined the process. Framing lumber was pre-cut. After the members for a wall had been cut, they were wrapped in a steel band and stacked in bins along with other parts for a particular model home. Every major piece was pre-cut, lowering waste and raising efficiency. Houses sold for \$12,000, providing a profit margin of nearly 25 percent.

Feeling they had maximized their growth potential as a small company, the Sheltons sold Fortis in 1971 to Daniel

International, a hugely successful construction and development company based in Greenville, S.C. "We needed more capital to grow the business," Charlie says, "and we agreed that was the way to go. We were able to keep our name and Ed and I still ran the company. That was part of the deal."

The following year Fortis showed a 90 percent profit over projections. One year later, the company built 750 houses. A downturn in the economy had lowered that number by more than 60 percent two years later, but the Sheltons had anticipated the movement and streamlined the company's payroll.

Things moved smoothly for a while, but by 1977 the relationship between Fortis and its parent company was strained, thanks largely to in-fighting among the latter's upper management. It got so bad that Charlie resigned, effec-

tive April 1 of that year, with the knowledge that Ed would soon follow.

One month later, news leaked that the company's majority stockholders had agreed to sell Daniel to Fluor Corp., a worldwide petro-chemical engineering firm headquartered in Los Angeles.

The Sheltons sold their stock the day prior to Fluor's final offer, but their sales price was within 50 cents of the final amount. The math worked this way: Charlie and Ed sold 135,649 shares for \$4,158,998 — almost \$4 million more than the \$167,000 they had invested through the years. "We sensed it was the best thing for us to do at the time," Charlie says, "and we were right. The sale gave us capital to grow a business as we saw fit."

As has always been their wont, the brothers shared their good fortune. Before selling the stock, the brothers earmarked 19,358 shares valued at \$593,516 to numerous projects in the King community, with more than half put toward a new building at King Elementary School that would be used as a combination gym, auditorium and lunchroom.

JUST after Labor Day, Ed resigned from Fortis and joined Charlie in their newest venture, Shelco. A couple of months later, they were enjoying their annual holiday lunch with Jimmy Dew and Bill Simpson, who owned RMIC, a mortgage insurance company. "They said that they had to have a new office," says Charlie. "I kicked Ed under the table and said, 'Don't you know that's the business we're in?'"

"Charlie kicking me under the table was the sign for me to keep my mouth shut," Ed says. "He wanted me to follow his lead."

That marked the beginning of the Sheltons' real estate development business. They built an office for RMIC and soon had earned a reputation as the hot builder in Winston-Salem. Republic Square and Madison Park were two major developments that extended the city's boundaries with regard to corporate business and housed blue-chip companies such as Sara Lee Corp., Piedmont Airlines and Xerox.

At one time or another, the brothers had their hands in most every business venture of note in Winston-Salem. They were instrumental in the rebirth of the Stevens Center, owned restaurants, took active roles in the chamber of commerce, and

helped raise millions for Wake Forest University, their adopted college. They also were a driving force behind the creation of Winston-Salem Business Inc., the city's economic development arm.

There are thousands of homes and office sites in Forsyth County that bear Charlie's fingerprints, but the county perhaps will most remember him for a construction that didn't involve a single piece of lumber. In 1985, he was appointed to the board of the state Department of Transportation. His connections and dogged determination helped generate more road-building money for Forsyth than in the four years that followed than had been raised in decades.

He resigned from the board on Oct. 1, 1990, less than a year after the bids had been awarded for construction of the final section of an I-40 bypass. It was his crowning achievement, providing safe travel around the city and relieving congestion on old I-40, the most traveled and dangerous interstate segment in the state. It involved big money — the total cost of the project was \$142.5 million, or about \$6.5 million per mile — but it was needed. "It was essential to Winston-Salem's growth," Charlie says.

By 1988, the Sheltons had shut down most of their development business and were looking for contract business. In 1991, they moved their corporate headquarters and 100 employees to Charlotte. One of their first hires in the Queen City was Hugh McColl III, son of the chair and CEO of NationsBank. "We felt like we had reached our potential in Winston-Salem," Ed says. "We were subcontracting out about \$50 million in business a year, and we wanted to grow that. Being close to the banking centers, where we could act quickly, made sense."

The management of Shelco had been turned over to a group headed by Ed Rose, who had started with the company in 1983 as a project manager. Charlie and Ed were free to delve into any venture that struck their fancy, and by 1998 their fancy no longer included real estate. There was one exception, however, an old dairy farm in Surry County that caught Charlie's eye.

"I paid \$1,600 an acre" Charlie says. "Three days later, I told Ed about it. At the time I just wanted a piece of land to get out and walk around on once in a while. We gave the use of the land to the local farm community for hay.

"Then one day I told Ed that I'd like to try a little bit of vineyard up there on the property. He said he didn't want to have anything to do with it, so I decided that I'd fool around with about 20 acres. Then he tells me that if I want to do 50 acres and build a pretty entrance, he might be interested."

AND build a pretty entrance the Sheltons did. A long, winding drive flanked by more than 300 rose bushes at the end of every vineyard row leads to the winery. Fourteen varieties of grapes are grown, and they are handpicked by hand in mid-to-late August.

After aging in barrels the wine is bottled — state-of-the-art equipment allows for 52 bottles of wine to be filled per minute. They are released for sale only after a period of bottle aging appropriate to the wine. "We started selling the first wine we produced in 2001," Charlie says, "and in two years time we annualized it at 18,000 cases a year.

"Our promise has been to only sell good wine with our label on it. We probably won't sell our 2003 vintage of red ourselves because it contained too much water. Instead, we'll end up selling it in the bulk market."

The brothers spend a couple of days a week at Shelton Vineyards and their remaining time in their offices near SouthPark, their eye always on the next great venture. They could have profited more from shopping Shelco on the open market, but that's not their style. "That's the last thing we wanted," Ed says. "We've got about 250 employees who have worked hard for us and helped make this company, so they should have some fun with it like we did."

The brothers don't confess to many hobbies, save for three or four weekends a year when they take part in a friendly poker game. Family time is special, whether it's Ed and Dotti gathering at Elk River with their three daughters, their spouses and four grandchildren, or Charlie and Sandy at Hilton Head with their son and daughter, their spouses and four grandchildren. The only one who doesn't live in Charlotte is a daughter of Ed's who teaches in Atlanta.

"Charlie likes watching the sun come up and I like watching it set," Ed says. Most of the hours in between, whether they're in Charlotte, Surry County or visiting their respective second homes, is still business as usual.

NC

Assignments

■ Smith Moore LLP announces that **Sidney S. Eagles Jr.**, who retired as chief judge of the N.C. Court of Appeals in January, will join the firm's Raleigh office in February. Eagles served on the Court of Appeals for 21 years and was named chief judge in 1998. Prior to joining the court, he was in private practice in Raleigh, was counsel to the speaker of the North Carolina House of Representative, and earlier was a special deputy attorney general.



Eagles

■ First Citizens Bank names **Douglas Berlon** a group vice president. He is director of marketing and based in the bank's corporate headquarters in Raleigh. Berlon has more than 14 years of bank marketing experience.



Berlon



McCoy

■ The Greater Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce promotes **James McCoy** to vice president of public policy and communications. He joined the chamber in 2000 as director of government affairs and in 2002 assumed management responsibilities for research and communications. McCoy is a graduate of Wake Forest University.

■ ColeJenest & Stone, P.A., Charlotte, hires **Jonathan Crowder** as a project landscape architect. He received a master's degree from Harvard University and a bachelor's degree from N.C. State University. ColeJenest hires **Siobhan Meegan** as a landscape architect II. She received a degree from Syracuse University.

■ Trone, High Point, hires **Emily Dalton** as senior media planner/buyer. She most recently was with CNET Networks, San Francisco, and prior to that MTVi Group and Ogilvy & Mather, Chicago.

■ Duke Energy, Charlotte, names **Myron Caldwell** vice president and treasurer. He succeeds **David Hauser**, who was recently promoted to senior vice president and CFO, in an acting capacity.

■ Williams Overman Pierce & Co. hires **Liz Broadway** as tax manager in the firm's Raleigh office. She has 10 years of experience in public accounting.

■ Martin Marietta Materials Inc., Raleigh, names **David S. Watterson** vice president and chief information officer. He joined the firm in 1999 as vice president, information systems.



Watterson



Pusey

■ McKim & Creed, Wilmington, hires **Steve G. Pusey** as a senior mechanical designer, specializing in water, wastewater, and reclaimed water projects. He previously was with KSB Inc., Ingersoll-Dresser Pumps (now Flowserve Corp.), and HS Engineering Inc.



Buford



Crawford

■ Brooks, Pierce, McLendon, Humphrey & Leonard, LLP, announces three new associates in the firm's Greensboro office: **John S. Buford**, law degree from Washington & Lee University, clerk to Senior Judge Jackson L. Kiser of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia; **Nicole A. Crawford**, Duke University; and **Alexander Elkan**, UNC School of Law.



Elkan



Oakley



Noggle

■ Capital Bank, Raleigh, names: **Alvin Oakley**, senior vice president and director of operations, has served as vice president and branch administration department manager for Capital for the last two years, has more than 22 years of banking experience; **Jennifer Noggle**, senior branch administrator, joined the bank in 1997 and previously served as a customer service representative, branch operations specialist and an assistant vice president in the operations department; and **Vickie Price**, senior vice president of human resources, 21-year career managing human resource development for a number of organizations, previously served as an officer in the United States Marine Corps.



Price

■ North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co., Durham, names **Dennis Daniel** vice president of information technology services. He has more than 25 years of experience in the field, most recently with IntelliMark IT Business Solutions.



Daniel



Dunathan

■ Parker, Poe, Adams & Bernstein L.L.P. announces that **Susan L. Dunathan** has joined the firm's Raleigh office as an associate in the regulation of business and governmental relations department, concentrating in the area of health care law. She is a 2001 graduate of N.C. Central University School of Law and previously was an associate with Maupin Taylor, P.A., Raleigh.

Lowgap vineyard opens new wine tasting room

By BRIAN BOSWELL
Special to The Mount Airy News

LOWGAP — A simple trip to California's Napa Valley transformed the lives of two local couples, eventually resulting in the area's latest producing vineyard.

Lee and Janet Martin went to visit their son in California with long-time friends George and Susan Little. The two couples are from Mount Airy.

They visited the vineyards in California and came away wanting to start a vineyard of their own.

"The grapes were so beautiful," Lee Martin said, "and we said to ourselves, 'We can do this.' I grew up in the country and for me it was getting back to the land."

This was to be a retirement project for Lee, who works for Southern Community Bank in Winston-Salem, and George, a lawyer in Winston-Salem.

After returning home from their trip, the couples immediately started looking for land. They hired vineyard consultant Steve Lyons, who also manages Raffaldini Vineyards in Swan Creek, to help with the endeavor. After testing the soil and looking at several properties, they decided on a beautiful tract on Round Peak Church Road.

"A day after closing, the work started," Lee said. They planted the

See VINEYARD, page 3A

Vineyard

Continued from page 1A

first eight acres of what was to become Round Peak Vineyards in the spring of 2000.

The first year they planted chardonnay, merlot, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, nebbiolo and sangiovese grapes.

The first two years were spent trying to get the vineyard in shape, but last year they celebrated their first commercial harvest.

"It's very labor intensive," commented Janet Martin, "The harvest is the hardest time of the year, but it's also one of the best times. Everyone pitches in."

This year, because of unusually heavy rains, the harvest lasted a lot longer than usual, starting in August and not ending until the middle of October. Each day friends and family would come together and help to bring the harvest in.

Round Peak does not have its own winery, so the grapes were sent to RayLen Vineyards in Mocksville to be processed into wine.

That first harvest's wine earned Round Peak quick recognition in the Yadkin Valley appellation. It won gold medals for the 2002 chardonnay, merlot and sangiovese at the recent Dixie Classic Fair plus two silver medals and a bronze (for the sangiovese) at the North Carolina State Fair.

Round Peak Vineyards has opened a tasting and sales room to the public. The owners now plan to build a winery in time for the 2005 harvest. The 2003

harvest is being turned into wine at the RagApple Lassic Vineyards in Boonville and the 2004 harvest will be sent there as well.

Next April, Round Peak Vineyards will add three acres of grapes and a new variety, the viognier.

Vineyard manager Mark Golding joined the team last year after moving in next door to the vineyard. He's a hands-on manager.

"We literally touch every vine 10 to 15 times a season," he said.

Golding credits some of Round Peak Vineyards' success to Surry Community College.

"Surry (Community College) has been great to us," he said. "They've been a lot of help to me, especially this past year." The college has the state's only viticulture program.

In addition to new and successful wines and the friendliness of the people working at Round Peak, the vineyard also has another great drawing point: the beauty of the location. The tasting room overlooks the vineyard and the Blue Ridge Mountains are a backdrop.

"You have to come out here and see how beautiful it is," Golding said.

The tasting room and vineyard are open Thursday through Sunday, March through December, and are convenient to travelers on I-77. From I-77, take Exit 100 (N.C. 89) west toward Galax. Take a right onto Round Peak Church Road. The vineyard is located 1.4 miles on the left.

12-17-03

Golden LEAF makes \$100,000 grant to SCC

ROCKY MOUNT — The Golden LEAF Foundation Board of Directors has awarded a \$100,000 grant to Surry Community College in Dobson.

The grant will provide support to Surry Community College to grow the viticulture industry in North Carolina by establishing best practices for grape and wine production in North Carolina through demonstration and applied research; assisting wineries with evaluating commercial acceptability of wines and creating quality standards for the industry; creating an internship program for students; and educating growers and consultants to support high quality grape and wine production.

Golden LEAF administers half of the money received by the State of North Carolina from its settlement with ciga-

rette manufacturers. This grant is one of 55 totaling \$7,371,762 that the Foundation recently made to non-profit organizations and government agencies for projects that will help in North Carolina's transition from a tobacco-dependent economy and aid economically distressed areas.

In its recent round of annual grantmaking, Golden LEAF continued to focus on economic development, including infrastructure requirements; developing alternative crops and marketing agricultural products; retraining displaced workers, and increasing workforce preparedness. It also funded a statewide program of scholarships in both public and private colleges for students from tobacco-dependent counties.

12-7-03

SCC

Continued from page 1A

Lawrence Davenport, of Pactolus, chairman of the Foundation, said, "We always try to listen to what community leaders say their priorities are and what is needed most in their particular area. There was a lot of diversity in the grants we made — from developing new agricultural products to infrastructure improvements that will create new jobs. This diversity illustrates just how hard non-profit organizations and government agencies are working to find ways to keep farm land in production, help farm-

ers make a decent living, and provide good jobs and training for displaced workers."

Valeria Lee, president of the Foundation, said, "This is the Foundation's fourth grant cycle, and it is rewarding to look back now and see tangible, positive results. Hardly a week passes that some local paper doesn't write a story about good work being done by a Foundation grantee — farmers are finding new ways to make a living, thousands of jobs being created and the tax bases of local communities are being strengthened," she said. "We are a state in transition, and a lot of people are having a difficult time. Our hope is that each one of these 55 grants will

move North Carolina's new economy another step forward."

The Golden LEAF Foundation was established in 1999. Since its inception, it has made 252 grants totaling \$101,074,646.41 to non-profit organizations and government entities throughout North Carolina to help communities make the transition from a tobacco-dependent economy and create new job opportunities.

Grant application forms are available on the Foundation's Web site goldenleaf.org or by calling 888.684.8404. The deadline for the next annual grant cycle is Aug. 1, 2004.

See SCC, page 2A

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Round Peak Vineyards opens tasting room

MOUNT AIRY — Round Peak Vineyards, North Carolina's newest producer of fine wines with the Yadkin Valley appellation, has opened a tasting room for samplings and sales.

The vineyard is near Mount Airy at 765 Round Peak Church Road, 1.5 miles from the intersection of Interstates 74 and 77.

The opening of the tasting room coincides with the release of Round Peak Vineyards' award-winning 2002 Yadkin Valley chardonnay, merlot and sangiovese. All three wines won gold medals and the sangiovese also won a bronze at the 2003 North Carolina State Fair in Raleigh.

Round Peak Vineyards was established in 1999 and recently licensed under the North Carolina wine producers statute. Nine acres are planted to French and Italian varietals. Three additional acres will be planted in 2004.

The grapes are hand picked and the wines are carefully crafted. All Round Peak wines are made exclusively from grapes grown at Round Peak Vineyards.

Round Peak Vineyards' tasting room is open for sales, tastings and tours Thursday through Sunday in the months of March through December.

The vineyard is owned by George and Susan Little of Winston-Salem and Lee and Janet Martin of Lake Norman.

Mark Golding is the general manager.

12-11-03 MAN

Local vineyards look for great things from crop being harvested this year

From MidSouth News Service

The annual harvest is nearing completion for most Yadkin Valley vineyards and owners have high expectations for this year's crop.

Sean McRitchie, general manager at Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, said he is excited about the possibilities of this year's harvest. The vineyard completed its third harvest of 155 producing acres last week.

"The harvest went very well," he said. "We picked well over 400 tons of grapes. The quality is very good."

McRitchie said although the drought hurt other crops, it did not damage the grapes.

"The drought increased the sugars and intensified the flavors of the grapes," he said. "For the wines, we are looking at

very good quality. It looks very good for our 2002 vintage."

McRitchie said the vineyard harvested some new white grapes and will have new wines to release this winter.

"We've got some new white varieties planted in 2001," he said. "They are now producing. The new white varieties that we are harvesting are White Reisling and Sauvignon Blanc. It is kind of fun to get the new varieties picked off. They are of good quality."

The other vines, McRitchie said, are more mature and are producing finer grapes.

"The vineyard has become more established and the yields have gone up because the vines are getting more mature," he said. "It is all going well."

Michael Helton, co-owner of Hanover

Park Vineyards in Courtney, said he hasn't finished harvesting.

"We've got one more variety to harvest," he said. "Everything is early or on schedule ... It is a totally different harvest and I am not sure why."

This is Hanover Park's fourth harvest. It has six acres of producing vines.

"Will it be another good year? Maybe, maybe not," Helton said. "This year looks like it is a good crop. Last year was phenomenal. Usually you can tell pretty well by January - that is the first time that I do a tasting."

Helton said the dry weather helped the grapes, but the rain storms over the past week have caused some damage.

"It was dry and then we had a week of

See HARVEST, page 3

10-1-02 MAN

10-1-02 MAN

Harvest

Continued from page 1A

rain," he said. "Some of the whites were harvested before the rains. A few of the whites came ripe and would have been ready to be picked when the rains came through. There is a little damage. You never quite know what the weather will give you."

Lenna Hobson, co-owner of RagApple Lassie Vineyards in Boonville, said she too was pleased with this year's harvest.

"Our brix (sugar content) was high," she said. "The grapes like hot dry weather. They like being hot and dry between drinks of water. I am pleased with the quality and quantity."

Hobson anticipates the grapes will make fine wines.

"Linda (King), our wine maker, is very pleased with the quality," she said. "We expect very good wines. We harvested more varieties this year. We have 15 varieties and that will continue to grow over the years. Some of them are half acres that we are using to make blends."

Van Coe, co-owner of Stony Knoll Vineyards in Rockford, said the vineyard just completed its first harvest of five and a quarter acres.

"We are excited," he said. "We have passed all the pest and fungal challenges and our chemical make-up is something

that we want to adjust."

Some of the varieties did better than others, Coe said.

"The Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon did well," he said. "The Syrah was a challenge ... This year we sold our grapes to RagApple Lassie and Hanover Park. We are under construction and hope to be crushing in the next one to two years."

Coe said planning a vineyard was a way that he could perpetuate the family farm that has been in the Coe name since 1896.

"I think we have proven that we can deliver a good wine crop - an Old World wine crop," he said. "It has been a lot of work, but it has been a labor of love."

Kim Myers, co-owner of Laurel Gray Vineyards in Hamptonville, has already completed her first harvest. The vineyard has five acres growing, but only two were ready to harvest.

"We are very happy," she said. "The Chardonnay turned out very well. We harvested 1,800 pounds of Chardonnay and we are happy with that. The Cabernet, we harvested 1,100 pounds. We are very pleased with both."

Myers said they limited the number of clusters that the vines produced to get better quality grapes.

"We really limited the amount of grapes we had on the vines because we didn't want to stress the vines too much," she

said. "Next year, we will be able to have a larger harvest. As the vines mature, the wines just get better and better. The older vines have more flavor and complexity."

Laurel Gray Vineyards is hoping to have wines available under its own label by next fall.

"It is such a relief to have them picked," she said. "It is such a long process getting them to that point. We are excited and looking forward to having a really good product."

Allen Hinchler, co-owner of Windy Gap Vineyards in Ronda, said his harvest went well. The vineyard completed its third harvest more than a week

ago.

"We harvested what we expected due to the drought," he said. "The quality has been extremely good. I think it is going to make a very good wine."

The grapes from this year's harvest will produce more than 16,000 bottles of wine.

"We purposely have not cropped our grapes," he said. "It helps them ripen and mature. It makes a better quality of wine. We would rather have quality over quantity."

Hinchler said he still has some of last year's wines that need to be bottled.

"We are building quite a backlog of wines," he said.

BUSINESS

WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL
Wednesday, October 1, 2003



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Group of senior managers buys Shelco Inc.

Founding brothers focus on operating vineyards

By Brian Louis
JOURNAL REPORTER

A group of senior managers of Shelco Inc. has bought the company from its founders, Charlie and Ed Shelton, the company said yesterday.

Shelco, one of the biggest general contractors in North Carolina, was founded in Winston-Salem in 1978. The headquarters moved to Charlotte in 1992. The terms of the deal, which will take effect today, were not disclosed.

"I think it's every builder's dream to

own a piece of their own construction company," said Ed Rose, the president and chief executive of Shelco. Rose led the management buyout group.

Rose said that the Shelton brothers have not been involved in the day-to-day operations of the company for 15 years. Shelco said that the Shelton brothers decided to sell the company as part of their estate planning. None of their children are involved in the company.

The Sheltons plan to focus on Shelton Vineyards, their 5-year-old, 200-acre vineyard and winery near Dobson.

Shelco employs more than 250 people. It had revenue last year of \$248 mil-

lion, according to the company's Web site.

In addition to its Charlotte headquarters, the company has offices in Winston-Salem, Raleigh, Greensboro, Greenville, S.C., and Hilton Head, S.C.

Rose said he is grateful that the Sheltons gave the management group an opportunity to buy the company.

"They didn't have to do that," Rose said.

Rose, who started working at Shelco in 1983, said that the Sheltons could have sold the company to an outside interest, to the "highest bidder, so to speak."

Rose said that there will be no oper-

ational changes to the company under the management group's ownership.

Shelco has built many buildings in the Winston-Salem area, including the 2,100-space parking deck at N.C. Baptist Hospital and Baptist's outpatient rehabilitation building. It also built Madison Park, a large office complex in northern Winston-Salem, and Northridge Business Park in Rural Hall.

The company has also built projects for Wake Forest University, Sara Lee Corp., Flow Motors, Bob Neill Inc., and the Budd Group.

■ Brian Louis can be reached at 727-7378 or at blouis@wsjournal.com

RayLen Vineyards

FARMINGTON — RayLen Vineyards, the Yadkin Valley's southernmost winery, makes an attractive start or finish to a tour along the Yadkin Valley Wine Trail. Orderly rows of vines and the winery's distinctive rooftop can be seen from Interstate 40, between exits 174 and 180.

With grapevines planted on 40 acres of a former dairy farm, the winery welcomes visitors to its wine-making facility and offers tastings and sales of its wines. Although it is located in a dry county, RayLen is a bonded winery and therefore permitted to bottle and sell its own product.

RayLen's owners, Joe and Joyce Neely, have developed their vineyard after years of interest and research. They named it for their daughters, Rachel and Len.

The Neelys snatched the 115-acre tract out of the hands of residential developers, confident that their dream of owning a fine vineyard complemented the agrarian nature of the property.

Steve Shepard is RayLen's general manager and winemaker. Steve's is a familiar name in the Yadkin Valley—he was winemaker at Westbend Vineyards, only a few miles away. He has enjoyed working, literally, from the ground up on a new vineyard.

Starting with the first planting, Steve has overseen the development of the vineyard and winery. He found that adding fertilizer has not been necessary at RayLen. Coming off a long

history of dairy cattle, the soil is already rich enough in nutrients.

Grapes concentrate their flavors better when the plant's energy doesn't go into foliage, so Steve's work is to suppress the vigor of the growth.

Hard work over the past four years have produced RayLen's European varietal grapes, including Chardonnay, Viognier, Pinot Grigio, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Shiraz. From these grapes, RayLen has already produced many double-gold medal-winning wines.

RayLen produced 8,000 cases of wine last year. The wine list includes chardonnay, barrel-fermented chardonnay, Carolinum, Merlot, Shiraz and Viognier. The winery has a new wine called Yadkin Gold, is a blend of four white grapes: Viognier, Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio and Riesling. Steve plans to double production every year, with a final capacity of 20,000 cases.

The tastings are offered at an attractive bar in the main reception area where RayLen wines and wine-related gifts are sold. Comfortable chairs and tables complete the welcoming, relaxed atmosphere.

John Donnelly is tasting room manager. He opens the winery for tours and tastings six days a week, Mondays through Saturdays, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.



Surry Community College Viticulture and Enology Technology

Surry Community College is offering a wide range of training opportunities for persons interested in the grape growing and wine industry. Students may choose from a degree, diploma, or certificate program or short-term seminars/training sessions. Curriculum courses include classroom and practical laboratory applications of viticulture and enology. Topics include: Vineyard Establishment and Development, Wine Grape Production, Vineyard Management, Grape Pests, Diseases, Disorders, Grape Harvest, Wines of the World, Winery Design, Winery Operations, Wine Production, Wine Analysis, Wine Marketing and other related studies.



For more information:

Viticulture contact: Gill Giese,
gieseg@surry.cc.nc.us or
336-386-3461



Enology contact: Dr. Bob McRitchie,
mcritchier@surry.cc.nc.us.or
336-386-3408

N.C wineries expected to nearly double next year

CHARLOTTE (AP) — North Carolina is quickly making a name for itself as one of the nation's top winemaking states.

About 20 new wineries will open in the state next year, nearly doubling the number of wineries in the state. Thirteen will open by next July and eight more will join them by that September, according to the N.C. Grape Council. North Carolina already has 25 wineries.

The growth can be attributed to a climate good for growing grape vines, the increasing number of tobacco farmers switching to grapes and the increasing recognition of North Carolina wines.

"It's a snowball effect," said Tania Dautlick, executive director of the N.C. Grape Council. "As people see that the wineries currently operating are a success, they want to try it too."

North Carolina ranks 12th in

wine production and 14th in grape production in the nation.

Tourist dollars and wine sales added about \$79 million to the state's economy last year, Dautlick said.

At the turn of the century, North Carolina was the nation's leading wine producer with 25 wineries. But Prohibition shut down the industry, and many farmers turned to tobacco.

The decline in the tobacco industry in recent years has caused farmers to diversify, said Scott Bisette, a state tobacco program administrator.

Frank and Lenna Hobson turned to winemaking after the federal government cut in half the amount of tobacco they could grow on their property in Yadkin County.

"We did the vineyards purely as a replacement crop," said Lenna Hobson. "It was very important that this land remain agricultural and remain in the family. We were not going to

build a winery."

But they did, opening RagApple Lassie Vineyards in September 2002.

The winery includes a cellar for its American and French oak barrels, a gift shop and a catwalk where visitors can peer into the fermentation tanks. The winery produces about 7,500 cases of merlot, cabernet sauvignon, viognier, chardonnay and two whites called "Boonville Blanc" and "Evening Sunset."

The Biltmore Estate Winery in Asheville is North Carolina's largest producer with more than 100,000 cases of wine each year. The Teensy Winery, in the western part of the state, bottles about 80 cases a year. By comparison, California-based Kendall Jackson produces 4 million cases annually.

Most of the new wineries will be in the Yadkin Valley near Winston-Salem, while a

See WINERIES, page 3



AP Photo

Frank and Lenna Hobson look in on rows of cabernet grapes at their vineyard in Boonville. The Hobsons turned to winemaking after the federal government cut in half the amount of tobacco they could grow on their property in Yadkin County. The winery produces about 7,500 cases of merlot, cabernet sauvignon, viognier, chardonnay and two whites called "Boonville Blanc" and "Evening Sunset."

MAN 8-4-2003

Wineries

Continued from page 1

few will set up in nearby Alamance and Rowan counties. One is scheduled to open in Wayne County.

Raffaldini Vineyards, which plans to open a winery in Elkin the coming year, will pick its first harvest in about a month and send its grapes to nearby RagApple Lassie Vineyards to be made into wine.

Co-owners Stephen and Susan Lyons have planted more than 10 grape varieties, mostly Italian to represent the Raffaldini family's heritage.

Raffaldini also plans to offer wine tastings and carriage tours up nearby Hagers Mountain.

"We're trying to make it as a destination so people will want to come and stay for hours," said Lyons, former vineyard manager for the Ravenswood Winery in California.

North Carolina is one of several states, including Texas, Colorado, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Virginia, "generating significant buzz because they're showing they can produce good-quality wines," said Bill Nelson, president of WineAmerica, a Washington, D.C.-based trade association.

"I think the people who are on the lookout for up-and-coming wineries are looking at these states," he said. "People who have tried North Carolina wines are impressed. No question about it."

Local briefs

Wilkes quilters plan show in September

— WILKESBORO —
“Wilkes Quilts 2003” will be presented Sept. 5-6 at Wilkesboro Civic Center, 1241 School St..

Exhibits will include quilts; wall hangings; a red, white and blue guild challenge display; a Hoffman Challenge traveling show; a doll exhibit; a vendors' mall; silent auction items; an opportunity quilt; and a boutique of handmade items.

A fashion show of wearable art is scheduled for 5:30-7 p.m. Sept. 5.

Show hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Admission is free (donations accepted).

Wilkes County Quilters promote quilting and needle arts and do community service. To date, more than 160 quilts ranging from queen size to baby quilts have been donated to various groups in Wilkes County.

The quilters also donate “walker bags” to nursing homes in the area.

Vineyard to host Saturday shindigs

BOONVILLE — RagApple Lassie Vineyards will host Saturday shindigs from 4 to 8 p.m. starting Aug. 16 with The Entertainers and Mixed Emotions at the vineyard.

On Sept. 13, recording artists Lorrie Morgan and Anita Cochran will perform.

To reach the vineyard, travel three miles east of Boonville on N.C. 67. Turn south on Rockford Road, the winery is on the left.

Food and beverages will be available. No picnic baskets or ice chests allowed.

Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 at the gate. For tickets, call the Yadkin Chamber of Commerce at (336) 679-2200, Allen Styers at (336) 244-5551, or RagApple Lassie Vineyards at (336) 367-6000 or 1-866-RagApple.

Benefit yard sale set

MOUNT AIRY — There will be a benefit three-day yard sale Aug. 14-16 beginning at 7 a.m. daily at 345 Granite St. Proceeds will go toward medical expenses for a young cancer patient.

New winery planned for Mount Airy

By **THERESA KILEN**
Staff Writer

ROUND PEAK — The newest up-and-coming winery to receive approval from both the county's planning board and the Surry County Board of Commissioners is Round Peak Winery on 31 acres next to Round Peak Church Road west of Mount Airy off N.C. 89.

The vineyard and winery is owned by two Winston-Salem couples who were inspired by a trip to California's Napa Valley and by the accomplishments of friends Ed and Charlie Shelton of Shelton Vineyards in Dobson.

Attorney George Little Jr. owns the vineyard in partnership with his wife, Susan, and friends Lee and Janet Martin.

Little said that the idea for the vineyard was born about five years ago.

"We went on a trip to the Napa Valley and decided that we could do the same thing here in North Carolina," he said. "We made that decision on a tentative basis in the fall of 1998 and then conducted a search for property. It took us a year to find what we were looking for, but we love the area. We're in love with the site and we love Surry County. We think it's a great place to be and we

believe that this will really take off there."

Encouraging them along the way are the Sheltons, who opened their own vineyard and winery to the public in the spring of 2000 and whose wines have since gathered numerous awards. The Sheltons also helped the area gain its much-sought-after federal appellation — a designation that allows area vineyards to produce and market their wines under the Yadkin Valley label. There are only about 150 such districts in the country and this is the first to be established and approved in North Carolina.

"We knew that the Sheltons were doing this in a big way and they were very encouraging and have been very supportive of what we are doing," Little said.

The Littles and the Martins bought the land in November 1999 and began planting eight acres of chardonnay, merlot, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, sangiovese and nebbiolo grapes in April 2000 and a ninth acre last year. Little said they plan to plant up to another five acres.

The couples contracted with their friends Joe and Joyce Neely of RayLen Vineyards — who joined the Martins and the



Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

Grape vines grow along neat wire supports at Round Peak Winery's vineyard.

Littles on their 1998 Napa Valley excursion — to produce Round Peak Vineyards' first wines.

"We already have 19 barrels of wine down at RayLen Vineyard (in Mocksville) that will

be packaged next month," Little said. "We're expecting to produce about 475 cases of wine, which will be available for sale once we get the first phase of our building completed — hopefully, in October. There's a lot

that has to be done between now and then.

"We have a site plan and a preliminary building plan. We'll be fine-tuning our building plan once we get approval from ABC."

The Mount Airy News

5/18/2003

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Wine flows as the rain falls

Weather hurts attendance,
but not enthusiasm, at
second wine festival

By **THERESA KILEN**
Staff Writer

ELKIN — Rain and unseasonably cool temperatures did not keep wine lovers from attending the 2nd annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival Saturday at Elkin Municipal Park Saturday.

The event shows promise of growing in popularity each year, as evidenced by the more than 4,000 people who turned out for yesterday's event.

"I'm pleased with the turnout, especially given the weather," festival Chairman Rebel Good said. "We've got critical mass here. People are lined up at all of the wine tents. It's a success no matter what happens."

Elkin Town Manager Eddie Smith said that Elkin and the entire region is destined to benefit from the success of its wines and from the festival that celebrates its growing viticulture industry.

"We were very much appreciative to be able to host the wine festival for the second year in a row," Smith said. "I think it's a great event for Elkin. It helps showcase our area as the wine capital of North Carolina."

"Turnout is what we expected based upon the weather forecast, but I think this year's attendance will surpass last year's attendance. Hopefully, the third year will produce some sunshine and we ought to see attendance levels double, if not triple, because word of mouth has produced a lot of attendees and a lot of vendors."

"This is a major event, not just for Elkin but for the Yadkin Valley," Smith added. "Since we are well tested in being able to host it and put it together, it's only fitting that we can make additional improvements next year."

The Yadkin Valley Wine Festival was designed specifically as a showcase for wines produced in the newly-approved Yadkin Valley Appellation which consists of all or part of seven northwestern North Carolina counties — Surry, Yadkin, Wilkes, and parts of Forsyth, Stokes, Davie and Davidson counties. All of the wines poured at the festival contained at least 75-percent grapes grown in the Yadkin Valley.

The federal appellation approved last year became official Feb. 7 and allows area vineyards to bottle their wines using the region's Yadkin Valley designation.

The festival featured wines from the region's eight bonded



Christine Sigmon (left) and Leigh Holmes, both of the Durham-based Grow Park Wine Club, kick off the grape-stomping competition at the 2nd annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival Saturday at Elkin Municipal Park.

Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News



Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

Saturday's cold, wet weather did not stop more than 4,000 people from attending the 2nd annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival at Elkin Municipal Park. All eight of the region's bonded wineries poured their wines for festival-goers. Festival Chairman Rebel Good said he expects that within three years the region would have three times as many bonded wineries to its credit.

Wine

Continued from page 1A

wineries, including Black Wolf, Hanover Park, RayLen, West-bend and Shelton Vineyards,

representatives from up and coming wineries that will begin producing their own wines within the next year or two, as well as representatives from Surry Community College's viticulture and enology pro-

gram — the only two-year degree program of its kind on the east coast.

Last year's festival drew about 4,500 people from as far away as Charlotte and parts Virginia.

Democrats band together to bash Bush on taxes, terrorism

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Democratic presidential rivals united Saturday in attacking President Bush on national security, an issue on which voters rate him highly.

White House hopefuls, at a forum designed to highlight their differences, accused Bush of scrimping on domestic defense in favor of cutting taxes for the rich.

The 2004 contenders said the inability to ascertain the fate of suspected Sept. 11 mastermind Osama bin Laden is symbolic of what they contend is Bush's failed policy on fighting terrorism.

The Democrats said Bush talks tough on homeland security but does not deliver, and uses the issue largely to advance a right-wing agenda.

Candidates at the meeting, sponsored by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, also renewed their criticism of Bush's tax-cutting efforts.

"The president's prescription for everything is take two tax cuts and call me in the morning," said former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, a physician.

Taking on Bush's homeland security policies marked a shift in emphasis for the Democrats, who were split on whether to go to war in Iraq. But bombings last week in Saudi Arabia and Morocco have raised questions about how effectively the administration has defused terrorist threats.

In response to a question from a New York City firefighter, Rep. Dick Gephardt of Missouri, said the administration's actions since Sept. 11, 2001, underscored his point about failings in homeland security.

Rescuers who went into New York's World Trade Center "were union members, and they were heroes. They were patriots, and they did everything we asked them to do," said Gephardt. Yet "when it came to passing a homeland security bill, this administration insisted on a bill that would take away the rights to organize."

Workers in the Transportation Safety Administration, created in that legislation, cannot join unions for collective bargaining.

"When you get to the bottom line, the money is not there," said Gephardt. "We are vulnerable to further attacks because this administration has not done its job."

North Carolina Sen. John Edwards warned the union activists that Democrats cannot take back the White House unless the party convinces vot-

ers that it will keep them safe.

"We should not cede this issue to a president and a party whose idea of homeland security is plastic wrap and duct tape," Edwards said.

Florida Sen. Bob Graham warned that the administration had a golden opportunity to destroy the al-Qaida network but did not follow through. "We had them on the ropes, but we let them regenerate," Graham said.

Al Sharpton cited the uncertainty about bin Laden. "Mr. Bush, the question you have not answered is, 'Where is bin Laden?'" Sharpton said. "We need to go after those who went after us."

The candidates made their case before 1,000 activists in a union that is a pillar of the Democratic base in the state where caucuses in January initiate the long presidential nominating process.

They offered mild distinctions over their competing health care plans but reserved most of their fire for Bush.

"We have a powerful case to make against this president, and we need to take this values argument right at this president," said Edwards.

"This president has ruled by making us (Americans) fear each other," Dean said. "We've lost a lot in the last 2 1/2 years."

Former Illinois Sen. Carol Moseley Braun argued that a sour economy and soaring deficits should tell labor activists all they need to know about Bush's economic policies.

"The tax cuts were absolutely a travesty and ought to be rolled back," she said. "This crowd is into fighting the needy and helping the greedy."

Added Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich. "It's time we have someone in the White House who understands working people."

Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman, an observant Jew who does not campaign on Saturdays, videotaped an interview with Gerald McEntee, president of the government workers' union. It was shown at the meeting.

Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, who was in Iowa on Friday to lay out his health care plan, spoke to participants by telephone from New Hampshire, the first primary state.

Earlier Saturday, in Concord, N.H., Kerry told graduates of the Franklin Pierce Law Center that they should use their degrees to do good. "Lawyers can be the guardians of the rights of average citizens ... and champions for the underdog," he said.

Pilot wrote plane was near weight limit

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The captain of a commuter plane that crashed here wrote just before departure that the turboprop was within 2 pounds of its maximum takeoff weight. The Charlotte Observer reported Saturday.

The plane's weight and mechanical problems are likely to

a dispatch form indicating the total weight of the Beech 1900 turboprop was 17,118 pounds, the Observer reported, citing a source. Its maximum takeoff weight is 17,120 pounds.

There's enough of a safety margin built in so the plane could carry that weight with one of its two engines operat-

recorder showed an unusual up-and-down motion of the elevator control on all nine flights it took following the maintenance work, investigators have said.

The NTSB board's staff also has been looking at the maintenance hangar in Huntington, W.Va., where the improper adjustment may have been performed by a mechanic.

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MARKET REPORT

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S&P 500	▼	Down	3.28
NASDAQ	▼	Down	6.76

T-BILLS

3-Month	1-Year
Unavailable	

Business

North Carolina wineries fret over court ruling on shipping

CHARLOTTE (AP) — North Carolina's winemakers have a sour taste in their mouths over a court's ruling against state regulations meant to protect the fledgling industry from out-of-state vintners.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled this week that it is unconstitutional for the state to allow in-state wineries to sell and ship products directly to North Carolina residents while barring direct shipments from vintners in other states.

The ruling by a three-judge panel of the court involved only direct sales to private individuals, not shipments for resale in stores.

The court said North Carolina does not have to allow the out-of-state shipments; it can remedy the constitutional violation by barring all direct shipments of wine — including those within the state.

"We have a lot of people who visit our winery and then go home to some

other place where our wine is not easily accessible," said Patricia McRitchie, who works with her husband, Sean, at Shelton Vineyards in Dobson. "If we're not able to ship it to them directly, we've lost a customer."

Jerry Douglas is senior vice president of brands for The Biltmore Company, which operates the nation's most-visited winery on the grounds of the Biltmore Estate in Asheville.

He said the ruling means not only could North Carolina wineries be barred from direct shipments in state, they could also face limits on sales to people who visit their facilities.

Specifically, guests at the Asheville winery could be barred from ordering a case of merlot or cabernet during their visit with the intent of having it delivered to their homes, he said.

The Biltmore Estate vintner, which produces about 100,000 cases of wine a year, is on the grounds of George Vanderbilt's sprawling country home,

which is a major tourist attraction.

Sales made by the winery's retail shop account for about half of its total sales, which Douglas said is only a tiny sliver of the U.S. wine market.

"I doubt the people in the Napa Valley are staying awake at night worrying about us," he said.

Sean McRitchie, who manages Shelton Vineyards, said he doesn't understand why anyone would want to inhibit the flow of good wine. "This is not good," he said. "We need to move our wine. Let it go, it's just another agricultural commodity."

Oakstone Winery Inc., a small winery in Fair Play, Calif., joined several North Carolina wine enthusiasts in challenging the regulatory scheme, which was struck down last year by U.S. District Judge Graham Mullen in Charlotte.

The appeals court upheld Mullen's ruling that the laws violate the Constitution's commerce clause but ruled

that he went too far in throwing out the entire scheme, not just the 1981 law that carved out a preference for in-state wineries.

Judge Paul V. Niemeyer acknowledged in the unanimous opinion that the ruling "frustrates the plaintiffs' efforts to purchase wine directly from out-of-state wineries and to ship wine directly into North Carolina."

However, he wrote that North Carolina "retains great flexibility to determine what sort of relief to provide to cure the discriminatory treatment," and state officials had indicated they preferred to strike the local preference.

More than two dozen other states have similar laws requiring that imported wines be distributed only through licensed wholesalers and retailers to ensure that taxes are paid and that alcoholic beverages are not purchased by minors by mail or over the Internet.

Virginia's law was ruled unconstitu-

tional by a federal judge in Richmond last year, and the 2003 General Assembly passed legislation allowing direct shipment of out-of-state wine and beer to Virginia consumers.

Federal judges have upheld the out-of-state bans in at least three other cases, creating disagreement on a national issue that could ultimately be resolved by the U.S. Supreme Court.

North Carolina ranks 10th nationally in wine production. California leads the pack, followed by Washington, New York, Pennsylvania and Oregon. North Carolina has 21 vineyards and wineries producing about 500,000 gallons of wine each year.

"If you take away the ability of North Carolina wineries to conduct business, it's going to have a chilling effect on the industry," said Patricia McRitchie.

Shelton Vineyards continues path of excellence

Dobson — Shelton Vineyards released its first vintage of estate Riesling at its Second Annual Holiday Open House on November 30 and December 1, 2002. The Riesling was Shelton Vineyards' top-selling wine over the holiday weekend.

Shelton Vineyards grows ten acres of Riesling grapes that were planted April 1, 2000. The decision to plant Riesling came after the owners, Charlie and Ed Shelton, and general manager, Sean McRitchie, visited wineries in Virginia and tasted several laudable bottlings of Riesling. McRitchie, who had worked in Germany and Alsace-Lorraine where Riesling thrives, was interested in seeing whether Riesling would prosper at Shelton Vineyards' Yadkin Valley site.

"Riesling is an interesting grape. It typically reflects the terroir where it is grown, but always maintains a strong varietal character. I am happy with this first bottling. I think people will really enjoy this wine," stated McRitchie.

In December, two other new varieties from Shelton Vineyards estate vineyards, Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Franc, will be bottled and released in time for the holidays.

• Shelton Vineyards' Wines Continue Award-Winning Streak

Shelton Vineyards continues to collect awards and accolades, recently picking up "Best of Red" and a gold medal for its 2000 North Carolina Merlot in the Wines of the South wine competition held in early November in Tennessee.

Every Shelton Vineyards wine entered in this competition received a medal. In addition to those received by the 2000 North Carolina Merlot, medals include a gold for the 2000 Georgia BlackStock Vineyards Merlot, silver medals for the 2001 North Carolina Syrah and Madison Lee Red Wine, and bronze medals for the Salem Fork Blush, Salem Fork Zephyr Red, 2001 North Carolina Chardonnay and 2000 North Carolina Cabernet Sauvignon for a grand total of eight medals.

Also in November, the 17th Annual American Wine Society Commercial Wine Competition was held in Buffalo, New York. This international competition had a total of 1206 wines entered. Shelton Vineyards picked up a total of five medals in this competition. Silver medals were awarded to the 2001 North Carolina Chardonnay and the Salem Fork Blush. Bronze



Shelton Vineyards, owned by Charlie and Ed Shelton, is located near Dobson in the Yadkin Valley. The 383-acre estate offers tours and tastings at its winery and cheese shop.

medals were awarded to the 2000 North Carolina Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2000 North Carolina Merlot, and the 2000 Georgia BlackStock Vineyards Merlot.

Shelton Vineyards is located in the Yadkin Valley near Dobson, North Carolina. The 383-acre estate

has nearly 200 acres of premium vinifera grapes and offers tours and tastings at its winery and cheese shop. The owners are Charlie and Ed Shelton. The companies' websites can be found at www.sheltonvineyards.com and www.sheltoncheeses.com.

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**Greater
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A HOMETOWN FEELING

SCC viticulture program trains next generation of winemakers; college to become area's next bonded winery this spring

By **THERESA KILEN**

Staff Writer

DOBSON — The only degree program of its kind in the southeastern United States, Surry Community College's viticulture and enology program is a two-year course in grape growing and wine making.

State legislation expanded its scope last year. Now 120 students can receive hands-on experience in the manufacturing and bottling of wine. SCC could do neither for the first two years after the program began.

The college now is poised to become the area's next bonded winery.

Rep. Rex Baker, R-District 91, who worked toward passage of the bill that allows SCC to manufacture wine on its campus for about three months, said the bill began as an item buried deep within the state's budget. Members of the then newly formed Old North State Winegrower's Cooperative in Mount Airy had their first grapes coming in and had to contract with other wineries to get their manufacturing done. Because of the time constraints involved, the measure was pulled out of the state's budget and crafted into a bill.

SCC President Frank Sells went to Raleigh personally and lobbied for passage of the bill that allows a "state holder of a viticulture/enology course authorization to manufacture, possess and sell wine for certain limited purposes as part of a community college's or college's viticulture/enology program."

Said Sells at the time, "The action that was taken on this is just unprecedented. It was done very quickly. Had they not gotten it loose from the budget piece, it might never have been passed.

"This is the General Assembly authorization of our full program that we needed in order to seek permits from the state ABC (Alcoholic Beverage Control) and federal ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) boards, which will enable our students to get hands-on experience learning the entire process of making wine, from growing to bottling."

Both Sells and Baker said that because the co-op's winery was not yet ready to handle manufacturing and bottling in time for last year's harvest, it was a perfect opportunity for the students at SCC to get involved. SCC already had the equipment to accommodate the grower's crops, but lacked only the approval and licensing to begin.

Baker said the process of separating the authorization from the state's budget and drafting it into a bill began in June with a call from a member of The Old North State Winegrowers Cooperative Association Inc. who wanted to know if the process could somehow be expedited.

"The area's dry weather sped up the growers' harvest time and the grapes were ready before we were," Sells said when he received word of the bill's passage. "They were looking for alternatives. We need the grapes and they need a winery. We've been working in haste so that our students could

get in on this before the harvesting season is over and we expect that by the time they get to their later harvests, we'll be able to help them."

And they did. Students acquired grapes from the harvested crops of several area grape growers and got valuable hands-on experience crushing the grapes, separating the juices and taking the product through the fermentation process.

Sells said that the college should receive its permits from the ATF and ABC during the next six to eight weeks in its effort to become a bonded winery.

"We're still in that process right now," he said, "but it has really moved pretty quickly for us."

Less than 50 yards off the college campus, SCC leases five acres of land from the Surry County Board of Education. Students have planted grape vines — one acre so far — and this spring students will plant another. Sells said the college plans to allow each class to plant its own crop as part of the curriculum that now enables students to learn the grape-growing and wine-making process on campus from beginning to end.

Fifth District Congressman Richard Burr said recently that the value of having this particular program in an area that is in the process of establishing itself as a world-class wine region and tourist destination is invaluable in both promoting the industry and supporting it locally.

"We've got a jump on everybody else, we've got a vision that is held by a number of peo-

ple and is catching on," Burr said. "We've been able to realize that you've got to have something underneath an in-

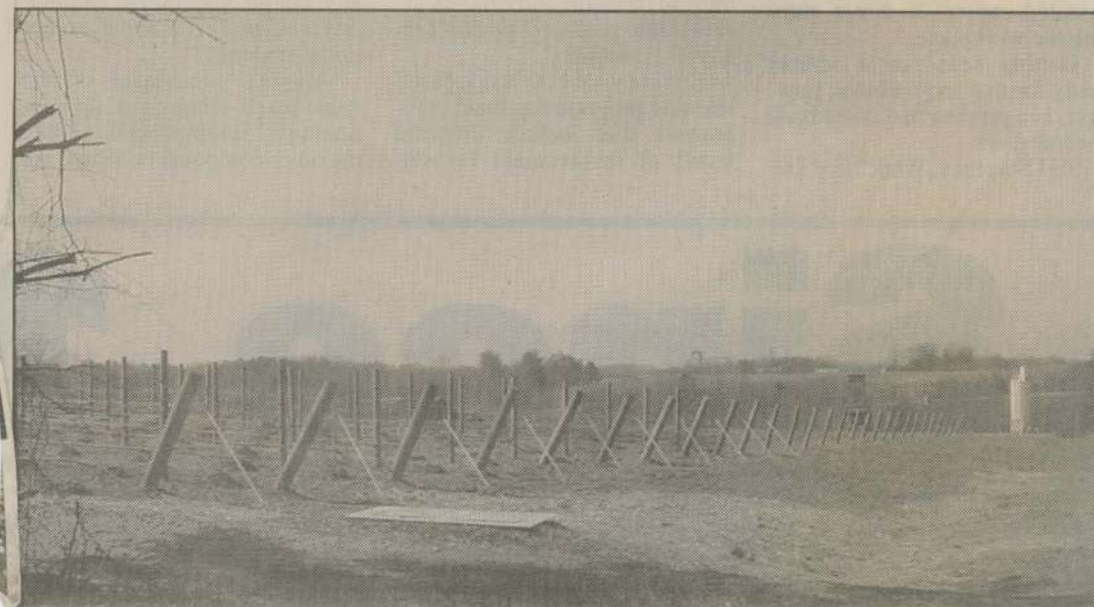
dustry to support it and that's people coming in familiar and trained to go into that industry. SCC will bring a strong pool of

kids that are trained to know a little bit more about this business."



Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

The rustic SCC Vineyard marker designates the area of campus now devoted to the study of the growing of grapes and the manufacturing of wine.



Shelton Vineyards leads the way for Yadkin Valley wine producers

By **THERESA KILEN**
Staff Writer

DOBSON — It is an exciting time for Shelton Vineyards. Since its opening in 2000, the vineyard now has its third harvest under its belt, opened an on-premise cheese shop whose cheeses are already winning national awards, has added several new wines to its repertoire and has managed to gather dozens of national and international awards for both its white and red varieties.

In addition to its many accolades, the vineyard managed to add another feather to its cap recently that benefits not only the Shelton Vineyard, but all of the new vineyards that have sprung up in the surrounding area. After submitting an application to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in 2001, a federal appellation was granted to the region in December 2002. The Yadkin Valley is North Carolina's first American Viticultural Area (AVA).

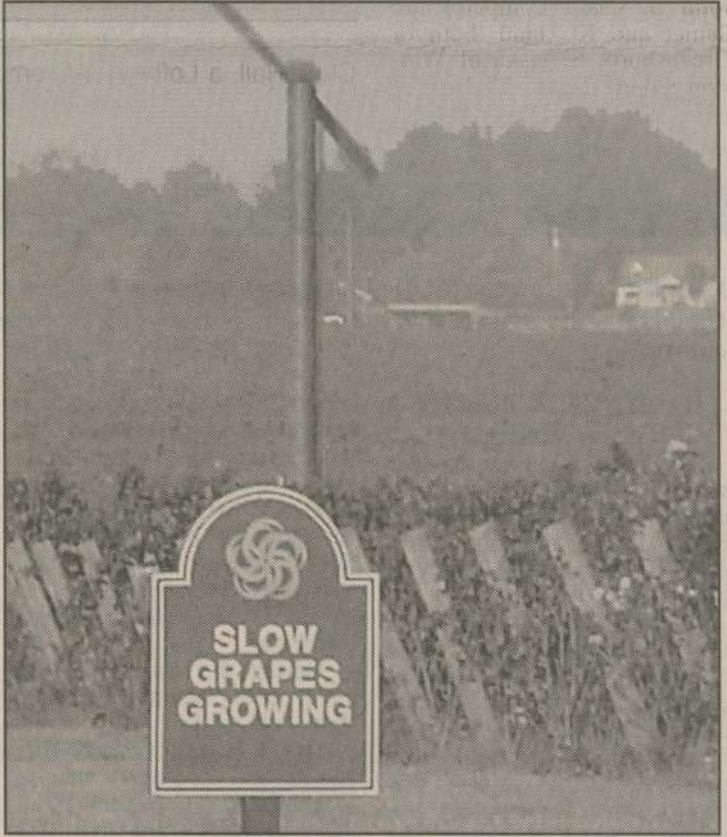
Part of the criteria for being granted an appellation is if the soil, growing season, climate and amount of rainfall in a particular region vary from its surrounding areas. There are about 150 appellations in the U.S.; only eight of them are in the southern region of the country. The designation went into effect Feb 7.

The Yadkin Valley encompasses 1,416,000 acres and includes all of Surry, Yadkin and Wilkes counties and portions of Stokes, Davie, Davidson and Forsyth counties.

For years, brothers Ed and Charlie Shelton have made no secret of their desire to see a legitimate wine region flourish in Surry and its surrounding counties.

The Sheltons bought the 343 acres of land — on Twin Oaks Road southwest of Dobson — on which the estate winery and vineyard sets, at auction in 1994. Interested in winemaking for years as a hobby, in 1998 the brothers began the installation of the approximately 200 acres of vineyards now cultivated each year. Construction of the high-tech, 33,000-square-foot winery began in 1999, and in the spring of 2000, Shelton Vineyards opened for tours and began production of its first North Carolina-grown wines.

"We have more people in the 150 miles around our winery than they do in the 150 miles around the Napa Valley," Charlie Shelton said. "We have more people to draw from. I can see hotels, restaurants and even a



Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

There are now 14 varieties of grapes planted on the Shelton vineyard, ranging from cabernet to viognier. It is estimated that each acre of the grafted North American root stock vines yields four tons of grapes per harvest. The vineyard is now bottling between 50,000 and 60,000 cases of wine annually.



Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

The aging of the wines produced at the vineyard is one of the final steps in the process of producing Shelton Vineyard's award-winning world-class wines.

golf course here in the future."

There are now 14 varieties of grapes planted on the vineyard, from Cabernet to Viognier. Last fall, the vineyard introduced two new wines, a White Riesling, a German-style wine, and a Sauvignon Blanc.

In January, the vineyard introduced its new Cabernet Franc into its wine-tasting rooms, and in February, unveiled its Family Reserve Claret, a mixture of petit verdot, cabernet sauvignon and merlot — a rare bottling

See Shelton on page 9.

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SHELTON

limited to only 120 cases — along with its first Yadkin Valley merlot and cabernet sauvignon.

Patricia McRitchie, vice president of Compliance for Shelton Vineyards, said that more changes are on the way.

“We are building a covered stage for our outdoor concert series — a wood truss-style building very similar to the one that they are working on at Fisher River Park,” McRitchie said. “Our concert series this year will also be bigger than before. Several of the bands we’ve had in the past will be returning, along with even more well-known bands than we have had in the past.”

The Shelton Vineyards Outdoor Concert Series will begin May 31, with concerts scheduled for the last weekend of each month through October.

The vineyard is also increasing its distribution potential by 100 percent this year. While Shelton produced wines are available in four states — Virginia, Georgia and North and South Carolina — McRitchie said that over the next 12 months Shelton Vineyards would be expanding their market into four more states.

“There is a lot of logistical maneuvering that goes along with that expansion,” she said, “but we are working on expanding into all of the southeastern states and then, from there, the mid-Atlantic states and up the eastern seaboard.”

It is estimated that each acre of the Shelton’s grafted North American root stock vines yields four tons of grapes per harvest, from which the vineyard is now bottling between 50,000 and 60,000 cases of wine annually.

Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News
To the right: Brothers Ed and Charlie Shelton bought 343 acres of land on Twin Oaks Road southwest of Dobson where their estate winery and vineyard sits. Construction of the high-tech, 33,000-square-foot winery began in 1999. In the spring of 2000, Shelton Vineyards opened for tours and began production of its first North Carolina-grown wines.



The Mount Airy News

FRIDAY

Established 1880

Mount Airy, N.C.

<http://www.mtairynews.com>

February 7, 2003

50 cents

Sheltons unveil Yadkin Valley label

By **THERESA KILEN**

Staff Writer

DOBSON — Local officials, winery owners and Congressman Richard Burr, R-N.C., were on hand Thursday afternoon at Shelton Vineyards to mark an important and historical area event — the unveiling of the region's first wines labeled under the new Yadkin Valley designation.

Owners Ed and Charlie Shelton were on hand for the occasion and presented the first three bottles of Family Reserve Claret, a limited edition Bordeaux blend, 2001 merlot and 2001 cabernet sauvignon to Burr in appreciation of his efforts in helping the area secure its appellation.

"Tomorrow (Friday) will be the first official day that we can sell a wine with a Yadkin Valley label on it and we all think that is very important, not only for Shelton Vineyards but for all of the winegrowers here in the Yadkin Valley," Ed Shelton said. "I think that this is going to be a very big benefit not only to our business, but also for the whole area."

The Yadkin Valley encompasses all or part of seven counties in northwest North Carolina — Surry, Yadkin, Wilkes and portions of Davie, Stokes, Davidson and Forsyth counties — and encompasses 1,416,000 acres. It is the first American Viticultural Area (AVA) designation in the state and is the most recent appellation approved in the United States.

"Right now we have six bonded wineries in the Yadkin Valley and there are more than 50 grape growers as I speak," Shelton continued. "The significance of the area as an AVA, the re-

quirements that you have to go through proves that you are a special winegrowing region. That proves to the world that we do have a special place.

"To me, what makes the Yadkin Valley so special as a winegrowing region is that we do have a river that runs through two mountain ranges and it runs the same way the prevailing winds blow. The combination of the minerals we have got in the valley, plus the natural river, does create a special area here.

"We have proved that we deserve the AVA, now it's up to us as winegrowers to prove that we can make a good wine."

"We're watching today an industry that's fading," Charlie Shelton said, "as we all know tobacco is — because less of us smoke than we used to — and as that fades, here is a profit coming in. We have 400 acres planted and 400 acres produces a lot of wine. I look at it in terms of what it can do for the area."

In part, the Sheltons credit Rep. Burr for helping the region secure its appellation "in record time."

Burr said Thursday that he has heard that many appellations take up to five years to acquire. Patricia McRitchie, vice president of Compliance for Shelton Vineyards, submitted paperwork the appellation to the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in January of 2001. The Yadkin Valley application received



Ed (left) and Charles Shelton present Rep. Richard Burr (right) with three bottles of Shelton Vineyard wines bearing the new Yadkin Valley label.

Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

See LABEL, page 2A

Elkin preparing for second Yadkin Valley Wine Festival

ELKIN – The wine will be flowing again in the Yadkin Valley in May. The second annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival, sponsored by the Elkin Jonesville Chamber of Commerce, is scheduled for May 17 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Elkin Municipal Park and promises to be bigger and better than last year's inaugural event.

The festival expects to feature at least eight wineries and vineyards pouring the Yadkin Valley's best, as well as displays from other vineyards with vines still too new to produce wines.

"We're eagerly anticipating this year's festival," Rebel Good, chairman of the festival committee, said. "This year's festival is building on the successes of last years."

The festival is designed to showcase grapes and wines produced in the Yadkin Valley Appellation - consisting of Surry, Yadkin, Wilkes, parts of Stokes, Forsyth, Davidson and Davie counties.

The appellation, which was approved last year, allows vineyards in the region to bottle their wines under a label saying it was produced in the Yadkin Valley. Elkin is at the geographic heart of the Yadkin Valley re-

gion. "We anticipate having more wineries and more patrons than last year," Good said. "We are celebrating the fruits of the Yadkin Valley Appellation." Last year's festival drew a crowd of about 4,500 from surrounding areas, including Charlotte, Wilkesboro, Mount Airy, Winston-Salem and parts of Virginia.

The festival allows people to sample the wines produced in the Yadkin Valley, learn about the process of making wines, shop various craft vendors and listen to jazz by Cle Thompson from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and rhythm and blues by Maurice Williams and The Zodiacs from 3 to 6 p.m.

Representatives from Surry Community College will also be on hand to discuss the school's viticulture and enology program. Yadkin Valley Bank is the festival's presenting spon-

sor.

Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the gate. Advance tickets are available through the Chamber as well as through the chamber's website at www.ejachamber.com or at www.yvwt.com. Each ticket includes a commemorative wine glass with the festival's logo. Admission is free for those who choose not to taste the wines.

In conjunction with the festival, a formal event sponsored by the Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital Foundation will be held the evening of Friday, May 16 at Holiday Inn Express in Jonesville. An auction will be held to benefit the foundation, with the highlight the auctioning of individual bottles of the best Yadkin Valley wines.

For more information, contact the Elkin Jonesville Chamber of Commerce at (336) 526-1111.

MAN 2-23-03

Designation to boost Yadkin wine industry

By **MATT HARRINGTON** THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

DOBSON — The designation of the Yadkin Valley of North Carolina as an American Viticultural Area should make the region's wines more easily identifiable to consumers and provide a lift to the state's wine industry.

The Yadkin Valley is the first area in North Carolina to receive the designation from the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, and Chanel McIntyre, marketing and programs coordinator at the N.C. Grape Council in Raleigh, says it "paves the way for other (viticultural areas) in the state.

"It's good because it produces a regional brand identity," she said. The designation allows Yadkin Valley winemakers to brand their wines, the same way Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley mark their bottles.

"Consumers can use it as a tool of recognition," McIntyre said. "It's good for the state because it helps to solidify the image of North Carolina as a quality wine and grape producer."

The designation becomes official Feb. 7 and covers 1.4 million acres of land in the Yadkin Valley, including all of Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties and parts of Stokes, Davie, Davidson and Forsyth counties. Patricia McRitchie, on behalf of Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, filed the request.

There are five wineries and more than 400 acres devoted to vineyards in the Yadkin Valley. Bobby Todd, president of the Yadkin County Chamber of Commerce, said he hopes the national designation will give the area more recognition as a wine producer.

"As time marches on and the wines become more well known" the area will

THE YADKIN VALLEY IS THE FIRST REGION IN THE STATE TO RECEIVE THE AMERICAN VITICULTURAL AREA DESIGNATION.

see a great impact, Todd said. "We are just beginning to see the surface scratched" in the wine industry in North Carolina.

Todd says the wine industry not only helps the economy on its own, but also draws visitors to the region who take advantage of other attractions in the area.

McIntyre, with the Grape Council, said there has already been talk in the southern portion of the Yadkin Valley of applying for another viticultural area designation. Such areas are allowed to overlap, she said.

"As soon as the word gets out" about the national designation, "the impact will be pretty immediate," she said. "There's a certain amount of prestige that comes with the designation."

According to the ATF's Federal Register, the group will consider expanding the Yadkin Valley area based on a request from Rep. Pryor Gibson, D-Montgomery County, into Stanley and Montgomery counties "when the appropriate supporting evidence is furnished."

"With this designation, there will definitely be others to follow," McIntyre said.

Reach **MATT HARRINGTON** at (336) 370-2918 or mharrington@bizjournals.com.

Gill Giese teaches about and loves the vineyard

By Patsy Bradley
Guest Writer

Mr. Gill Giese has been here just over a year and already is an important member of the community. He teaches viticulture, or grape growing, at Surry Community College. This together with wine making taught at Surry Community by Dr. Bob McRitchie will give the economy in this area a new interest in hopes of replacing the dwindling tobacco industry.

Gill and his family, wife Kelly and 9 year old daughter Amelia, arrived here last December. They came from Fayetteville, Ark. He was born in upstate New York into a military family. He has lived in the states of New York, Virginia, Ohio and also Guam. When he was 12 his father moved the family to a small farm in Arkansas. He met his future wife Kelly when he was 15. They didn't marry until he was 23 and she was 22.

He has a BS and an MS in horticulture from the University of Arkansas and a teaching certificate from Texas A & M. When Surry Community College asked for a teacher of viticulture he applied and was accepted. Now he and his family are living on Square Road off of Springs Road.

Kelly has been working with Polly Long at the high school. She has just been accepted at Duke Divinity School and will commute there until she graduates. Amelia is in the fourth grade at J.J. Jones Elementary School. They attend Maple Grove Methodist Church, which is off Rt. 89.

Before coming here he worked at the experiment farm at the University of Arkansas. He managed the vineyards in the summer and worked at the winery in

the winter. He has also worked at seed companies in California and South Florida. In the class he is going to teach here he will teach the students to install the vineyards and grow the grapes for table grapes and juice as well for wine making. Here there were 25 wineries last year and many more now. He has never seen anything grow so fast. He observes that the people here have a strong work ethic and an intimate knowledge of their land.

A North Carolina group called The Golden Leaf Foundation was formed to distribute the money from tobacco settlements. This has helped in the transition from tobacco growing to grape growing and wine making. This group helps with the program at Surry Community College and at The Old North State Winery Co-op on North Main Street in Mount Airy. He explained to me that co-ops are formed to help market a new product, to give it a presence.

Gill goes on to say that wine is a food that is part of a well-balanced diet. This is what the French people believe. The "French paradox" describes the French way of eating. They eat rich food but do not suffer as much from heart disease as we do. It is a fact that this is because of the red wine they drink with their meals. It is the same with dark grape juice.

Vineyards add aesthetic and economic value to the countryside. "What could be



Kevin Campbell, on the right, looks at grape vines along with Mr. Gill Giese.

prettier than a countryside covered with vineyards!" he exclaims.

Last year a well-known grape grower and wine maker from Australia gave a lecture at the community college. His name

is Dr. Richard Smart. About 100 grape growers attended. Dr. Smart said that he has never known a grape growing region to fail. Individual growers may fail but never a region.

The Mount Airy News

12-11-2002

WEDNESDAY

Established 1880

Mount Airy, N.C.

<http://www.mtairynews.com>

December 11, 2002

50 cents

Region's wines awarded Yadkin Valley designation

By **THERESA KILEN**
Staff Writer

DOBSON — After many months of anticipation, on Tuesday local wine growers received the news they have waited nearly two years to hear. Effective Feb. 7, all or part of seven counties in the northwestern region of North Carolina, will be officially known as the Yadkin Valley American Viticulture Area (AVA).

The appellation — a geographical name under which a wine grower is authorized to identify and market wine — is the first designation of its kind in the state.

Patricia McRitchie, Shelton Vineyards' vice president of Compliance, filed the petition on behalf of the vineyard to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms requesting the designation of the Yadkin Valley as an AVA in January of 2001.

"For an appellation process, this has moved rather quickly," she said recently.

Wade Nichols, vice chairman and public relations specialist for the The Old North State Winegrowers Association Inc. — a cooperative formed in 2000 to provide reliable sales channels for the region's grape growers and a means by which independent growers may bottle their wines — said that McRitchie deserves much of the credit for obtaining the designation so quickly.

"Patti, and all of the other people who worked to get this together, really

did a lot of homework ahead of time, so that when federal officials reviewed the application there were not a lot of unanswered questions," he said. "They did a great job."

Association Chairman C. Fred Jones Jr. said Tuesday that the designation "is an important step for our area."

"We are really very happy and excited about this," he said. "There are only 150 wine growing regions, or appellations, in this country, and this gives us our own region. It says that our area, our climate and our soil is conducive to producing good quality grapes and wines. Also, if a buyer is looking for a particular wine from this region, the appellation identifies all of our vineyards. That in itself is a really good, positive thing for our area."

Shelton Vineyards owners Ed and Charlie Shelton, whose vineyard in the last two years has amassed dozens of awards and accolades for its wines, couldn't be more pleased.

"We are very excited that the Yadkin Valley AVA has been approved. It has been a long process, but we are happy with the outcome," Ed Shelton said.

Brother and business partner Charlie Shelton agrees, adding, "The Yadkin Valley is unique in climate and soil. We think the wines produced from grapes grown in the Yadkin Valley are distinctive and being able to put Yadkin Valley on our labels will help the consumer better identify the wines they purchase."

The newly-created Yadkin Valley region encompasses a total of 1,416,000 acres, including all of Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties, as well as portions of Stokes, Davie, Davidson and Forsyth counties.

"This appellation is an extremely important means by which the wine growers and wine makers of this region will distinguish themselves in a crowded market," Nichols said.

"Yadkin Valley is a name unique to this region, and we hope to see it describe a taste and style of winemaking that characterizes this beautiful region and our grapes. The Yadkin Valley has distinctive soils and climate conditions, and we have a terrific farming heritage that is rapidly bringing our wine industry into the spotlight."

"The challenge before us now is to develop a coherent marketing and communications effort within the industry of the new Yadkin Valley viticultural area. We now want to shift our attention to ensuring that consumers know the name, and we believe this can be a great tool for building a strong demand for our wines in the coming years," he said.

There are currently six wineries and more than 400 acres devoted to vineyards in the Yadkin Valley. Several more wineries are planned or are currently being constructed in the area. In addition, local Surry Community College in Dobson, has the only viticulture and enology degree program on the east coast.



Photo by Mondee Tilley

Alex Young, general manager of Midkiff's Restaurant on Main Street, stands near a display of Shelton Vineyards wine featured in the restaurant's foyer. Young said Tuesday that Shelton wines, and other local wines such as those from the Westbend Vineyard, "sell very well" at Midkiff's. "We actually suggest these local wines to our customers and the Shelton Vineyards Chardonnay is one of our best sellers."

Shelton Vineyards wines continue to gather awards

New varieties released in time for holidays

By **THERESA KILEN**
Staff Writer

DOBSON — Continuing a winning streak that began with its 2000 wines, Shelton Vineyards in Dobson continues to collect regional, national and international awards as it strives to establish itself as a world-class winery.

Most recently, at the Wines of the South competition held last month in Tennessee, each of the eight Shelton wines that were entered this year received a medal.

Shelton Vineyards was honored with the competition's "Best of Red" designation for its 2000 North Carolina Merlot, in addition to a gold medal for both this merlot and its 2000 Georgia Blackstock Vineyards Merlot. Both the 2001 North Carolina Syrah and Madison Lee Red Wine took silver, while the Salem Fork Blush, Salem Fork Zephyr Red, 2001 North Carolina Chardonnay and 2000 North Carolina Cabernet Sauvignon garnered the vineyard bronze medals.

Also in November, at the 17th Annual American Wine Society Commercial Wine Competition in Buffalo, N.Y., Shelton Vineyards picked up five more medals. In this international competition that featured more than 1,200 wines, silver medals were awarded to Shelton's 2001 North Carolina Chardonnay and the Salem Fork Blush, while its 2000 North Carolina Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2000 North Carolina Merlot and the 2000 Georgia BlackStock Vineyards Merlot each won bronze medals.

Not content to rest upon its laurels, Shelton Vineyards is expanding its offerings to include its first vintage of estate White Riesling, a German-style wine, which was introduced to the public during its 2nd annual Holiday Open House held Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.

Patricia McRitchie, vice president of compliance, said the vineyard now grows 10 acres of



Designation to boost Yadkin wine industry

By **MATT HARRINGTON** THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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The Mount Airy News

TUESDAY

Established 1880

Mount Airy, N.C.

<http://www.mtairynews.com>

October 8, 2002

50 cents

Shelton wines gathering accolades

By **THERESA KILEN**
Staff Writer

"Grapes of such greatness, yet wild, as France, Spain, nor Italy hath no greater."

— Florentine explorer Giovanni de Verrazzano while exploring North Carolina in 1524.

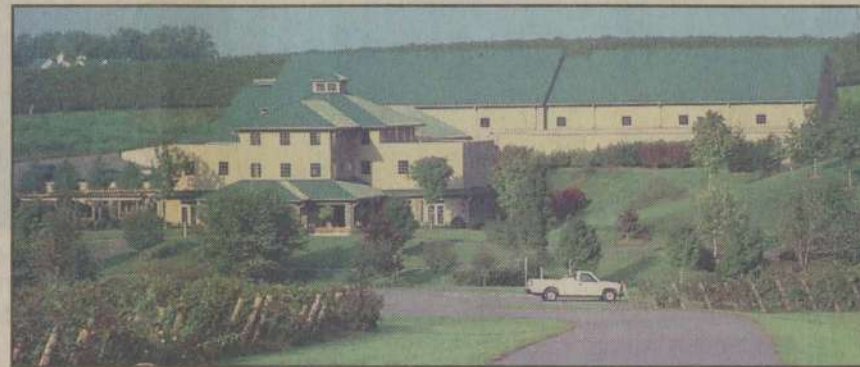
DOBSON — Is the young and burgeoning Yadkin Valley wine region destined to become one of the Napa Valley's most formidable competitors?

Sean McRitchie, Shelton Vineyards' vice-president and general manager — echoing the sentiments of vineyard owners Ed and Charlie Shelton — says, "Yes."

"We are absolutely establishing ourselves as a national-class winery," McRitchie said. "We have already competed and have won gold and silver medals in several wine competitions both nationally and internationally, as well as several state awards."

"We compete, in part, for our own study. In trying to compete with as many other places as possible, we're grading ourselves."

With its third harvest now complete, Shelton Vineyards is leading the way in the Yadkin Valley. Throughout the region, grape cultivation and wine making is enjoying a revival in the state that produced the nation's first cultivated wine grape. Wine making



Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

The Shelton Estate is located off Twin Oaks Road south of Dobson.

thrived in North Carolina until the onset of prohibition in the 1920s. Now, 80 years later, the northwestern district of the state is in the midst of an eno-

logical renaissance that, in the future, may prove to play a major part not only in its economic recovery, but in its ability to thrive and to grow.

"Tourism is great here," McRitchie said. "We are so fortunate to be where we are: close to the interstate, which draws a lot of travelers. The number of people who come through here to tour our winery is growing all the time."

"Right now, our main market is in North Carolina. We distribute around the state, but we are being seen in more and more markets, which may also help draw people to us."

"Tourism is important in that it

See WINES, page 2

County school board discusses drug tests

By **WENDY BYERLY**
Staff Writer

DOBSON — The Surry County Board of Education on Monday began a discussion of drug testing for students in extracurricular activities.

"I believe, based on things I have heard from reliable sources, that some of our students — mostly in athletics — have been involved in drug use," began Board Chairman Graham Atkinson, who also is a lieutenant with the Surry County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division. "I have heard things like steroids, marijuana and other things."

School attorney Fred Johnson went over the basics with the board:

"In 1995, the United States Supreme Court approved drug testing for student athletes. In June this year, they upheld that decision, adding all extracurricular activities.

give their consent for you to participate in drug testing," Johnson proposed as just one of many types of rules that could be included in a drug-testing policy.

He emphasized, "The students are not turned over to law enforcement, but rather to counseling for therapeutic reasons."

The board can make the decision to remove a student from an activity after a positive test or the school can let students remain while going through counseling.

Johnson explained that the tests can be done in a way to protect the privacy of the student, so that only one person in the entire school will know what student is assigned to the random number picked for the test. Also, they can take into account any conditions or medication that would affect the testing.



Wines

Continued from page 1

builds diversity. Wine is just another draw. Any one thing will not be a cure-all for the economy, but large-scale tourism would have an effect in the creation of new businesses, hotels, restaurants, et cetera. We are managing to get them out of Charlotte and into Surry County, though."

Farmers and legislators agree that the wine industry has great potential as a new alternative to tobacco in this part of the country. While there exist other alternatives to growing tobacco, not many ventures offer the same income potential as that of viticulture.

In 1994, brothers Ed and Charlie Shelton bought the 343 acres of land on Twin Oaks Road southwest of Dobson where the estate winery and vineyards sit. Interested in wine making for years as a hobby, the Sheltons in 1998 began the installation of approximately 200 acres of vineyards. Construction of the high-tech, 33,000-square-foot winery began in 1999. In the spring of 2000, Shelton Vineyards opened for tours and began production of its first North Carolina-grown wines.

Shelton Vineyards was the forerunner in the Tri-County area and remains the on-going inspiration for many of those who are making the transition from one agribusiness to the other.

There are now 14 varieties of grapes planted on the vineyard, from cabernet to viognier. It is estimated that each acre of the grafted, North American root-stock vines yields four tons of grapes per harvest. The vineyard is now bottling between 50,000 and 60,000 cases of wine annually.

The vineyard has accumulated gold, silver and bronze



"The Cave" at Shelton Vineyard has a design based upon a traditional French cave. An earthen floor helps create the right humidity for aging wine. There is also a small "waterfall" on the far wall that runs from a spring.

medals in numerous state, national and international competitions. In addition to its award-winning 2002 merlot, cabernet and syrah, the jewel in the Shelton Vineyards crown is the 2000 chardonnay that won 11 medals and impressed judges coast to coast.

The estate has won prizes in the 2002 Grand Harvest Awards Wine Competition in Santa Rosa, Calif.; Taster's Guild 6th annual Wine Lovers' Consumers' Wine Competition in Washington, D.C.; the 2001 Atlanta International Wine Summit Competition; the 2002 New World International Wine Competition in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.; the 2001 American Wine Society Wine Compe-

dition at Hilton Head Island, S.C., where it won best of Show; and the 2001 North Carolina Wine Competition in Raleigh where it won the N.C. Winegrower's Cup.

It is an impressive resume for an up-and-coming vineyard.

Said McRitchie, "Every site is different and every climate is different. You can't compare North Carolina to any other place in the world. We entered into this with the capability of doing it right and there's enormous potential here. We still have a long way to go and a lot to learn, but that is the fun part — farming, watching the weather, maintaining the vineyard, wine making. We're here to let the world know that all wine does not come from California."

"It is so much fun to plant something," McRitchie also said, "get the crop into the tanks and into the bottles. You have something grown on North Carolina soil and now it's at the bar."

Even the four-year drought, that has caused millions of dollars in crop damage across the state, has worked in the vineyard's favor.

"As an estate winery, we're after quality, not quantity," he said. "Grapes are like trees in

that they do not need a lot of water to thrive. You get some of the best flavors from the fruit when it is dehydrated — it increases its natural sugars. This year's wines will benefit from that, I'm sure. Also, the dry weather decreases disease pressures.

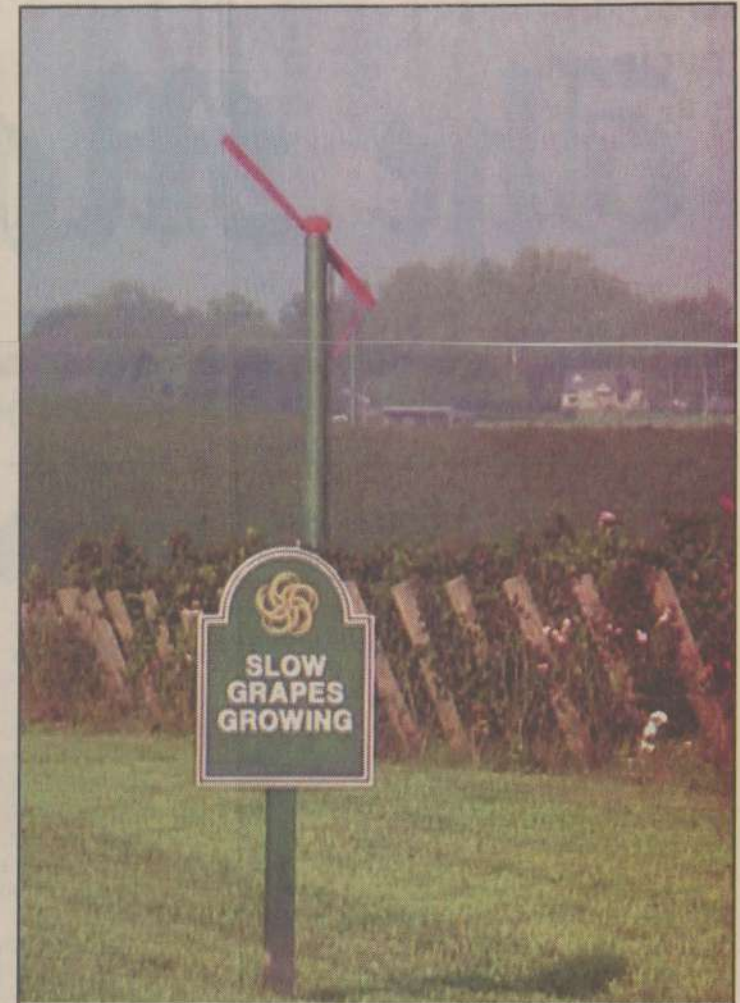
"The weather here — mild summers and winters — is ideal for grape production, but it's tricky. Farming in the area is kind of like sailing a ship. You constantly have to make decisions in regard to your crop. Dry weather may provide a boon, but a hurricane could wipe out everything you've worked for. We have to work our harvests around all of that."

The 2002 harvest not only produced premium sweet grapes, it will also produce some new wines this fall.

McRitchie said that for the first time, Shelton Vineyards will bottle a white riesling, a German-style wine, and a sauvignon blanc. Both will be bottled and marketed by Thanksgiving.

"We've had chardonnay, chardonnay for a few years. Now we have more white varieties kicking in," he said.

The next step is to get consumers who have not yet done



Signs at the vineyard bear the Shelton wine's crest and a reminder to visitors of the time involved in producing wine.

so to try North Carolina wines.

"I would think that as consumers, people would want to purchase products produced on the state's own soil and support their own economy," he said. "Sometimes it can be a hard sell trying to get people to try regional products — I think that now there is a winery in every state in the U.S. — but North Carolina has so much potential and people are beginning to see that."

"As for leading the way, we have our own standard, as each individual winery does. Just like us, each of them is focused on quality. That is the only thing that holds wineries together — producing a quality product."

McRitchie said he welcomes, and is glad to see, the establishment of many new wineries in the area.

"As more wineries are established, it will be even more worth it for tourists to come and stay, go from winery to winery, and take in all that we have to offer," he explained.

For years, the Shelton brothers have made no secret of their desire to see a legitimate wine

region flourish in Surry and its surrounding counties.

"We have more people in the 150 miles around our winery than they do in the 150 miles around the Napa Valley," Charlie Shelton said. "We have more people to draw from. I can see hotels, restaurants and even a golf course here in the future."

McRitchie agrees that the possibilities are endless.

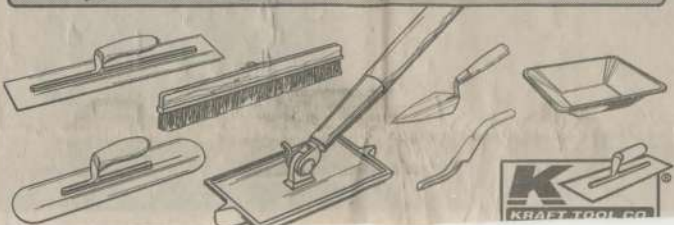
His wife, Patricia, the vineyard's vice-president of compliance, now is in the process of selecting 2001 entries for this year's wine competitions. So far, she has entered Shelton's 2001 chardonnay into the Taster's Guild 7th annual Wine Lovers' Consumers' Wine Competition in Washington, D.C., where it garnered a silver medal and in the third annual Jefferson Food & Wine Classic in Hot Springs, Va., where it won a certificate of American merit. The winery's staff is confident there will be more accolades to come.

"This year, our numbers were real good," McRitchie said. "This is a very exciting time for us."

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A new leaf

- With tobacco profits up in smoke, more area farmers are turning to viticulture.

Sunday afternoon's dedication of the RagApple Lassie Winery in Boonville marks another milestone in the evolution of the area's agriculture.

It's also an important chapter in the rapidly developing viticulture industry that is sprouting up in the Yadkin Valley Area.

Like most farmers in the area, Frank Hobson Jr. has depended heavily upon tobacco for his income. But over the years, as the fortunes of tobacco began to decline, Hobson and his wife Lenna decided to embark on a new business venture.

Following the lead of Hanover Park Vineyards in Courtney and Shelton Vineyards across the Yadkin River in the Twin Oaks community in Surry County, Hobson began converting some of his tobacco fields into a vineyard. The first wines, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, were planted in April 2000.

A little more than two years later, RagApple Lassie dedicated its new winery. A large crowd turned out Sunday to sample the new wines and tour the just-built winery, initially designed to produce 10,000 cases of wine.

Judging from Sunday's crowd, RagApple Lassie is destined for success.

That's an important barometer in a local economy beset with turmoil in tobacco and massive layoffs in the textile industry. Whether we like it or not, our agricultural landscape will continue to change.

No one ever said that change is easy, and it's particularly difficult for generations of farming communities that have become accustomed to reaping the dividends of the golden leaf. Many farmers followed in their ancestors' footsteps, making a living the only way they ever knew how.

And yet tobacco farmers, like all good businessmen and women, are quick to tell you they are having a tough time these days with the uncertainty of civil litigation, dramatic cuts in allotments, and yet another buyout proposal.

Some farmers, like the Hobsons, have decided to take a proactive approach. Yes, there is certainly a lot of risk (not to mention costs) involved with a new vineyard and winery. But at least there are some out there who are willing to take those risks, looking for ways to diversify their income and keep the family farm.

Years from now, we are confident will look back at the first winegrowers in the Yadkin Valley Area and thank them for having the vision to make this historic step.

Planting a Vineyard? Weed Management Starts Now!

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If you intend to plant a vineyard this spring, think about weed management considerations now. In most cases vineyards are planted into established grass sods. A common practice is killing the sod in the vine rows prior to tillage operations ahead of planting. Roundup UltraMax, or Touchdown may be used to kill sods. Roundup UltraMax or Touchdown at 2.4 or 3 qt/acre, respectively, will control most cool season grass mixtures, common to wine grape production areas. For cool season grass (fescue, bluegrass) mixtures, applications should be made in mid-fall, when these species are actively growing. In areas where warm season grass (bermudagrass) mixtures are common a late summer to early fall application of Roundup UltraMax or Touchdown at 3.2 or 4 qt/acre, respectively, is more appropriate. One question often asked is "How long after applying my herbicide must I wait before tillage can be done?" Usually 4 weeks is adequate.

Weed control the first year is important. Several preemergence herbicide options are available in newly planted vineyards. Surflan is the most commonly used product in newly planted grapes. It provides excellent pigweed, common lambsquarters, and annual grass control. Surflan should be applied once soil has settled after transplanting. Problems with the manufacturing facility has limited its availability, however this is expected to change. An alternative to Surflan is Prowl. Prowl should be applied once soil has settle after transplanting, but can not be applied once bud break occurs. Prowl provides similar weed control as Surflan. In addition to the preemergence herbicides, postemergence herbicides applications will be necessary. Weed spectrum, growing conditions, and the long growing season make weed control in Southeast more difficult than in other regions of the United States. At least 1 or 2 applications of a non-selective herbicide, like Gramoxone Max or Rely, will be needed. The need for Gramoxone Max or Rely requires grow tubes or some other form of protection to shield tender vines from the herbicide spray. if postemergence grass control is needed Poast, Fusilade, and Select are all registered for use in newly planted vineyards. These products provide effective control of perennial grass weeds like bermudagrass and Johnsongrass as well as annual grass weeds like crabgrass.

The Mount Airy

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Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

Bryan Anderson, head cheese maker at Shelton Cheeses, and Cindy Beaman, Shelton Cheeses manager, work with what they hope will be another batch of award-winning cheeses.

Shelton's cheeses join wine as award winners

By **THERESA KILEN**

Staff Writer

DOBSON — North Carolina is not typically known as a cheese-producing state, but that however, is about to change.

"When you think of cheeses, you think of Vermont, Wisconsin and California," Shelton Cheeses Manager Cindy Beaman said. "We are hoping that will not always be the case."

Just as Shelton Vineyard wines are making a splash across the state — its 2000 Chardonnay won best in show in Raleigh last October — Bryan Anderson, head cheese maker at Shelton Cheeses, has brought a new honor to the Shelton name.

Three of Anderson's cheeses took home awards at the prestigious 19th annual American Cheese Society Competition in Washington, D.C., that was held July 31 and Aug. 1. No small achievement for a company barely out of its infancy.

Shelton Cheeses took home a second-place award in the category of Aged Goat's Milk Cheeses for its unique "Blue Ridge Round," a vegetable ash ripened, aged chevre; a second place honor in the Soft Ripened Cheese: Goat and Sheep's Milk category for its "Twin Oaks Brie;" and in the category of American-made International Style Cheese, received another second-place honor for its "Shelton Estate Tomme," the house cheese of Shelton Cheeses, made from Jersey cow milk.

Shelton Cheeses opened its doors March 19, 2001, under the direction of former Head Cheesemaker Laura Doerr. At the time, Doerr had been with the vineyard for about a year preparing for cheese production and the opening of the new shop, which was to coincide with the release of the first of Shelton Vineyards' North Carolina-produced wines.

Doerr spent part of that year touring small cheese-making



Norma Schoffstall mixes seasoning for some of the Shelton Cheeses' special blends.

facilities in Vermont, California and Wisconsin, doing extensive research into the processes of making a variety of cheeses, reading and taking classes to prepare herself for the task of creating the winery's cheeses.

"Cheese and wine are natural companions," Doerr said just after the shop's opening. "Also, tobacco is a dying commodity in this area. Ed and Charlie Shelton wanted to get into new agribusinesses in an effort to help the area grow and to move in other directions."

As time went on and Doerr

found it difficult to manage cheese production and the management of the shop by herself, she put an advertisement in the newspaper for an apprentice cheesemaker.

Anderson, an Elkin resident, was working as a chef at The Elevator Café on Main Street in Elkin when he noticed the advertisement.

"I was intrigued by the idea," he said. "It sounded like something I thought I'd like to do."

Anderson was hired — Doerr had no idea she had just em-

Theresa Kilen/The Mount Airy News

ployed the young man who would bring national recognition to the fledgling business.

When Doerr left in December to pursue another start-up opportunity on the West Coast, Anderson took over.

"Bryan had a background in food and an understanding of how different flavors and foods work together, but he had no formal training in cheese making," Beaman said. "He learned much of what he knows from

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Cheeses

Continued from page 1

Laura and, too, he has a natural talent.

"Many of the people who won these awards have been perfecting their technique for 10 or 12 years, or more. We're only a year-and-a-half old. He pulled out these award-winning cheeses and didn't even expect to."

Ironically, none of the three people who comprise the Shelton Cheeses staff — Anderson,

Beaman and Norma Schoffstall, who blends herbs and other ingredients to create the many custom-made chevre cheeses at the shop — imagined their products would place, much less win.

"None of us even attended the competition," Beaman said. "We sent our cheeses to them by mail. We found out that we had won through someone who works our Whole Foods Market account in Chapel Hill."

The account representative broke the news during a telephone call to the shop to con-

gratulate Anderson on his win.

"It was a complete surprise to us," Beaman said. "When I told Bryan, he just kept saying, 'Get out of here!' It took a little while for it to sink in, I think."

Anderson said that he is now "experimenting" with new cheese creations that he hopes will bring further honors not only to the Shelton Cheeses name, but also to North Carolina. He added that next year the cheeses he will enter in the competition would not be sent to judges by mail.

"Next year, I plan on winning first place, and," he smiled, "I plan to be there when it happens."

Shelton Cheeses is located on the grounds of Shelton Vineyards, on Twin Oaks Road southwest of Dobson, near Interstate 77. The 383-acre estate has 200 acres of premium vinifera grapes and offers daily tours and tastings at both its winery and cheese shop.

Orders may also be placed at the Shelton Cheeses website at www.sheltoncheeses.com, or at the Shelton Vineyards website at www.sheltonvineyards.com.



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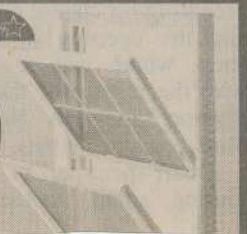
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AGRICULTURE

PROGRESS EDITION 2002 THE MOUNT AIRY NEWS, SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2002

Vineyard Effort Growing In Surry

By CAROLINE BEAMER
Staff Writer

The growing of grapes for wine is becoming more and more popular in Surry County. In an area that's part of the Yadkin River Valley where the soil and temperatures are supposed to be conducive to grape growing, Surry County now has farms where trellises line the rows rather than tobacco or soy beans.

Two wineries are established, with the largest being Shelton Vineyards, where visitors may take tours, sample wines and purchase gifts and wine and cheese made at the site off Twin Oaks Road.

Black Wolf Vineyards on U.S. 601 at Dobson opened a restaurant this year, adding an element of fine dining to its trellised hills.

Surry Community College received a \$300,000 grant this year to continue its development of a viticulture program. This program has many students traveling from out of town to take courses, according to instructors.

Another recent development has been the establishment of the Old North State Winegrowers Cooperative. This organization has a board of directors composed of growers primarily from this area. The purpose of the cooperative is to have the farmers teaming up to produce their wine and then market it.

Farmers who want to see their own labels on bottles of wine need to have their grapes "custom crushed." The expense of installing a winery is too prohibitive for each farmer, so the cooperative has the goal of building a winery where members can have their wine crushed and bottled.

Local grower Wade Nichols has planted three acres of Cabernet Sauvignon and an acre of Sangiovese. "The vines come in faster here than they do in Napa Valley," he commented. The cost of ordering plants and getting them in the ground runs about \$5,000 to \$7,000 an acre, he said.

Nichols has been instrumental in getting the cooperative established, and he also would like to use the services of the cooperative. He said it's his vision to see this area become "the Napa Valley of the East." He and others hope that some day the winery and the vineyards will be drawing cards for tourists.

"I think this is a real good opportunity for the surrounding counties to start a new industry," said James Shore of

Sanders Ridge Vineyards.

The evolution of the rural atmosphere plays a role too. "A major point of all of this is to keep the family farm alive," said Billy Needham, who last year planted an acre of Chardonnay and calls his vineyard Fox Creek.

Bob McRitchie, viticulture professor at Surry Community College, said the collaboration that the cooperative provides is helpful.

"The two best tools are retrospection and collaboration," said McRitchie. "We belong to a curious family. No matter where you go, you are welcome with other people who grow grapes. People in this business share information. Sharing helps us progress. It goes beyond this room and beyond the entire North Carolina growers."

Nichols said the cooperative hopes to provide competitive contracts for grapes, offer awards for high quality productions, offer discounts on supplies, offer professional consulting services for vineyard management and provide seminars and technical publications.

"If you put a bottle in Lowes in Mount Airy, you are competing internationally," said McRitchie. "There is no substitute for excellence. The best and most important element is the quality of the grapes...The concept of the cooperative is a good idea."

Nichols said the cooperative is set up so that each vineyard that is a member will get one vote, and the elected board will set policy and supervise the general manager of the cooperative's winery.

"This is a needed voice," said Nichols. "This is one of the voices that can arise. All voices need to be heard to make an effective wine state in this region."

Nichols said the cooperative plans on building a winery to produce wines from member vineyards so that the vineyards do not have to go through the large expense of building their own winery, while still bottling the wines under the vineyard's label. The cooperative also will operate a tasting room and a retail sales outlet.

"The purpose of the co-op is we want to be the spring board, the catalyst, for people to develop their own winery," said Gray Draughn, member of the steering committee. "We want to provide a market. We want this to become a wine region."

The cooperative anticipates building a winery of about 15,000 square feet, built modu-



ROWS OF VINES: Grape growing has become a commodity for Surry County farmers who hope to make money in the wine business.

larly to accommodate any additions. Nichols said the cooperative anticipates being able to produce at the 5,000 case level in 2003. Nichols said the cooperative is looking at the greater Elkin area to build the winery.

"I think this is a real good opportunity for the surrounding counties to start a new industry," said Shore. "It is a good way to liven up the area. It is a catalyst to start industry up pretty good...I think there is a lot of opportunity here."

Nichols said the custom wine producing will be priced around the \$18 to \$22 a case range and the grower will provide the grapes, bottles, corks, labels and special additives.

Building costs are estimated, said Nichols, at \$650,000 and equipment costs of one year are estimated at \$682,322. Nichols said members would pay \$1 per vine in membership fees.

"It allows a person to postpone the expense of building a winery," said Nichols. "It is a way we can all share the expense, because it is difficult to find a winemaker."

Members paid \$250 to reserve their membership. Twenty-six vineyards signed up for memberships. Nichols said the remaining balance would be



TIME OF REST: In February the grape vines are dormant, waiting for the pruner's hand and warmer weather to set them back on their path to production.

Vines

Continued from page 1

due in three installments by June 30, 2002.

“We are investing in the future of our vineyards and wine-making industry in our region,” said Nichols.

Nichols said once the cooperative turns profitable, dividends would be distributed back to the vineyard owners.

“It is important to create a sound market for the grapes,” said Nichols. “We need to introduce the element of competition needed to create a market for the industry in the state. It is needed to put North Carolina on the map as a real wine region.”

Local Winery Seeking Grape-Growing Certification

DOBSON (AP) — A Surry County winery hopes to capitalize on the location of its vineyards like the wine-makers do in the Napa and Sonoma valleys.

Shelton Vineyards in Dobson has asked the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to establish the Yadkin Valley as a viticultural, or grape-growing, region.

There are 145 viticultural regions in the nation — most in California, the Pacific Northwest and New York — but none in North Carolina, according to the ATF.

“That’s because there hasn’t been such a cluster of vineyards and wineries, yet,” said Tania Dautlick, executive director of the North Carolina Grape Council, a state agency that encourages development of the wine industry. “Until now, they were scattered with people experimenting to find suitable regions.”

Patricia McRitchie, who filed the petition on behalf of Shelton Vineyards, said that establishing a region will help consumers identify the origin of their wine.

“Once a region is estab-

➤ See WINERY, page 3A

MAN 2/11/02

Winery

Continued from page 1A

lished, people will know, for example, that Yadkin Valley can produce a great Chardonnay," McRitchie said.

Vineyards that make wines made from grapes grown in the area can label only the county, state and country of origin.

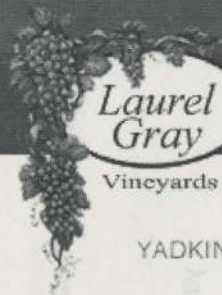
"But Surry County doesn't mean much to people once you're beyond this immediate area," McRitchie said.

The proposed area falls along the upper Yadkin River basin and includes 1,924 square miles, encompassing all of Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin counties and parts of Forsyth and Davie. In the proposed region, there are 350 acres of vineyards, 200 of which are part of the Shelton Vineyards.

The ATF opened up the issue up for public comment this week. The petition will go back to the agency for possible modification. It would then be sent to the U.S. Department of the Treasury for final approval.

Tim DeVanney of the ATF said that petitions are sometimes modified but rarely denied.

Matthew Mayberry, who worked on the geographic boundaries for the petition, said he expects additional land in the Yadkin Valley region to be dedicated to wine grapes in coming years.



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Viticulture Program Growing At SCC

MidSouth News Service

DOBSON - Where would you go to get a degree in grape-growing and winemaking on the East Coast?

Surry Community College is offering something that no other college in the state, or for that matter, the East Coast has to offer - a degree program for people interested in growing grapes and producing wines.

The viticulture and enology program at SCC has been around for two years and is preparing to graduate its first group of about 10 students this spring. The college offers a certificate, diploma or degree in grape-growing and wine production.

Bob McRitchie, professor of viticulture and enology at the college, said the school is looking to develop an eight-acre vineyard and winery so that students can "get their hands dirty."

"The course work covers everything from basic plant science to, eventually, marketing," he said Thursday. "If a student wants to become a viticulturist exclusively, we have two good years of course work."

McRitchie said the land has been prepared for planting and the plan is to let students plant in half-acre increments. He hopes to have students begin planting in mid-April.

"It (the program) has helped me," said student Neil Shore of Boonville. "I grew up and live on a tobacco farm. Grapes are foreign to me. I am lucky that there is an offering of these classes so close."

Shore intends to start planting his own grapes this spring, starting with five acres and adding about that amount each year until he cover his 22-acre site.

McRitchie said most of the students are taking the courses because they want to start their own vineyard and winemaking venture.

"The students are excited," McRitchie said. "We have an enthusiastic group."

McRitchie said SCC's vineyard will give students experience in laying out vineyard plans, as well as tending to young vines through mature ones once the vineyard has been through a couple of plant-

ings.

The land is behind the football field at Surry Central High School. The property is owned by the high school and the college has an agreement to let the viticulture and enology program use it.

"In developing the vineyard, we are putting together a winery that will accommodate 20,000 tons of grapes," McRitchie said. "Some students have indicated that they will run some of their grapes through the facility. That building will also house our offices. It is miniscule, but it will be legitimate with the kinds of quality tools to make good wines."

McRitchie said the winery will be in one of the existing buildings on campus.

"The building is not very romantic looking, but I have made wonderful wine in an old garage. The beauty of the facility doesn't equate to the beauty of the wine."

Dr Frank Sells, president of the college, said he is excited that the college is able to

► See PROGRAM, page 3A

Program

Continued from page 1A

offer the program.

"The program attracts students from both locally and outside the area," Sells said. "We are attempting to get as many courses online as possible."

McRitchie said the students in the viticulture and enology program will get a solid background in education and will be able to really participate in what is involved in developing the vineyard and winemaking facilities.

"There are easier ways to make a living," McRitchie said. "You've got to do it because you love it."

Sells said he is excited about the program for two reasons.

"It is a whole new concept for the area," Sells said. "It has a lot of potential for salvaging agriculture. So far nothing has come close to salvaging tobacco as a cash crop. There is potential for it to be a very economically and highly monetary cash crop. But it won't happen soon."

"Since we are trying to do a whole lot more with tourism, the wineries tend to do that. Anywhere you have wineries, it attracts a lot of people that are interested in it."

McRitchie said the area is growing in wine production, but it will take time for the region to gain credibility.

"We're in a world market whether we want to be or not," McRitchie said. "Excellence is an extremely important part of the whole thing."

McRitchie said he is encouraged about the future of the program at the college.

"I hope that before I croak, we have a program that is up and running and established," said McRitchie. "We have a good bunch of students. They are intelligent and intellectually

aggressive...They are excited about wine but they don't let their excitement overshadow their reason. These students want to do it right."

McRitchie said the draw to growing grapes and making wines seems to attract all sorts of people to the program. He said he has taught a banker, a writer, a housewife and a police officer.

"It's like most agriculture - you can't generate a formula and you have to stay on your feet," said McRitchie. "It is continually challenging and fascinating. There is room for almost any kind of interest. That's what has kept me interested."

Sells said the college has also hired another professor for the program that will concentrate more on the grape-growing side of the program. Gill Giese will begin teaching in December. Giese has five years of experience managing a vineyard at the University of Arkansas and has also been a farmer. McRitchie said Giese has retail and practical experience and a strong interest in teaching.

McRitchie spent several years teaching and researching after he graduated with a Ph.D. in comparative physiology from Rice University. He said he stumbled into the wine business in 1972, looking for a change in pace. McRitchie spent five years in Napa Valley, Calif., as a winemaker, then spent 26 years in Oregon as a commercial wine maker.

Sells said the program began during the spring semester two years ago in the continuing education department. He said last fall the college instituted a degree program.

"This program has a lot to offer for the students in terms of interest as well as job markets," said Sells. "I feel like it is a good program."

MAN 11/16/01



Angela Leonard/The Mount Airy News

Grape Harvest

Employees of Shelton Vineyards, Dobson, harvest Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes last Friday morning. The grapes are cut, carried by bucket to trailers, and then transported from the vineyard to the winery where they are crushed to begin their transformation into wines.



The Mount Airy News

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MAN 6/15/2001

Mondee Cox/The Mount Airy News

FIRST HARVEST: A machine which places the labels on the newly bottled Shelton Vineyards Wine zips through 50 bottles a minute while Liliana Rodriguez places the wine in boxes Thursday.

Shelton Vineyard Bottles First Wine

From Staff Reports

DOBSON — The first bottles of wine to ever be produced at Shelton Vineyard's on Twin Oak Road rolled off the production line Thursday.

"Our supplies are in and we eagerly await the opportunity to use our new bottling line," said Sean McRitchie,

vice president, and general manager.

Although the vineyard produces several different types of wines, their Chardonnay was the first to be bottled. The wine is from their first harvest in the fall of 2000.

The bottling equipment put into production for the first time Thursday is capable of producing 50 bottles per

minute, 3,000 per hour and 2,000 cases per day.

Shelton Vineyard and Shelton Cheeses are located in the Yadkin Valley near Dobson. The 383-acre estate has 200 acres of producing vineyard. The owners are Charlie and Ed Shelton.



"It's a great way to bring credibility and visibility to the wine industry. And it's a great way for people to get out and sample a number of wines at one place."

Tania Dautlick, the executive director of the North Carolina Grape Council



JOURNAL ILLUSTRATION BY NICHOLAS WEIR

'We Gotta Do That'

North Carolina Wine Festival returns amid blooming of new vineyards in the state

By **Michael Hastings**
JOURNAL FOOD EDITOR

The North Carolina Wine Festival is back after a one-year hiatus. The festival will be held Saturday at Tanglewood Park in Clemmons.

Radio station WSJS is organizing the festival, which will consist of tastings of wine from eight state wineries, live entertainment and a grape stomp.

The festival was first held in 1999, organized by Tanglewood Park, but was skipped last year after Forsyth County took over management of the park.

The station stepped in after Mike Fenley, WSJS's program director, attended the first festival, liked what he saw and suggested that the station get involved. "I was the one who got to emcee all the acts, and I thought it was a great event," Fenley said. "I kept saying to our people here, 'We gotta do that. We gotta do that.' And someone finally listened."

Tom Hamilton, the station's general manager, said that once WSJS contacted the North Carolina Grape Council, the festival came together pretty easily.

"They were anxious to do a festival, if the wineries were willing to participate. We proposed it to wineries at a meeting and they were ecstatic. The way we see it, the vineyards are a new industry in the state that may replace lost revenues from tobacco."

Tania Dautlick, the executive director of the grape council, said that an annual festival is something that the council has been talking about for years. "We've just been waiting for the right people to come along and organize it for us," she said.

She said that the council was encouraged by the first festival, attended by six wineries and about 1,800 people, and liked this area because it is centrally located in the state and a lot of wineries are close by.

"A lot of states have several festivals," Dautlick said. "It's a great way to bring credibility and visibility to the wine industry. And it's a great

way for people to get out and sample a number of wines at one place."

One of the livelier events at the festival is likely to be the Grape Stomp, run by Duplin Winery of Rose Hill. Participants will be invited to take off their shoes and put their feet to work to see who can stomp the most juice.

Ann Fussell of Duplin Winery said the way a stomp usually works is that a bunch of half-barrels, each big enough for one adult, are filled with grapes. With music serving as the starting gun, participants stomp away, and when the music stops, the juice is measured. Prizes are typically awarded to the person who stomps the most juice, as well as those who have the best stomping style and even the best costume.

Fussell warned that stomping isn't everyone's cup of juice. "The grapes are very slick," she said. "What most people say is, 'Ewww, it's like I'm walking in eyeballs.' But it's a lot of fun."

She said that the stomping period is usually just 45 seconds, but that it's enough to give most people

IF YOU GO

The North Carolina Wine Festival will be held from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday at Tanglewood Park in Clemmons.

Admission is \$12 in advance, \$18 at the gate and free for children 12 and under. The back of each ticket will have a \$3 coupon to the food court at Hanes Mall.

Tickets are available at all Lowes Foods stores in the Triad. They are also being sold in Winston-Salem at 59 Society and The Vineyards restaurants, Buena Vista Shop, Windsor Jewelers, Woodward & Co. asset-management company, and WSJS radio; in Greensboro at Bob Dunn Jaguar and Lancaster Gas & Patio; and in Kernersville at Fabric Forum.

Admission includes wine tastings, seminars and a grape stomp. Live jazz and classical music will be provided by The Piedmont Wind Symphony, Alamance Jazz Band and Janice Price & Priceless.

The tentative schedule for seminars is Wine Tasting 101, 12:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.; Wine and Cheese Pairing, 1:30 p.m.; Home Winemaking, 2:30 p.m.; and Home Grape Growing, 4:30 p.m. Seminars will last 20 to 30 minutes.

Proper identification will be required to participate in the tastings. WSJS, the organizer of the festival, has set up a designated-driver program to help ensure a safe festival.

Water and soft drinks will be available to underage attendees, and a concession stand will sell gourmet burgers and sandwiches. Beer will also be sold.

For more information, call WSJS at 777-3900.

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

FESTIVAL

Continued From Page E1

a workout. "You can do a lot of stomping in 45 seconds," Fussell said.

For entertainment, the festival will have performances by the Piedmont Wind Symphony, Alamance Jazz Band and Janice Price & Priceless. A concession stand will sell burgers and sandwiches. Beer will also be for sale, as well as sodas and water. Participants will receive wristbands after presenting identification and different wristbands will identify designated drivers.

All eight participating wineries will be organized under one tasting tent at the festival. Wineries will also sell bottles of wine.

The council will have an information table for consumers and potential growers and winemakers. It also plans seminars throughout the day on such subjects as wine-tasting etiquette and home winemaking.

One topic of conversation at the council's table is sure to be the tremendous growth of the state's wine industry, which has retail sales of about \$25 million a year.

In 1991, North Carolina had 68 vineyards, or places where grapes are grown. Now it has more than 250.

The state has 21 wineries, where wine is made, and Dautlick expects four more wineries to open in the next year. Two of the newest wineries in the state will be at the festival.

Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, which got started last year, is the state's largest winery. Raylen Vineyards in Mocksville just opened to the public Friday. It's led by winemaker Steve Shepard, who made some of the award-winning wines at West-bend Vineyards in Lewisville.

Other participating wineries will be Duplin, Rockhouse Vineyards of Tryon, Waldensian Heritage Wines of Valdese, Hanover Park Vineyard of Yadkinville, Dennis Vineyards of Albemarle and Chatham Hill Winery of Morrisville.

Some of these wineries, including Duplin, have been around a while. Others, such as Hanover Park, are new. As word spreads, the latter are beginning to outweigh the former.

The industry is growing not only because the first wineries have proved that the location and climate are favorable for grape growing, but also because

some tobacco farmers have turned to grapes as a more promising alternative crop.

Spokesmen say that the move is proving to be economical for the people who've started it; they can make a profit.

Also, those involved in the new product say that growing grapes is a way of keeping in touch with the land, keeping the land out of development and keeping the family working together.

Cathy Caudle, WSJS's promotions director, said that she was amazed at the amount of interest in the industry when she attended a meeting of the N.C. Grape Growers Association in February, attended by 220 people.

"Tania Dautlick asked how many people planned to start vineyards in the next year and 16 people stood up," Caudle said. "Then she asked how many people plan to start vineyards in the next three years and about 60 people stood up."

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Wolf's Lair Is Looking For New Pack in Dining

By **CAROLINE BEAMER**
Staff Writer

Drive out Hwy 601 from Mount Airy toward Dobson and on the left, if you look carefully, is a stone entrance with rows of grape vines behind it. Welcome to Black Wolf Vineyards and its new restaurant, Wolf's Lair.

Wolf's Lair rises on the crest to look like a variation on log cabin construction to resemble a European lodge. Inside are esoteric furnishings, such as the giant, carved grandfather clock or the two stuffed wolves eyeing entering guests from the upstairs balcony.

To dine there will be "an experience for the pallet," says chef Mike Elsner, a New York transplant with a long list of cooking credentials and a disarming wit when he's not discussing the serious topic of cuisine.

Elsner has been on staff since January while work on the restaurant was being completed. He's been designing a menu that will be "an elegant dining experience."

"The wines offered are all from the vineyard," explained General Manager Patrick Bigelow.

"The Cabernet Sauvignon won an international gold medal last year," Elsner added.

There's also a Wolf's Lair Red, a Chardonnay, a Moonlight White and Wolfsbane Rose.

Elsner, who is a classically trained chef and who's been in the restaurant business since he was 13, said that his entrees in-



Mt Airy News

4/29/2001

Caroline Beamer/The Mount Airy News

AT THE WOLF'S LAIR: General Manager Patrick Bigelow (left) stands with Executive Chef Mike Elsner at the new Wolf's Lair Restaurant.

clude "elk, quail, lots of fresh seafood, foie gras, filet mignon and New York strip." He's proud to tell diners that "everything is made here, from the bread to the soup to dessert."

Elsner will also be pastry chef, concocting sinfully delicious delectables. This chef

knows his way around the kitchen, having prepared meals for five presidents. He'll be training Dolores Kelly, a Surry County native, to "paint plates." Kelly will be "painting" the plates with colorful purees of kiwi, strawberry and mango.

➤ See **DINING**, page 2A

Dining

Continued from page 1A

Such faire is different from what one might typically find at local restaurants, but Bigelow said the time is right for this eatery's arrival.

"A demand has been created in the county for fine dining," he said. "Whatever we do here will add variety."

Elsner expresses the sentiment more poetically. "We'll give their appetites a warm welcome. The servers will anticipate their needs, the kitchen staff will exceed their expectations of culinary desires."

The servers will wear 'service tuxedos,' Bigelow said. Those who dine are not required to wear comparably elegant clothes. "We want people to be comfortable here," he

said, so a coat and tie are not required.

Operation hours as of Wednesday will be 4-11 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays, and from 2-9 p.m. on Sundays. Bigelow said the future may hold other projects, such as weddings and parties at Wolf's Lair, "but for now, we want to focus on what we do best."

SCC Works To Build Better Workforce

From Staff Reports

DOBSON — During a business/education forum held on the campus of Surry Community College on March 27, business and industry representatives shared ideas on how the college can help build a strong workforce by educating and retraining workers.

Judy Riggs, Dean of Continuing Education. Business and industry representatives expressed her appreciation to Surry Community College for various courses and activities sponsored by the college and suggested that future efforts focus on pre-employment assessment, information technology training, customer service, supervision, English for speakers or other languages, and legal issues.

"I am excited about this exchange of ideas. This informal meeting provides a format for sharing. We can update the business community on new opportunities and can use their ideas to custom design courses and programs to meet their needs. Today's program is the first of several sharing sessions we plan to host."

A similar program was hosted by the SYSTEM JobReady/Tech Prep partnership on March 23. Charles Boles, Chairperson of the Science Division and Randy LeQuire, Chairperson of the Engineering Technologies Division, solicited ideas from high school teachers on how to help students make a smooth transition from high school to college. They spoke of the importance of students building strong basic skills particularly in English, reading and mathematics.



FORUM SUCCESSFUL: Charles Boles, chairperson of the Science Division of Surry Community College met with public school teachers to discuss Viticulture and other new programs in agriculture and technology.

Teachers from Surry, Stokes and Yadkin counties discussed the importance of the concurrent enrollment option which permits high school students to take college courses without paying tuition and the Community College Statewide Articulation Agreement through which high school stu-

dents earn college credit based on the final grade and end-of-course test score in certain high school courses.

Ideas from both meetings focused on the importance of basic skills, education beyond high school, and the need for lifelong learning.

STATE

"Hopefully we're going to promote the Yadkin Valley Wine Tour."

Steve Shepard, the general manager of RayLen Vineyards



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE

A sign designating a plot of vines is posted along the main road into RayLen Vineyards. The winery can be seen from I-40.

Nurturing 'a Jungle'

Yadkin Valley vineyard looks forward to summer thick with vines

By **Danielle Deaver**
JOURNAL REPORTER

MOCKSVILLE

The vines that will eventually bear up to eight pounds of grapes each at RayLen Vineyards in Davie County don't look quite up to the task right now.

They are about three feet high, mere twigs spread against taut guidewires.

But to General Manager Steve Shepard, they look just about perfect — and they'll look even better after their growth takes off in the middle of April.

"When vineyards are growing and up on the vines, it's a beautiful site," Shepard said. "This place will be a jungle — hopefully — in the middle of the summer."

RayLen Vineyards is the first vineyard and winery in Davie County. Joyce and Joe Neely bought the property, the site of an old dairy farm, two years ago and hired Shepard, a former winemaker at Westbend Vineyards in Forsyth County, to be the general manager.

People have been stopping in to check out the vineyard nearly every day since the small wooden sign was first tacked to the fence along U.S. 158, Shepard said.

Many people are drawn in after seeing the 30 acres of vines from Interstate 40 or after seeing the tall green-and-orange towers that stand over the fields.

The towers are windmills that will be used whenever there is a chance of frost destroying grapes, Shepard said. The wind keeps the dew from settling on the grapes.

RayLen's first crop will not be harvested until the fall, but they will



STEVE SHEPARD



A worker sprays mineral oil on young vines, which protects the new tips from cold.

begin selling wine this summer. RayLen bought grapes from North Carolina growers and used some of their own to bottle 2,500 cases of wine at a winery in Virginia.

Shepard will begin making wines at RayLen with RayLen grapes this fall. He said he hopes to increase production by about 1,000 cases of wine each year.

The winery will grow eight varieties of grapes, a mix of red and white. The wine will sell for about \$10 to \$15 a bottle and will be mostly sold at the winery.

The only hurdle the winery will have to overcome is getting the licenses to sell wine in Davie County.

"It is a dry county, but the way the ABC laws are written in this state, if you have a bonded winery, you are able to bottle and sell your own wine," Shepard said.

RayLen joins several others in the Yadkin Valley — an area about five or six miles wide on either side of the

Yadkin River, where the soil and other conditions are good for grapes.

Building a winery in an area that already has several is a good way to increase business, Shepard said.

"People don't want to travel great distances to visit one vineyard," Shepard said. "Hopefully we're going to promote the Yadkin Valley Wine Tour. They can come to this region, start at the southern or northern end, and visit four or five wineries on one day," Shepard said.

RayLen will be the fifth winery in the area, according to the North Carolina Winegrowers Association.

Like the other wineries in the area, RayLen will be a relaxing place to visit, Shepard said. The tasting area will be informal, with a small bar and tables and chairs scattered around, Shepard said.

"We're not going to make it too pretentious. We want people to be relaxed when they come in, and to feel comfortable," he said.

Surry Community College Viticulture Program Wins Approval

North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges at their April meeting approved Surry Community College's new Viticulture Technology program for the Fall 2000 semester. The program is the only one of its kind offered in the state community college system; indeed, it is the only two-year degree program available in the eastern United States.

According to Dr. Frank Sells, SCC President, "the viticulture program offers opportunities for many people in this area, as well as those in all of North Carolina, even in the mid-Atlantic and Southeastern United States. The college recognized the need for this program in addition to the opportunities it would offer individuals. The goal of the college is to respond to the changing needs of local citizens and industries and then provide the training and education necessary to meet those needs and keep our area economically strong and prepared for the future."

Viticulture is the study of grape growing from planting to market. This new program is designed to offer a series of courses to provide training in all aspects of this emerging industry. Classroom instruction and practical laboratory applications of

viticulture/horticultural principles and practices are included in the program of study. Course work includes plant science, plant materials, propagation, soils, fertilizers, and pest management. Also included are courses in plant production, landscaping, and the management and operation of horticultural businesses.

The graduates of this program will qualify for employment and self-employment in many areas of the grape industry, as well as garden centers, greenhouses, landscape operations, gardens, and governmental agencies. Graduates should also be prepared to take the North Carolina Pesticide Applicator's Examination and the North Carolina Certified Plant Professional Examination.

During the last few years, several facts convinced the college faculty and staff that this program is both needed and vital to the development of the grape growing industry in this area. One particular issue that has become more apparent with each passing year is the need for crop diversification and less reliance on tobacco as the major source of farm income for this part of the state. Tobacco farmers face threats from legislation and technological advances by

cigarette producers have led to reduced demand for high-quality leaf. Diversification will help farmers prepare for the uncertainties of life after tobacco. The more diverse Piedmont farmers become, the better the area will be if the demand for tobacco ends.

A second event to influence the college's decision to offer viticulture occurred in the spring of 1999, when college officials were approached by Charlie and Ed Shelton of Shelton Vineyards, concerning the need for individuals trained in viticulture. Shelton Vineyards includes a 25,000 square foot winery and 330 acres of land. The 250 acre vineyard will be the largest in the state. The Sheltons were committed to the program and agreed to make a donation to help defray the startup cost for a full instructional program.

Additionally, Charlie Shelton believes, "With tobacco farming on the decline, we saw viticulture as a great way to diversify the farming industry and open the door to new industries in the area, such as tourism." The expanding grape industry attracts more than 700,000 tourists to the state's wineries and "you-pick" vineyards each year.

Also, North Carolina currently ranks twelfth in the nation in grape production, having produced more than three million pounds of grapes in 1998. Grape production generated more than \$1.5 million in farm income last year. The sale of state-produced wine generated an additional \$4.5 million.

A new and quickly expanding grape market involves the health industry with grape and grape by-products being used as nutritional supplements and in alternative medical treatments. Indeed, the January issue of Prevention magazine states, "the antioxidant activity of grape seed extract is some 50 times greater than that of vitamin E and 20 times greater than vitamin C". The article, "Grape Expectations" continues saying that "grape seed extract helps the heart, vision, wound healing, and is a circulation booster".

For more information about the SCC Viticulture Technology program, contact John K. Collins, Vice President for Instruction; or Charles Boles, Chairman, Science Division, at (336)386-8121, extension 216 or 263.



Caroline Beamer/The Mount Airy News

LUNCH CROWD: Diners wait to check out at the Lantern, while others are still enjoying their meal at one of the town's favorite diners.



Michael Howlett/The Mount Airy News

BIG UNDERTAKING: One hundred and twenty acres of vines were planted in the spring of 2000, with 130-140 planned for planting this spring.

Cheese Factory To Be Part Of Vineyard

From Staff Reports

DOBSON — Surry County's Shelton Vineyards is in the process of building a 4,000-square-foot building that will house a "cheese factory" where specialty cheeses will be made to compliment the vineyard's wines.

The facility, targeted to open next spring will employ two or three people, said Ed Shelton, vineyard co-owner with brother Charles.

The new building will be designed so that visitors will be able to watch the cheese makers prepare the cheeses from scratch.

"Visitors can observe cheese making through long windows outside under a covered porch," said Laura Doerr, a Wisconsin native and cheese maker. Doerr said the public will not be admitted to the actual food making stations, because dairy standards are the highest sanitary standards for food preparation in North Carolina. The public will be invited inside the shopping area where the cheeses, wines and breads will be sold.

Doerr describes the cheeses to be made as "artisanal."

"We're small, so it will be a hands on style. You're playing with milk and curd and it cures at different times," Doerr said she'll be making spreadable or chevre cheeses, petit bries and other fresh cheeses to age. "We plan on having people come in and buy wine and cheese and we'll be baking fresh breads too."

A Lowgap dairyman, Danny Hodges, is raising Jersey cows and goats for the cheeses. "Jersey cows make better milk for cheese because they have more butterfat," Doerr said.

"Their milk is to cheese what grapes are to the wine," she explained. "The lactose in milk turns to lactic acid, which you need to make the cheese."

The first vintage of Shelton Vineyard wines will be ready this spring or summer, and Doerr is keeping her fingers crossed some will be bottled in time for the grand opening of the cheese factory in 2001.

Vineyard Preparing Cheese For Market

MidSouth News Service

DOBSON— For the past year, Shelton Vineyards has been preparing for its next phase of agribusiness — that of cheesemaking.

Laura Doerr, cheesemaker and general manager of Shelton Cheeses, a part of Shelton Vineyards in Salem Fork, checks the temperature of a batch of milk in the process of being pasteurized for cheese. Doerr creates traditional and specialty cheeses for the winery from both cows' and goats' milk. "Cheese and wine are natural companions," Cheesemaker Laura Doerr said Wednesday. "Also, tobacco is a dying commodity in this area. Ed and Charlie Shelton wanted to get into agribusinesses in an effort to help the area grow and to move in other directions."

Shelton Vineyards co-owner Ed Shelton said Thursday that he and his brother Charlie thought that cheese would be the next obvious product to have available at the winery.

"Cheese is a natural complement to wine," Shelton said. "And there is nothing like that in the area. Ashe County Cheese is huge, but they only produce cheddars; we wanted to do the handmade French-style cheeses."

Doerr has been with the vineyard for about a year preparing for cheese production and the opening of the new shop. Shelton Cheeses opened its doors for business two weeks ago.

Doerr's boyfriend, Kenneth Juhasz, is the vineyard's winemaker and their interest in wines and cheeses has taken her not only into the creation and production of traditional and specialty cheeses, but also into the general management of the shop itself.

"Shelton's gave me a year to get the building done and to get started," Doerr said. "I've had a lot of work to do to get ready."

Doerr spent part of the past year touring small cheese-making facilities in Vermont, California and Wisconsin, doing extensive research into the processes of making a variety of cheeses, reading and taking classes to prepare herself for the task of creating the winery's cheeses.

Shelton Cheeses offers three types of cheese: Chevre, a raw-milk (non-pasteurized) spreadable goat cheese; Tomme, another raw-milk cheese made from the milk of Jersey cows whose recipe originated in the French Alps; and two kinds of cheddar. The Chevre and Tomme cheeses are on sale now; the cheddar cheeses will be ready in August. The cheeses range in price from \$4.50 for a four-ounce container to \$8 for a nine-ounce roll.

Danny Hodges of Lowgap provides milk from goats and Jersey cows. Hodges raises the goats and cows expressly for the milk and has an exclusive contract with Shelton Cheeses.

The cheeses are created and aged on the premises. The 3,600-square foot building includes space for milk storage tanks, a large kitchen with cheese cutting bins and a pasteurizer, and three ripening rooms where the cheeses are aged. Each room is set at a different temperature and humidity level to preserve and age the various types of cheeses.

"Milk from Jersey cows has a higher percentage of butterfat than milk from other kinds of dairy cows and makes exceptional cheeses," Doerr explained. "Goat milk makes excellent cheese. It's a little trendy now, too, because the milk is lower in fat and calories than cow's milk."

Doerr will produce about 30,000 pounds of cheese for Shelton in the next year. About one-third of that will be held back and aged for future sale.

The cheeses will be sold in the retail section of the winery and will also be marketed to specialty shops and restaurants in Winston-Salem and Charlotte.

"We're going to branch out into the restaurant trade in the Triad, then into Raleigh and Charlotte," Shelton said. "It will never be a huge operation; we're going to keep it on a small scale. We'll be hiring additional staff to help her (Doerr), and of course, we can ship anywhere."

"Our contracts with wine have parlayed into cheese sales," Doerr added. "We're not looking to compete with a company like Kraft or anything, but the local markets look promising for us."

In addition to the cheeses, the Shelton Cheeses store next to the winery at the vineyard houses a variety of breads, deli items, fruit, cookies, gourmet condiments (oils, mustards and pesto), picnic supplies and Shelton Vineyards wines.

Vineyard Changes Face Of Farming

By MICHAEL HOWLETT
Managing Editor

DOBSON — When people think of wine country, Italy, France or southern California usually comes to mind. Surry County may not ever be mentioned in the same breath as those locales, but thanks to a couple of Mount Airy natives the wine business has hit home.

Charles and Ed Shelton, who were raised in Mount Airy but are now residents of Charlotte, took the first step toward building what is now Shelton's Vineyard and Winery in 1994 by purchasing a 330-acre tract just off interstate 77, near Dobson.

Nestled in a dale off Twin Oaks Road, the vineyard looks as though it has been part of the landscape for decades, instead of only a few years. Row upon row of vines are planted in a north to south direction, six feet apart with nine feet between the rows. The irrigation system is underground and windmills spin gently in a late winter breeze.

The actual production of wine began in the spring of 1999 when 60 acres of grapes were planted. Last spring, 120 acres were planted (which produced about a ton of crop an acre) and this coming spring another 130 to 140 acres are expected to be planted.

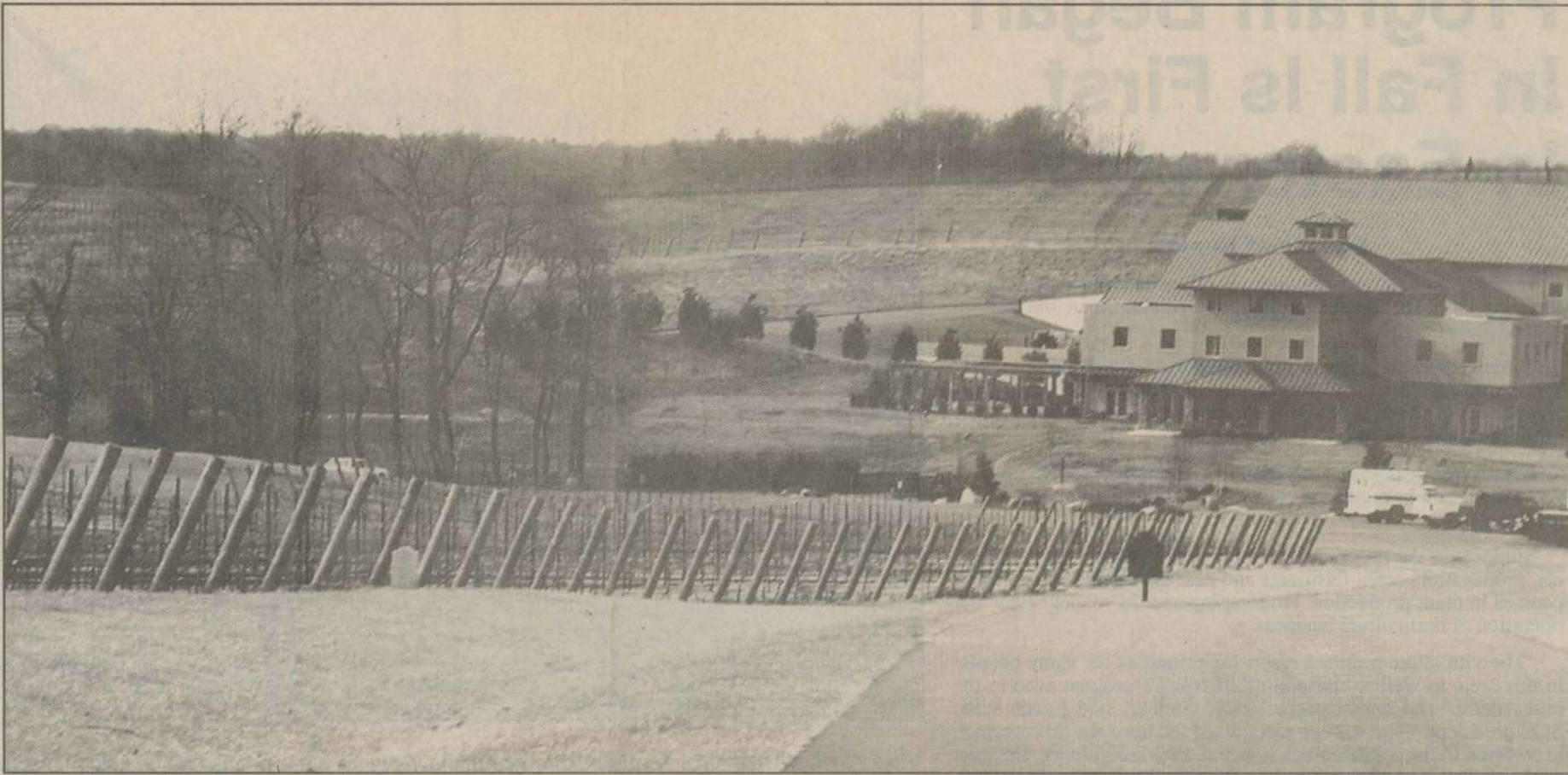
Sean McRitchie, the vineyard's general manager, described the first crop (off the spring 2000 planting) as "great."

"It's pretty amazing to have a crop off second-year vines. The quality that came in was great," said Ritchie, a 20-veteran of the wine business. "So far, I'm real excited about what can happen here."

Although Surry County may not be thought of as wine country by most people, McRitchie says the area's climate is very conducive to grapes, which begin growing in mid-April and are harvested in mid-October.

"We have a warm climate here, damn-near Mediterranean. In fact, it's almost too much heat in some cases. Since the vines are dormant in the winter, the cold weather makes no difference," said McRitchie.

After the grapes are harvested, which takes six to eight weeks, they are weighed, destemmed and crushed. The peel is left on the grapes if a red



SCENIC SHOT: Shelton's Vineyard and Winery is located on Twin Oaks Road, just off Interstate 77, near Dobson. Tours are available daily for those interested in learning more about the county's first working winery.

Michael Howlett/The Mount Airy News

wine is desired, and the peel is removed in order to make a white wine.

The juice is then put into fermentation tanks for two weeks before being transported to barrels. The juice is later taken out of the barrels for "preliminary blending," then put back in the barrels. How long the juice remains in barrels the second time depends on the "variety of wine" being produced, according to McRitchie.

Some wines are aged in 60-gallon barrels, while others in 620-gallon barrels. The smaller barrels offer "a better aging process," said McRitchie. "The smaller barrels are more expensive and more labor intensive, and make a better wine."

McRitchie added that his philosophy of wine making is simple.

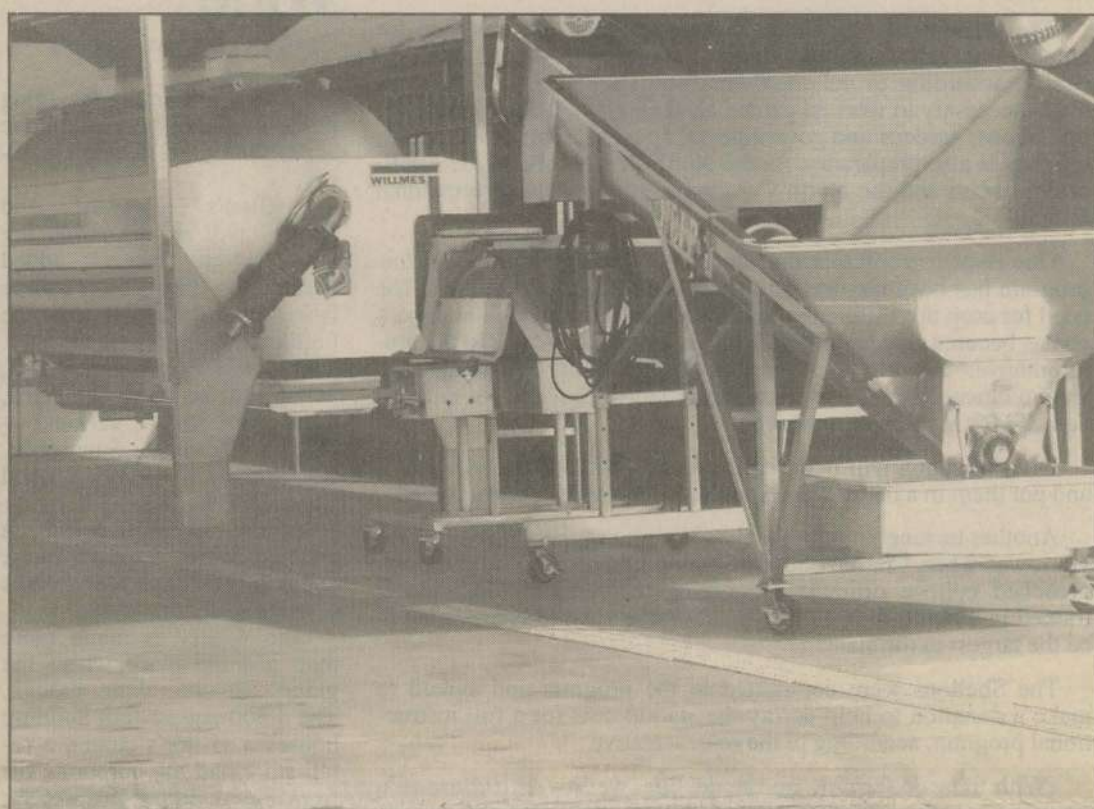
"The idea is to let the fruit

See WINE, page 4



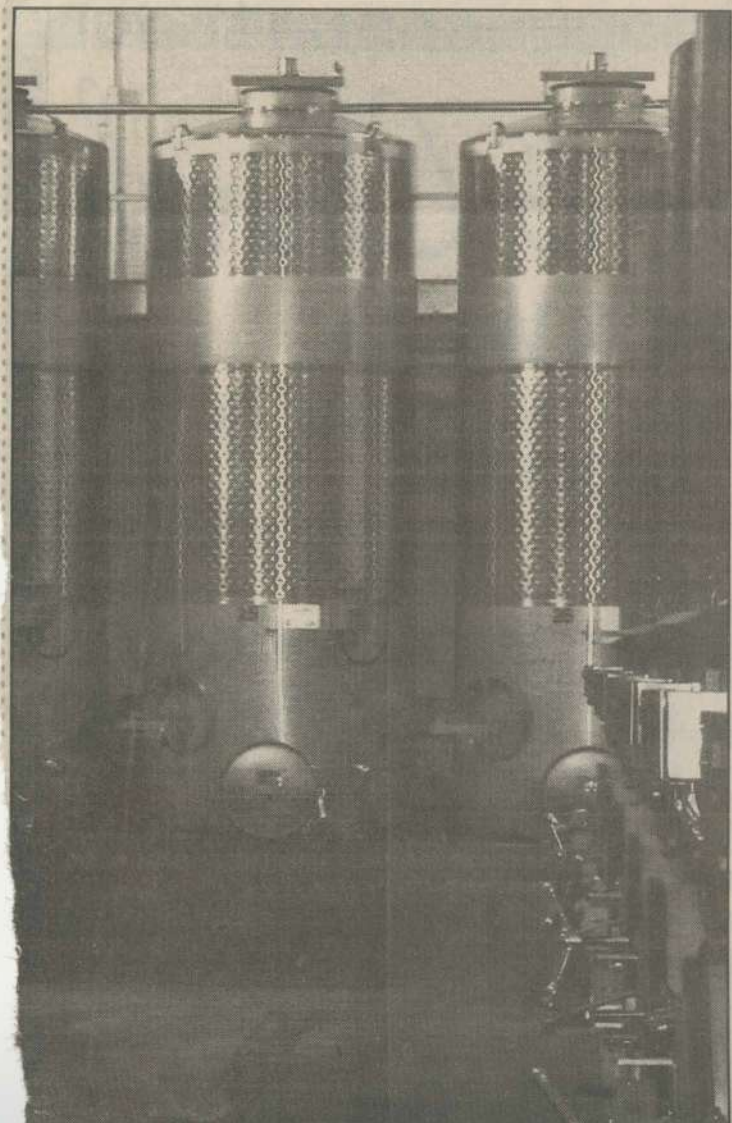
VIEW FROM THE TOP: A look at the fermentation tanks from a walkway near the top of the fermentation room.

By Michael Howlett/The Mount Airy News



GRAPES TO WINE: The first step in turning grapes into wine takes place here. The grapes are loaded in the hopper (right), then de-stemmed by the middle machine before being transferred to the machine on left to be crushed.

Michael Howlett/The Mount Airy News



HISTORY

Continued From Page E1

ter to a friend and set out to procure more — but in vain.

"Poor old Tom, he had a terrible time with his Scuppernong wine," said Pamela Watson, the author of *Carolina Wine Country: The Complete Guide*. "The story goes he liked Scuppernong wine, and he did take some graftings, and I guess it was just too cold. (Muscadines grow only from North Carolina south.) Then he tried to buy the wine, and the producers were pretty much producing for themselves and he couldn't even buy it."

Even without the help of such a famous wine connoisseur as Jefferson, winemaking thrived in North Carolina, in Tokay, Medoc, Catawba and other places. North Carolina had 25 wineries at the start of the Civil War.

After the war, wine really started flowing in the state, thanks to a man named Paul Garrett. He was a wine salesman who decided to start his own winery in Littleton in 1900. He almost immediately began buying up wineries and all the Scuppernong grapes he could find. He soon had a nationwide empire, and North Carolina was the nation's leading wine-producing state. Garrett's "Virginia Dare" wine was named after the first child born in America of English parents, on Roanoke Island. It won the grand prize for wine at the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in 1904.

Watson said that Garrett's genius was his salesmanship. "I was fascinated by Paul Garrett, because he was such a marketer. He was so unabashed in taking the name 'Virginia Dare.' He really was able to appeal to the Victorian romantic idea of the Lost Colony."

Garrett also was smart enough to anticipate Prohibition. When North Carolina went dry in 1909, he moved his operations to Virginia. When Virginia went dry, he moved to New York. When the whole country went dry, he predicted that it wouldn't last. Upon the repeal in 1933, Garrett was ready to sell wine in every wet state.

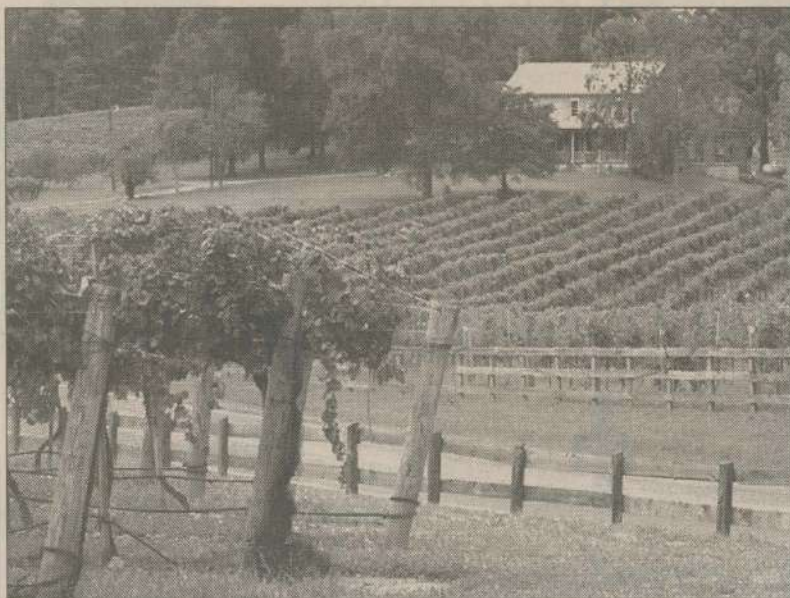
UNFORTUNATELY, MANY STATES remained dry after Prohibition, and Garrett's sources of Scuppernong grapes soon dried up. When Garrett died in 1940 at age 76, his wine business died, too.

By 1950, all of North Carolina's wineries had closed as counties voted dry.

In 1955, Raymond Hartsfield began Onslow Wine Cellars to meet a demand for Scuppernong wine from northern wet states. By the 1960s, many farmers in North Carolina began growing grapes to sell to out-of-state wineries — in 1968, no wine was made commercially in the state.

As out-of-state demand and prices rose, growers in Onslow County formed the New River Grape Growers Association. About the same time, the N.C. General Assembly approved money for grape and wine research and cut winery license fees and the state tax

YADKIN VALLEY: Westbend Vineyards, along the Yadkin River in Lewisville, has doubled its grape acreage since 1988.



JOURNAL PHOTO BY DAVID ROLFE

WINERIES

Continued From Page E1

ern Georgia up through Maryland and into Pennsylvania."

Of course, the Yadkin Valley has a long way to go to become the next Napa: It has six wineries, compared with about 200 in Napa Valley. But winemakers agree that the potential is here.

Sean McRitchie, the general manager of the new Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, said, "There's no reason it can't happen here. When I go out and look at the grapes, that's where it's all at. And we're getting good flavors."

Shelton Vineyards, which opened last year, is one of four new vineyards in the Piedmont. With 180 acres of grapes planted, it is the largest estate winery — a winery that makes wine from its own grapes — in North Carolina.

Amy and Michael Helton planted their first grapes at Hanover Park Vineyard near Yadkinville in 1997 and opened to the public this July. And Cerminaro Vineyard in Caldwell County and Windy Gap Vineyards in Wilkes County began harvesting this month.

More wineries are on the way. Raylen Vineyards — owned by Joe Neely and led by Steve Shepard, Westbend's former wine master — planted its first vines outside Mocksville this spring. And Frank Hobson, a tobacco farmer and co-owner of S&H Farm Supply in Yadkinville, is organizing tobacco farmers to switch to grapes and form a co-op winery in Yadkin County.

Tania Dautlick, the executive director of the North Carolina Grape Council, said that two other wineries, Moonrise Bay Vineyards in Currituck County and SilkHope Winery in Chatham County, opened this month, making this year's growth statewide the most she has seen in five years.

Pamela Watson of Greenville, the author of *Carolina Wine Country: The Complete*

Corp. helped promote wineries and tours through roadside signs and other means.

Though most Virginia wines are still distributed only to nearby states, Peyton said, they are faring well in national and international competitions, and Virginia wine sales have grown to \$34 million, compared with \$12 million in North Carolina.

Peyton said that another important factor in Virginia's success has been state support of growers and winemakers. The Virginia Wine Advisory Board, appointed by the governor, was established to oversee funding to help the industry. "And there is such tremendous support from Virginia Tech and the extension service, not only on the growing end but on the winemaking end."

North Carolina winemakers are beginning to get some of this support. The General Assembly approved a statute last year that allows wineries to display roadside signs to attract tourists.

In April of this year, the state community-college system set up a two-year winemaking program at Surry Community College in partnership with Shelton Vineyards. It is the only such program in the state, and one of two on the East Coast. The other is at Cornell University in New York.

N.C. State University and the Grape Council are planning to establish an experimental vineyard at the Upper Piedmont Research Station in Reidsville to help measure the potential of different grape varieties.

Dan Carroll, an N.C. State professor of food science, does some extension work with winemakers, but has to squeeze that in with teaching three classes at N.C. State, one at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and his research on food processing.

N.C. STATE also is trying to fill a position for an extension specialist assigned to the Piedmont and Western North Carolina after the death this spring of specialist Eric Bish, who was killed in an apparently random robbery. Though the position calls for work with grape and strawberry growers, Lawrence said he expects the new specialist to

Guide, said that wineries are popping up faster than she can keep up with them. Though her book came out just last year, she began the "Carolina Wine Country" newsletter this spring to keep people up-to-date. "And my little pushpins on the map (marking wineries), they just follow the Yadkin River down," she said.

Dautlick doesn't expect such large growth every year, but she does expect the number of wineries to keep increasing. That's because the demand for wine is so strong, and winemaking appeals to a wide variety of people.

The backbone of all this change is confidence in the ability to successfully grow European grapes and make wine here — a major shift in the thinking of winemakers.

Kroustalis said she and her husband were strongly discouraged from growing European grapes when they started in 1972. And Westbend's new wine master, Stephen Rigby, said that "You can't do that here" was a familiar refrain when he was starting out in Virginia's wine business. Californians heard the same thing when they set out to make quality wine from European grapes in the 1960s.



STEPHEN RIGBY

But those states have shown that it can be done, making such a venture look less risky for potential winemakers in North Carolina.

In the '90s, the state's production of European grapes was greater than that of Muscadines for the first time. Part of the attraction is that the European grapes fetch a higher price.

Dautlick said that winemaking appeals to people who are looking for something to do in retirement, those who want a business where they can be with their family and not in a corporate office, and farmers who are diversifying, especially those who have previously grown tobacco.

OTHERS ARE ATTRACTED by the tourism aspect. "People opening wineries realize that tourists like to visit a winery and learn about winemaking," Dautlick said.

The potential for tourism has Piedmont winemakers excited — instead of nervous — about all the competition they are getting as more wineries open.

How much traffic a winery gets depends a lot on how many other wineries are in the vicinity. Wine-loving tourists want to be able to visit a handful of wineries in a day. Plop one winery in a four-county area, and it will get a few visitors. Plant six wineries in the same area, and the number of visitors quickly multiplies.

"If we had 10 more wineries around here, we'd hug 'em all," Shelton's McRitchie said.

Tourism played a part in establishing the wine reputation of Virginia, which has gone from six to 64 wineries since 1979, according to Barbara Peyton of the Virginia Wine Marketing Office. Joint efforts between the marketing office and the Virginia Tourism

spend more time with grape growers.

But Dautlick said that N.C. State needs to more actively spur the industry. "We definitely need more support, particularly in the area of viticulture (the study of grape growing) and oenology (the study of winemaking), and it's a matter of money. N.C. State's budgets are being cut all over the place."

Toby Bost, an extension agent in Forsyth County, said that agents can now help growers with weed and pest problems, but generally do not have the expertise that winemakers and grape growers need.

"We feel like we need an authority on wine marketing and growing," he said. "This key person can pull together growers into a cooperative."

This type of support is particularly important if winemakers in North Carolina want to establish a reputation for quality wine.

So far, North Carolina wine has received some encouraging praise. Robert Parker, a noteworthy wine critic, wrote in *The Wine Advocate* a few years ago that Westbend was "one of the South's best kept wine secrets." Westbend's Chardonnay also attracted attention in 1992 when it beat out a Kendall-Jackson Californian wine in an international competition.

Jim Noble, the chef-owner of three fine-dining restaurants in the Triad, including Noble's Grille in Winston-Salem, carries Westbend and is talking to Shelton Vineyards about carrying its wines. He also said he has tasted some quality sweet wines from Eastern North Carolina when judging competitions at the Dixie Classic Fair.

David and Judy Simpson have won their share of silver and bronze medals at the fair and gained a loyal following for their small Germantown Winery, just a few miles north of Winston-Salem.

And Shelton's McRitchie, who grew up in the wine business, said that such winemakers as the Heltons at Hanover Park prove that you don't necessarily have to practice winemaking for years to make good wine.

But whether the words "Yadkin Valley" will ever become synonymous with good wine remains an open question.



DAVID SIMPSON

Lawrence said that if North Carolina is going to develop a good reputation for wine, new winemakers should proceed with caution. "The risk is that some wineries will develop that won't make wine as well as they could," he said.

"I think we need people putting wineries in

good locations, with proper drainage and all of that. We need to have people learn about this — not only the people who do the work but the owners and investors."

And he and Dautlick agreed that though winemaking may have a certain romantic appeal, prospective winemakers should realize that it takes a lot of work.

"I hope people do it slowly," Dautlick said, "because it's not a business to enter into lightly. It takes a lot capital, a lot of research and a lot of planning."

on native table wine.

Grape production rose from 1,500 tons in 1964 to a peak of 6,800 tons in 1978. Most of North Carolina's grapes during this period were being bought by New York wineries, said Tania Dautlick, the executive director of the North Carolina Grape Council. By the early '80s, the bottom fell out of this market — which coincided with the ascendancy of California wines.

As the export of North Carolina Scuppernongs declined, winemaking in the state quietly began to come back. But this marked a new stage for the industry, because the tide had turned from mostly Scuppernong wine to the European-style wines that had proved so successful in California.

Jack Kroustalis began making wine in Lewisville in 1972 as a hobby, and in 1988 he officially went into business as Westbend Vineyards, growing a variety of popular *vitis vinifera* (European) grapes, including Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Duplin Wine Cellars in Rose Hill, in Eastern North Carolina, began making Muscadine wine in 1976. From an initial production of three wines totaling 35,000 gallons, Duplin now makes 17 wines totaling 90,000 gallons.

WILLIAM MCGEE AND several members of the Piedmont Grape Growers Association formed a winery in Germantown that produced its first bottle in 1981. The six stockholders grew French and American hybrid grapes — as an alternative to tobacco — and produced about 1,000 gallons in McGee's old milking barn.

Now owned by David and Judy Simpson, Germantown Winery makes about 3,000 gallons a year. The Simpsons are buying from nearby grape growers as they prepare to move the vineyard to a different part of their 100-acre former tobacco farm.

Biltmore Estate in Asheville opened its winery to the public in 1985 and now produces about 100,000 gallons. Biltmore's wine is made from 73 acres of grapes on the estate, grapes from other North Carolina vineyards and juice from California. Much of Biltmore's wine does not qualify as "North Carolina wine" because it is made from less than 75 percent North Carolina grapes.

In 1986, the General Assembly approved the establishment of the N.C. Grape Council to finance wine research and help market and otherwise promote North Carolina wine.

In 1999, the state's largest estate winery, Shelton Vineyards planted its first vines in Dobson. While waiting for those grapes to grow, it bottled California and Washington grapes under its label. Shelton now has planted 180 acres of grape vines and has room to expand later. It recently began harvesting its first 60 acres of grapes, which it expects to bottle next summer.

In July 1999, the General Assembly approved a statute that allows wineries and other agricultural businesses to display road signs to help promote tourism. This spring, Surry Community College began offering a two-year program in winemaking.

This month, four new wineries opened in the state, bringing the number of bonded North Carolina wineries to 19.



JOURNAL PHOTOS BY DAVID ROLFE

RIPE FOR PICKING: A worker carries buckets of freshly picked Cabernet Franc grapes through Shelton Vineyards.

On the Vine

Winemakers hope upstart industry will take root

By Michael Hastings
JOURNAL FOOD EDITOR

Native Muscadine grapes dominated winemaking in North Carolina for 400 years, but the relatively recent invasion of European grapes is causing dramatic change — and growth — in the state's wine industry.

Muscadines, which include Scuppernongs, primarily grow in Eastern North Carolina, but modern winemakers in the state have focused on the *vitis vinifera* species of European grapes that includes Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and other popular varieties, as well as such hybrids as Seyval Blanc and Chambourcin.

Much of the growth is happening in the Yadkin Valley, which holds so much promise that some people in

the business have begun talking about "the Napa Valley of the East."

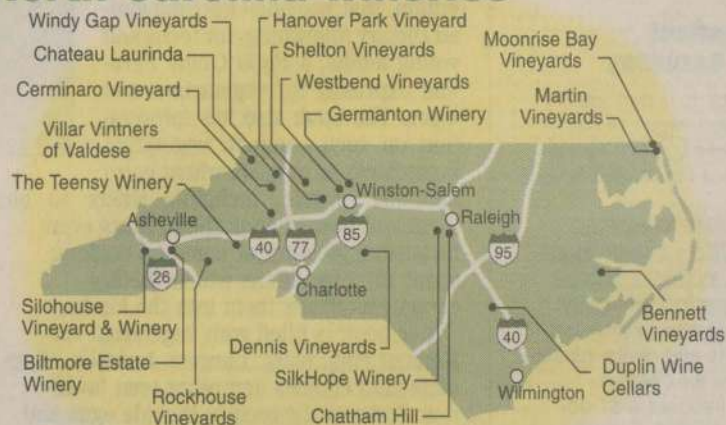
"I think it's happening right before our eyes," said Lillian Kroustalis, who owns Westbend Vineyards in Lewisville with her husband, Jack.

Scott Lawrence, the president of the North Carolina Wine Growers Association, said, "That area is the primary one in the state for growing grapes, because it's not so hot that it burns the grapes up but not so cold that it kills them in the wintertime."

Also, the region has the necessary long growing season, and plenty of rolling hills to provide the good drainage that helps grape vines thrive.

"It'll be the Eastern prime strip for growing grapes in the future," Lawrence said. "It'll go from north-

North Carolina wineries



Source: N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Division of Marketing

JOURNAL GRAPHIC BY JIM STANLEY

If You Go

The following is a list of Yadkin Valley wineries open to the public. Some of these wines are in retail stores, but many are available only from the winery. Directions are from Winston-Salem.

■ **Westbend Vineyards**, 5394 Williams Road, Lewisville, NC 27023; (336) 945-5032.

Directions: Take U.S. 421 North about 15 miles to Shallowford Road exit in Lewisville. Turn left and go 2 miles. Turn left onto Williams Road. Winery is about 100 yards ahead on the left.

Open: Thursday, Friday and Saturday noon to 6 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 6 p.m.

Wines: Chardonnay, Seyval Blanc, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and others.

■ **Germantown Winery**, N.C. 8, (Route 1, Box 1-G), Germantown, NC 27019; (336) 969-2075.

Directions: Take U.S. 52 North. Exit onto N.C. 8 and go north into Germantown. Winery's tasting room is in Germantown Gallery, on the left, at intersection of N.C. 8 and Friendship Road.

Open: The winery is closed as

■ **Cerminaro Vineyard**, 4399 Wilkesboro Boulevard, Boomer, NC 28606; (828) 754-9306.

Directions: Take U.S. 421 North to Wilkesboro. Turn left on NC 18 and go about 6 miles. Winery will be on the right.

Open: By appointment. Regular tours are scheduled to begin next year.

Wines: On the way: Seyval Blanc, Dechaunac, Chancellor, Merlot, Vignoles. First wines to be bottled next year.

■ **Windy Gap Vineyards**, 837 Perdue Farm, Ronda, NC 28670; (336) 984-3926 (after Oct. 1) or (704) 924-9467.

Directions: Take U.S. 421 North 6½ miles past I-77. Turn right on Clingman Road and go about ¾ mile. Turn left on Perdue Farm Road, go ¼ mile and turn left again. (This is still called Perdue Farm Road.) Winery is ½ mile ahead on the right.

Open: By appointment. Regular tours are scheduled to begin next year.

Wines: On the way: Viognier, Cabernet Franc, Chambourcin, Chardonnay (a hybrid of Chardon-

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BY THE BARREL:

Sean McRitchie, Shelton's general manager, checks wine fermenting in oak barrels.



The scuppernong has starred in history of N.C. viniculture

By Michael Hastings
JOURNAL FOOD EDITOR

North Carolina's wine industry has had a long and varied history, much of which is tied to the native Scuppernong, a type of Muscadine grape.

Early explorers couldn't help but notice "the big white grape" that grew in abundance around the Cape Fear River Valley. Giovanni de Verrazano noticed the Scuppernong vines in 1524, remarking that they "would without doubt yield excellent wines." And Captains Phillip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, explorers for

Sir Walter Raleigh, said in 1584 that the coast was full of these grapes.

"They covered every shrub and climbed the tops of high cedars. In all the world, a similar abundance was not to be found. Their smell of sweetness filled the air as if they were in the midst of some delicate garden," the captains wrote.

Colonists in Manteo were making wine on Roanoke Island before they mysteriously disappeared in 1590. By the 17th and 18th centuries, wine-making thrived around a town named Scuppernong in Washington County and along the Cape Fear

Open: The winery is closed as owners David and Judy Simpson plan to move their vineyard; they are currently making wine with grapes bought from nearby growers. The tasting room is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. (Call for Sunday hours.)

Wines: Seyval Blanc, Harvest Gold, Sweet White Wine, Autumn Blush, Sweet Red Wine and Vermillion. On the way: Chardonnay and Merlot.

■ Hanover Park Vineyard,

1927 Courtney-Huntsville Road, Yadkinville, NC 27055; (336) 463-2875.

Directions: Take U.S. 421 North to Yadkinville. Exit onto U.S. 601 South and go about 4 miles. At flashing light at intersection of 601 and Courtney-Huntsville Road, turn left. Go about 1 mile to winery, which is on the left.

Open: 4 to 6 p.m. Thursday and Friday, noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Wines: Viognier, Chardonnay, Chambourcin, Rose and Mourvedre (available in November). Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc on the way.

River east of Fayetteville. The name *Scuppernong* comes from the Algonquin Indian word *askuponong*, which means "in the country of the sweet bay tree." Indians used this word to describe the Albemarle Sound area, where bay laurels grew in the swamps.

Open: Chardonnay (a hybrid of Chardonnay and Seyval), Melody. First wines to be bottled next spring.

■ Shelton Vineyards, 286 Cabernet Lane, Dobson, NC 27017; (336) 366-4724.

Directions: Take Interstate 40 West to Interstate 77 North. Take Exit 93 at Dobson and follow signs.

Open: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 to 6 p.m. Sunday.

Wines: Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Carbernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir produced in California and Washington available now. On the way: North Carolina Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

For more information about North Carolina wines, call the North Carolina Grape Council, (919) 733-7136, or visit its Web site, ncwine.org.

For copies of Pamela Watson's *Carolina Wine Country*, which costs \$14.95 plus \$2 shipping and handling, or to subscribe to the quarterly "Carolina Wine Country" newsletter for \$8 a year, call toll-free (877) 353-2800.

A census taker in Washington County reported wine production of 1,368 gallons in 1810.

Thomas Jefferson got a taste of Scuppernong wine as early as 1817. He declared it "exquisite" in a let-

Tobacco Farmers May Be Switching To Grapes

By KIA BREAU
Associated Press Writer
DANVILLE, Va. — Financially strapped tobacco farmers in Virginia may find hope in growing another crop: grapes.

Two recent graduates of Cornell University with ties to Virginia have designed a proposal that would create a wine growers' cooperative and winery in Pittsylvania County. The cooperative would help area farmers convert tobacco fields into wine grapes — a crop that could yield as much profit as growing leaf.

The plan excited some experts in the tobacco industry. "Farmers have been looking for alternate crops to grow and grapes have been at the top of the list," said Bruce Jones, Pittsylvania County's tobacco extension agent. "I'm sure this will be welcomed news for a lot of people."

The proposal was drafted

See GRAPES, page 2A

Proposal Has Local Support

By WILL FOUSHEE
Staff Writer

North Carolina wine producers are excited about the production of more grapes in Virginia, and question why the idea hasn't caught on in this state.

Charlie Shelton of Shelton Vineyards Inc. said Wednesday that wine producers should be getting the state to be more supportive of grape growing in North Carolina.

"Virginia has always been very strong supporters of their wine industry," he said. "We need that kind of state support here in North Carolina."

Shelton, who co-owns the largest vineyard on the East Coast, says grape growing is an extremely

See LOCAL, page 2A



Nicola Kountoupes/The Associated Press

CIGARETTES TO WINE: Cornell University graduate students Andrew Harwood (left) and Michael Lukianoff stand in front of young vines in a vineyard in Ithaca, N.Y., in May. The two created a plan for a wine-growers' cooperative and winery in Virginia to help farmers there replace their tobacco crops. The cooperative would help area producers convert tobacco fields into wine grapes — a crop that could yield as much profit as growing leaf.

MAN 7/6/2000

Grapes

Continued from page 1A

by Andrew Harwood, who completed his undergraduate work at the College of William and Mary, and Michael Lukianoff, whose father operates a farm in Gordonsville. The duo was looking for a socially conscious business plan for a class project.

The plight of tobacco farmers caught their attention. Many tobacco producers are not making much money these days because of the decreasing demand for tobacco. Other factors include competition abroad, backlash of the national tobacco settlement and cuts in quotas — the amount of tobacco the government allows farmers to grow.

"Tobacco farmers are facing great difficulty right now," Harwood said. "People in Southside Virginia have the skills and resources to grow valuable crops but are in need of a product that is in demand."

Grapes certainly are in demand in Virginia because of the state's booming wine industry.

The number of wineries in Virginia jumped from six on 286 acres in 1979 to 60 on 1,963 acres last year. Virginia now ranks 10th among wine and commercial grape-growing states and sixth among vinifera grape-growing states. Vinifera grapes are those from vines of European origin as opposed to native American grapes.

Under the proposal, the wine cooperative would teach tobacco farmers how to grow grapes and provide them with technical support and access to equipment needed to produce wine grapes. In turn, the farmers would sell their grapes to the cooperative, which would then make wine.

The idea is farmers to initially do business exclusively with the cooperative. Later, farmers would be free to do business with wineries in other parts of the state.

Jones said some farmers were skeptical of converting their crops to grapes because of the high start-up cost. He also said there is some concern about the maintenance demands of keeping certain grape diseases under control.

Bill Dickinson, the state's assistant commissioner of agriculture, said some uncertainty remains about whether farmers can produce high-quality grapes on a widespread basis in Southside Virginia.

"My personal opinion is that wine grapes are not the total answer to agricultural change in Southside," Dickinson said. "But they may provide an alternative to some farmers in some areas."

While there currently are no organized cooperatives in Virginia, there are a few wine growers working together in the Northern Piedmont area, Dickinson said.

"Co-ops are a good way of doing business because they allow farmers to retain more value from the products they grow," he said.

The students' business plan ranked among the top eight of the 66 teams that competed for the best proposal for a socially conscience business at the University of California-Berkeley's Haas School of Business this year.

Harwood and Lukianoff currently are trying to raise money and attract investors for the proposal. They hope to have things up and running within two years.

"Tobacco farming is a culture in Virginia and it's being threatened," Lukianoff said. "Growing grapes is a long-term solution, not just for tobacco, but for other farmers who want to align their resources with the demand in the marketplace."

SURRY CC HELPS FARMERS FIND ALTERNATIVE CROPS

By Peggy Beach, System Office, Public Affairs
Susan Booth, Public Information Officer, Surry Community College

When farmers in the Piedmont look for alternative crops to tobacco, they can also look to Surry Community College's new viticulture program for help.

Viticulture is the study of grape growing from planting to market. Surry's program offers classroom instruction and practical laboratory applications. Course work includes plant science and materials, soils, fertilizers, and pest management. Students also study plant production, landscaping, marketing and management/operation of horticulture businesses.

The need for such a program is apparent in Surry and Yadkin counties, where tobacco has historically provided almost 94 percent of the income from agricultural cropland. "People in the area, knowing that tobacco is waning, have realized the

need for crop diversification and less reliance on tobacco as the major source of income. Diversification will help farmers prepare for the uncertainties of life after tobacco," said John Collins, Surry's Vice President for Instruction.

Grape growing and wine making are not new industries in North Carolina. Members of the Lost Colony were making wine on Roanoke Island before they disappeared in the late 1500's. Around 1900, 25 wineries operated in the state, making it one of the most productive wine states in the country. The industry closed with the onset of Prohibition. The industry is now thriving again. North Carolina has more than 125 commercial vineyards and ranks 12th nationally for total grape production.

Surry became interested in a viticulture program when Charlie and

Ed Shelton, owners of Shelton Vineyards, near Dobson, gave the college \$50,000 to help defray the start-up costs of a full instructional program. Dr. Frank Sells, President of Surry, believes the viticulture program offers opportunities for the community. "The goal of the college is to respond to the changing needs of local citizens and industries and then provide the training and education necessary to meet those needs and keep our area economically strong and prepared for the future," he said.

Local economic leaders agree. "It's

me. I think the viticulture program is the best thing to come to Surry County in a long time."

With annual sales of \$2.3 million, North Carolina grapes are a long way from replacing the state's \$650 million yearly flue-cured tobacco crop. However, experts agree the potential for growth is great. "Net profit on an acre of tobacco is about \$1,200 in Surry County," said Charles Boles, Chairman of the college's Sciences Division and agriculture instructor. Boles said that "the potential profit for grapes is about \$1,300 to \$1,500 an acre."

Dr. Bob McRitchie, viticulture instructor at Surry, has more than 25 years of experience in the grape growing and winemaking industry. He believes "the industry in Surry and Yadkin counties is almost identical to the industry 25 years ago in Oregon. It is young and in its early growth. There is a great deal of work to be done, but it is exciting and challenging to work in an industry and watch it grow."



Community college officials visit the Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, NC. The new viticulture program at Surry Community College is teaching farmers in Surry and Yadkin counties how to grow grapes instead of tobacco.

important to have a diversified economy," said Crystal Morphis, president of the Surry County Economic Development Partnership. "From an economic development perspective, viticulture is doing two things. It is diversifying the agricultural business and it is adding to the growing tourism industry."

So far, the program has proved popular. Last year's trial class was taught through the Continuing Education Division. It was full during both the fall and spring semesters. This fall, the college began its new full instructional viticulture technology program, with 34 day and evening students.

David Jones, who owns a small vineyard in Ararat, said the program has made a difference for him. "The first vines I planted weren't doing too well; and in the first class, I found out why," he said. "The things I have learned will make all the difference for

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

Just as Connections was going to press, word came of awards given to four students at the Workforce Development Conference in Greensboro. **Tameka Clark** of Henderson and **Coral Fickhesen** of Charlotte each received an award for Outstanding Workforce Development Youth Participant. **Jacqueline Taylor** of Oxford and **Daisy Walters** of Greenville each received an award for Outstanding Workforce Development Adult Participant. Clark and Taylor are each graduates of **Vance-Granville Community College**. Walters graduated from **Pitt Community College** and Fickhesen graduated from **Central Piedmont Community College**.

MasterBrand Cabinets of Kinston was named an Outstanding Workforce Development Employer. Employees at MasterBrand receive training through the New and Expanding Industry Training Program at **Lenoir Community College**.



Mary Good/The Mount Airy News

WINERY ERECTED: Shelton Vineyards has nearly finished building a winery on its farm in the Twin Oaks community. The winery will begin production this summer.

Winery Nearing Completion

By **JEFF LINVILLE**
Staff Writer

DOBSON — Construction of a winery is almost complete at Shelton Vineyards near Dobson.

The winery will be the gemstone of a 330-acre farm with 250-acre vineyard in the farming community of Twin Oaks.

Last summer, developers Charlie and Ed Shelton gathered with their families to toss the first shovelsful of dirt on the site of their 25,000-square-foot winery.

The brothers are handling the winery construction themselves through their company Shelco Inc. Last year, they hired Vice President and General Manager Sean McRitchie, formerly of Eugene, Ore., to handle the day-to-day operations. McRitchie has extensive experience in the wine industry, formerly being associated with wineries in Oregon, California's Napa Valley, France, Germany and Australia.

The Shelton family planted the first grapevine April 1, 1999, which will produce wine by the fall of 2001. In the meantime, the Sheltons will buy a variety of grapes from North Carolina, Virginia and New York state to allow for their first Shelton wine to be produced by the fall of 2000.

Once in full operation, the vineyard will be the largest in the state and produce a variety of wines. The Sheltons anticipate drawing more than 1,000 visitors a day and selling 50,000 cases of wine annually, much of that through the winery store.

A tobacco barn — restored to resemble the barns of the mid-

1930s — will also be on the site. Visitors to the vineyards will be able to take guided tours of the grounds, and sample and buy wines.

The winery building is almost complete, McRitchie said, with the final construction coming this week. After that, the interior work is expected to last through April and May with an opening tentatively scheduled for June.

The winery will include a crush pad, fermentation room, barrel storage area, bottling room, laboratory and a large retail room for tasting and selling wine and related items like cork screws and cookbooks.

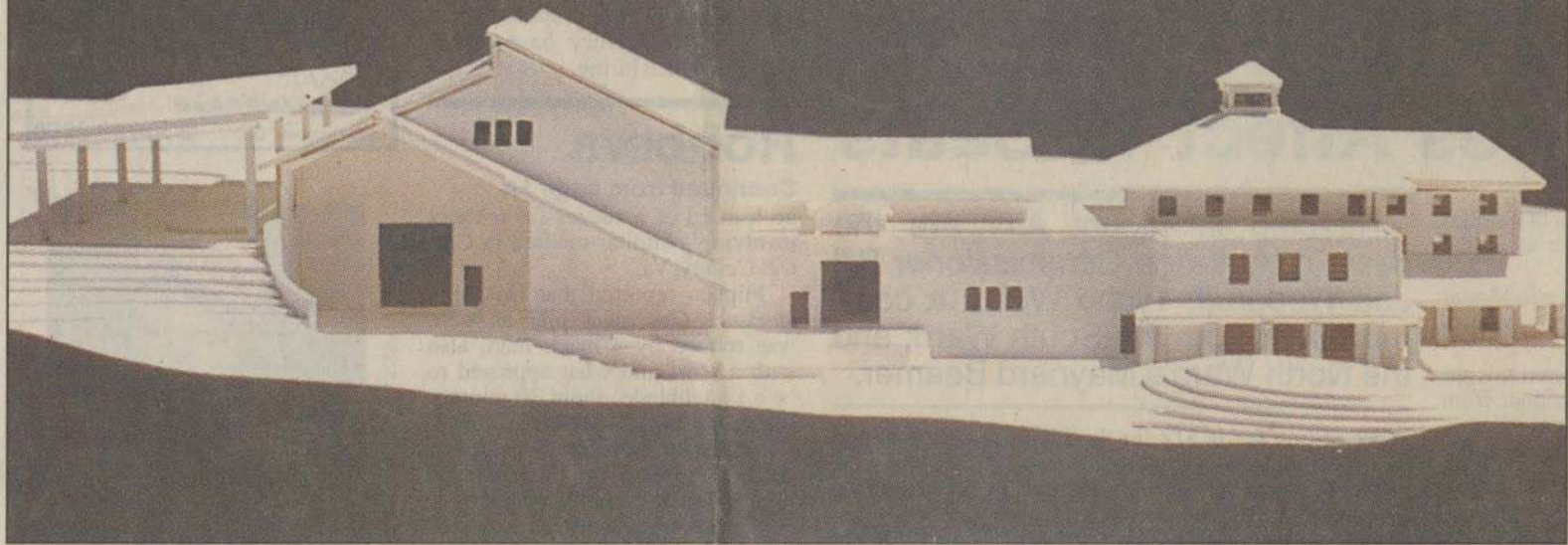
Three months after breaking ground on the winery, the Sheltons purchased 110 acres in the Dobson area on which to expand its vineyard. The original 250 acres were planted last year. An additional 115 acres is being planted now, according to McRitchie. Workers began planting the 85,000 plants at the first of the month.

Charlie Shelton said, "The Yadkin Valley region's climate is ideal for winemaking. We plan to produce fine quality wines that people from all over the country will enjoy."

McRitchie said last year's vines will produce a small crop this year so the winery will have to purchase grapes from outside growers.

With their winery project, the Sheltons said they realized the need for knowledgeable employees. To that end, Charlie Shelton said he and Ed would fund the first two years of a viti-

4/19/2000 MAN



VINEYARDS: Groundbreaking will be held Wednesday morning on a 25,000-square-foot winery in Surry County. Shelton Vineyards is located on a 330-acre site at Twin Oaks Road, three miles from Exit 92 off Interstate 77. Construction should be complete by the fall of 2000.

Shelton Vineyards To Break Ground

From Staff Reports

DOBSON — Shelton Vineyards will break ground on a 25,000 square-foot winery Wednesday.

The winery, located on 330 acres at Twin Oaks Road in Surry County and three miles from exit 93 off Interstate 77 North, will be complete by the fall of 2000. The winery is part of Shelton Vineyards, a new vineyard planned by Charles and Ed Shelton of The Shelton Companies, a Charlotte investment company. When completed, the vineyard, which will cover 250 acres, will be the largest in North Carolina.

"The Shelton Vineyards and Winery is something we've been interested in for a long time," said Charlie Shelton. "The Shelton family has a long history in Surry County, so to return to this area and start a completely new



Charles Shelton



Ed Shelton

venture is very exciting. The Yadkin Valley region's climate is ideal for wine making. We plan to produce fine quality wines that people from all over the

country will enjoy."

The Shelton family planted the first grapevine April 1, which will produce wine by the fall of 2001. In the meantime, the Sheltons will purchase a variety of grapes from North Carolina, Virginia and New York state to allow for their first Shelton wine to be produced by the fall of 2000.

The vineyards will produce a variety of wines, including Chardonnay, Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Sirah and Merlot. Wines will be priced between \$15 to \$30. Most will be sold at the Shelton Winery, with some also available through retailers. When in full production, the Sheltons anticipate selling 50,000 cases of wine annually.

The Sheltons expect the winery to draw more than 1,000 visitors a day. According to demographic research, there are more than 1 million people within a 50-mile radius of Shelton Vineyards, 5.5 million within 100 miles and an estimated 10 million within 150 miles. A tobacco barn — restored to resemble the barns of the mid 1930s — will also be on site. Visitors to the vineyards will be able to take guided tours of the grounds, and sample and purchase wines.

See VINEYARDS, page 2A

MAN 6/22/99

Vineyards

Continued from page 1A

Shelton Vineyards has hired Sean McRitchie as vice president and general manager. McRitchie, formerly of Eugene, Oregon, has extensive experience in the wine industry, working in wineries in Oregon, California's Napa Valley, France, Germany and Australia. A winemaker is expected to be named within a month.



McRitchie

To date, 60 acres of grapevines

have been planted at Shelton Vineyards. On April 1, 2000, an additional 100 acres of grapevines will be planted, with additional acreage planted in April 2001. The total acreage for the vineyards will cover 250 acres.

"This is a business that has great potential for the Yadkin Valley region," Ed Shelton said.

"We believe these vineyards – and others in the area – will have a big impact on the agricultural economy for years to come. With tobacco farming on the decline, this is a great way to diversify the farming industry in the area. With the development of wineries in the region, the tourism industry will ultimately follow. People love to tour vineyards, taste the wine and hear the story of winemaking. And at Shelton Vineyards, we believe we will soon have a great story to tell."

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Mount Airy News

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June 24, 1999

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Jeff Linville/The Mount Airy News

GROUNDBREAKING: Some of the more than 100 people attending Wednesday's groundbreaking crowd around to get a look as the Shelton family speaks. In the background is the location of the 25,000 square foot winery. More photos are on page 5A.

Shelton Family Holds Groundbreaking

From Staff Reports

DOBSON — More than 100 people celebrated the groundbreaking for a winery near Dobson Wednesday.

Developers Charlie and Ed Shelton gathered with their families to toss the first shovelsful of dirt on the site of their 25,000-square-foot winery to be finished by the fall of 2000.

The winery will be the gemstone of a 250-acre vineyard in the Twin Oaks community. Once in full operation, the vineyard will be the largest in the state and produce a variety of wines including Chardonnay, Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Sirah and Merlot.

Tania Dautlick, the executive director of the North Carolina Grape Council, said 12 wineries now operate in this state, supplied by 130 growers with more than 700 acres of grapevines. The Shelton Vineyards and Winery will be by far the largest in North Carolina, she said.

The rolling land and regional climate along Snow River is ideal for wine making, according to Charlie Shelton.

Also, the Shelton brothers grew up in Surry County and wanted to bring something positive back to their roots. Charlie Shelton added that



SPEAKERS: Charles (left) and Ed Shelton address the crowd. the vineyard is about 10 miles from their childhood home on Franklin Road.

The brothers will be able to handle the winery construction themselves through their company Shelco Inc. They also have an investment firm, The Shelton Companies, in Charlotte, where they now live.

Looking out over the crowd that gathering Wednesday for the groundbreaking, Ed Shelton, who chaired the 1999 fund drive for the Charlotte Arts and Science Council, said he

wasn't used to seeing so many people unless he was asking for money. Shelton joked that those in the crowd still could give donations if they wanted and claim a tax write-off by making out checks to Shelton Art Museum.

With their winery project, the Sheltons said they realized the need for knowledgeable employees. To that end, Charlie Shelton said he and Ed are funding the first two years of a viticulture program through Surry Community College.

Some SCC officials were on hand for the announcement, including John Collins and Steve Atkins.

Among the many public officials attending the groundbreaking were Surry County commissioners Gary York, Jimmy Miller and Fred O'Neal; County Manager Dennis Thompson; Sheriff Connie Watson; Dobson Town

Manager Wayne Atkins; Mayor Jimmie Davis; and town commissioners Kermit Draughn and Lana Brendle.

Surry County Economic Development Partnership President Crystal Morphis also was there along with recently retired President Bob Comer. Tourism Coordinator Julie Smith, of the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce, was accompanied by chamber Executive Vice President David Bradley and Executive Assistant Yvonne Nichols.

Surry County's First Commercial Vineyard Established By Retired Dentist And Wife

By ELEANOR POWELL
News Woman's Editor

A vineyard grows on a rolling hillside just outside Dobson, about a quarter-mile off busy U.S. 601. You would never suspect that grapes are growing there, but at a glance you can spot row after row of grapevines entwined on wire trellises.

The scene resembles vineyards in Napa Valley, Calif., known around the world as THE wine country. At the Dobson vineyard there won't be a Falcon Crest nor Jane Wyman, star of that famous television program.

What you will see are the stars in this grape production, retired dentist Dr. Stanley Boyd and his wife Norma, busily at work clipping white and blue grapes as they fall gracefully from the vines. What started out to be a hobby and therapy, has turned into a full-time operation for the two.

Taking out a minute from his work recently, Boyd commented, "I actually started experimenting with growing grapes at our home (in Mount Airy) about 12 or 14 years ago. I wanted to see which ones grew best in our area and I guess I grew 20 varieties before deciding on the French Hybrids that grow here in our fields."

He explained that they are growing three varieties: Seyval, Villard and Chardonnay. It was four years ago that the Boyds first planted 1,000 Seyvals, followed by 1,000 Villards the next year. They have been in full production for several months. The Chardonnays are in their second year and will begin producing in 1988, according to the Boyds.

Hybrids Are Economical

The couple owns 54 acres of farmland near Dobson, with six of those acres cultivated for their 3,000 vines.

Clipping away, Mrs. Boyd added, "We're getting 4,000 pounds of grapes from the two fields." Asked why they bother with hybrids, Boyd answered, "There's an economic reason — our grapes are running 22 to 24 percent sugar and wineries like that percentage. They will have to use less sugar." With a testing gauge, Boyd crushed a grape and the immediate results showed a reading of 23 percent sugar.



Staff Photos by Eleanor Powell

Dr. Stanley Boyd and wife Norma take a break at their vineyard located near Dobson. They have 3,000 French Hybrid grapevines planted on six acres of their farmland.

Commenting on the pick-your-own operation, Boyd said the venture is a costly one with small returns. "We sell the grapes for jellies, jams and wine-making. Eventually, we hope to sell the grapes to area wineries. We're the only vineyard that I know of in the county," he added.

Boyd praised Milton Parker, a Surry County extension agent, saying that he had been most helpful in getting the vineyard established in a spray, disease-free and fertilizing program.

He went on to say that weather conditions in this area are conducive to growing grapes. It was during the drought last week

that Boyd commented, "We haven't had to irrigate yet, but a river borders our land, so that will be beneficial should the need arise."

"Growing grapes has been interesting," the retired dentist commented as he pointed out the field locations of white grapes, blue grapes and the new Chardonnays. "Labor has been minimal — our major expense was getting the vines established."

"We have sprayed for Japanese beetles and fungicide and we're lucky that we haven't been bothered by the birds eating

(Continued on Page 2B)

Mount Airy News

9-11-87

Commercial Vineyard (Continued from Page 1B)

the grapes. Now the birds really ate the grapes growing at our home."

He mentioned that grapes produce about six to eight weeks during their peak season, which is now coming to a close. Mrs. Boyd added that she has picked a few grapes as late as October, "but not many."

After the succulent grapes are produced, the vines become dormant in the winter. Boyd says he'll prune them severely during that time and the growing cycle will repeat itself.

Mrs. Boyd noted that friends love the discarded grapevines because they use them to make decorative wreaths. Vines are fashioned into a wreath with ribbon and flower trim and used to decorate doors, walls and mantels.

Pick-Your-Own Grapes

On a recent hot day, customers were dropping by to pick their own grapes. Gilbert Nixon of Turkey Ford Road, with a bucket filled with grapes, waited for Boyd to assist him in crushing them for wine-making. Boyd noted that he doesn't ordinarily do this, but with Nixon being a special friend, the two began that process. The crushed grapes were then pro-

cessed in the press, with extracted juice running into a pan. This went into a crock to ferment for several weeks at Nixon's home. Then he'll wait for the wine.

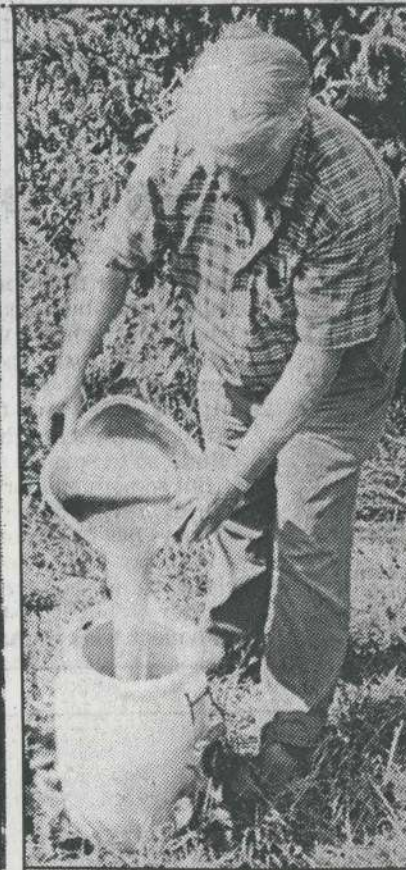
"We leave the pulp on the blue grapes to get color," Boyd said as bees buzzed around his hat. "They won't hurt you," he advised. The white grapes are used for white Chablis wine.

A lady came by about that time saying she just wanted some grapes to eat. "And I'd like some to make jelly, too," she added. Mrs. Boyd clipped a few as she explained how the vines are entwined on the wire to get established.

The Boyds agree that the vineyard is a "fun thing" but it does require work.

Back at their home, she showed how the wine is stored on racks according to vintage. Several vats were already filled with juice and left to ferment. When ready, the wine is poured into bottles that are capped and put on the racks to age.

With a glimmer in her eyes, Mrs. Boyd said, "We had the children here for dinner the other evening, and it was so nice to come to the cellar and pick out a wine for dinner — wine that came from our grapes."



A customer, Gilbert Nixon of Turkey Ford Road, crushes grapes then puts them through a press to extract juices for wine-making.



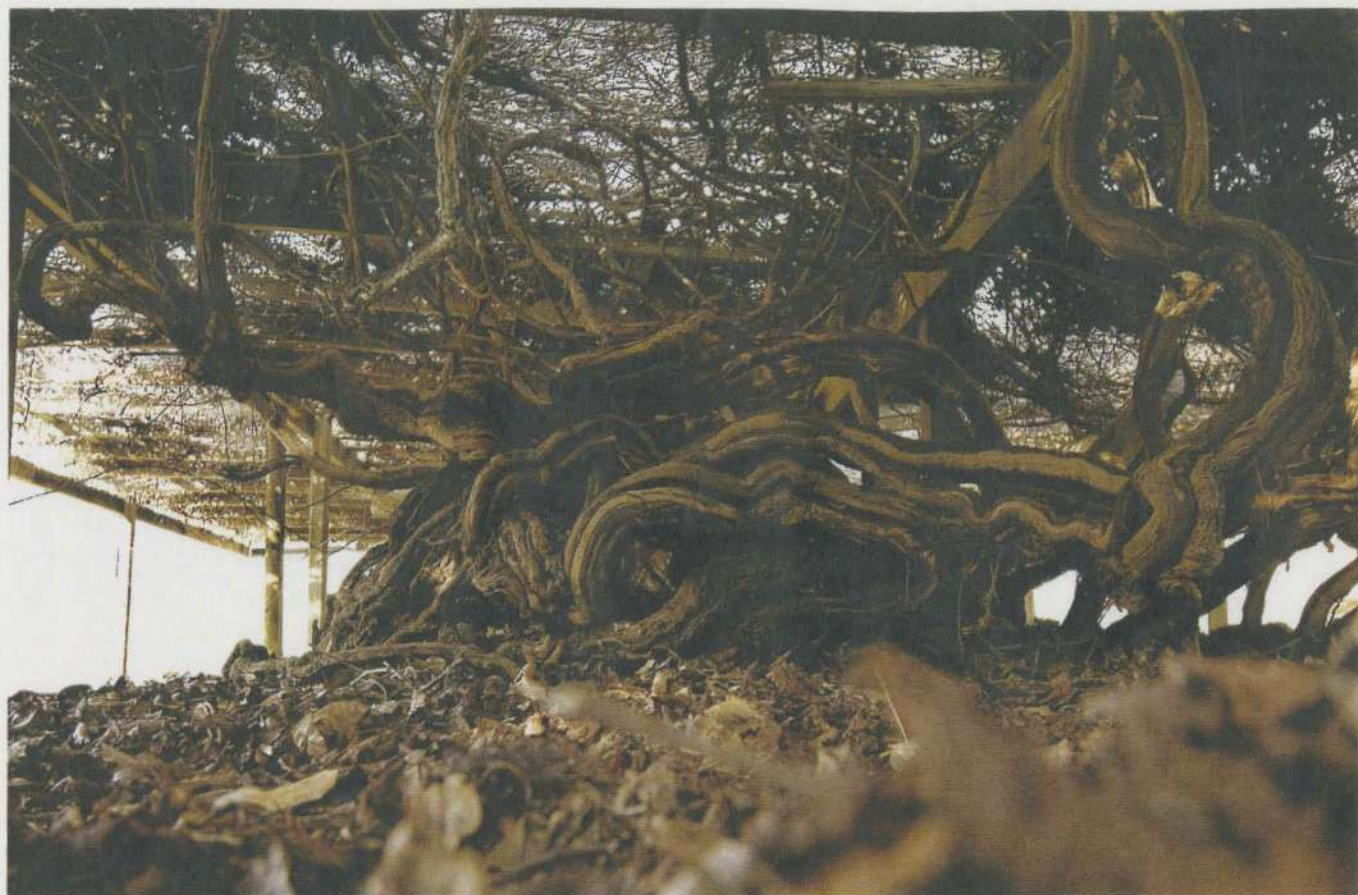
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The Scuppernong "mothervine" on Roanoke Island is an estimated 450 years old, 7 feet around, and still produces grapes. *Photo by drewimage.com.*

A Business of Good Spirits

N.C. winemakers squeeze profits from grapes

By Renee Wright

CHAD Andrews, winemaker and general manager at Uwharrie Vineyards, sums up what it takes to make wine pay. "When you get into the wine business, you don't just have one business model. You've got to have business plans for the vineyard, for the winery, for the retail shop, and for the banquet facility."

Andrews opened his Stanly County winery last November after years of planning and planting. He chats knowledgeably with visitors here to sample his wines, discussing skin time, mouth feel, alcohol content, and food pairings, the technical details dear to wine lov-

ers' hearts, as beach music plays in the background.

"Now this is our peach wine," he says, pouring a little into each tasting glass. "It's made with 100 percent pure juice, 3 percent residual sugar. It's just right for a hot July day on a boat."

Winemakers in North Carolina face a formidable array of challenges. Pierce's Disease, grape root borers, Ph factors, Supreme Court rulings, ABC permits and, always, the weather, join budgeting, marketing and the multitude of other worries that beset a business. The wine entrepreneur must be part farmer, part chemist and part public relations genius.

Despite these challenges, the wine industry is booming in North Carolina.

Margo Knight, executive director of the N.C. Wine and Grape Council, has the stats. "We have a winery opening on the average of once a month," she says. "In the last five years the number of wineries has more than doubled to 53—and counting. This year we expect to add 10 wineries and another 20 by 2007."

North Carolina wineries produced and sold 600,000 gallons of wine in 2004, valued at an estimated \$34 million. This makes North Carolina the 12th largest wine producing state in the nation. The state's vineyards and wineries support an estimated 855 jobs and have an economic impact of \$79 million.

"This could be a billion-dollar
continued page 17



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Stanly County is Fine for Wine

WHEN Ken and Marie Furr first saw the steep, rocky slopes falling away to Lake Tillery, they thought, "This would make the ideal vineyard."

The location at the edge of the ancient Uwharrie Mountains reminded them of France's Loire Valley. "It has a southeast aspect. It's at a 1,000-foot elevation," says Ken Furr. "The steep slopes promote drainage and good air flow. And the soil is rocky. Grape vines like that."

The couple established Stony Mountain Vineyards, planting European varietals including cabernet, merlot, syrah, chardonnay and riesling vines. So far, thanks perhaps to the ideal location, they haven't been plagued by Pierce's Disease. And the view from the winery's deck is spectacular.

Who would suspect that wine could become big business in the heart of North Carolina's Piedmont? Stony Mountain is one of three thriving wineries set in Stanly County, a mainly rural region poised on the eastern edge of Charlotte's explosive urban growth.

"I love the Piedmont," says Chad Andrews, winemaker at Uwharrie Vineyards just outside Albemarle, the county seat. "I traveled the world for Microsoft, but came back here to start my business." With 35 acres planted in a variety of grapes, his vineyard is the largest commercial agricultural business in Stanly.

Andrews aims to be a good neighbor and has completed the complicated procedure to have his vineyard designated a National Audubon Wildlife Refuge. "We had 102 live bluebird hatchings last year," he says. Raptors and owls nest



here, and the vineyard is a turtle sanctuary as well. Visitors can share Andrews' love of the Piedmont's natural world on a new outdoor pavilion. This summer's "Unplugged at the Vineyard" series offers dinner, music, and a chance to "sit down

and relax," Andrews says.

Dennis Vineyards, established in 1997, was Stanly's first winery. Sandon Dennis began making wine for church services, then turned professional winemaker by public demand.

Dennis recently opened a new rental facility called A Place in the Vineyard. "We have 7,000 square feet under roof," he says. "The 3,200-square-foot ballroom has a tongue and groove ceiling and a hardwood dance floor. The 2,000-square-foot patio overlooks a pond and a gazebo theater where bands can set up."

The new facility is already attracting wedding and reception bookings. "We separated it from the winery for people who prefer to have no alcohol at their events, but still want to enjoy the beauty of the vineyard," Dennis says. The vineyard also hosts a series of special events year round.

"The wine business is really working out for us," says Chris Lambert, acting director of the Stanly County Convention and Visitors Bureau. "It's a really big tourist attraction and a lot of people like the idea of getting married in a vineyard."

Stanly County wines can be purchased at the vineyards, online or at Total Wine shops and other specialty wine stores statewide.

—Renee Wright

DENNIS
Vineyards
Winery

ALBEMARLE, NC



Sandon Dennis, winemaker at Dennis Vineyards, poured samples of his muscadine wines at Charlotte's Southern Spring Show. Photo by Renee Wright.

industry," Knight says.

Why are so many people getting into the wine business despite its challenges? For Andrews, it all began over a few bottles of wine with his golfing buddy, and now winery partner, David Braswell. "We were looking for something that's a lot of fun," Andrews says. "By the third or fourth bottle, it made a lot of sense."

Like many of the new breed of winemakers, Andrews comes from a business background. He traveled the country as a senior engineer for Microsoft. Today, he oversees 35 acres of vines in Stanly County, plus another 22 acres at a higher elevation, a 14,000-square-foot retail and wine-tasting facility with a 250-seat banquet hall next door, stainless steel tanks that hold 23,000 gallons of fermenting wine and, perhaps, the largest wine press in the state.

"It's volume management," says the former engineer. "Keeps me awake nights."

Back to the future

In many ways, the scenario playing out in North Carolina's wine industry today is just a return to normal pre-Prohibition conditions.

North Carolina has always been a great place to grow grapes. Early explorers reported that grapes in the region grew right down to the ocean's surf. It's one of the top reasons Sir Walter Raleigh sent his colonists to the Carolina coast. The colony didn't survive, but one of the vines growing then did. The Scuppernon "mothervine" on Roanoke Island is an estimated 450 years old, 7 feet around, and still produces grapes.

As early as 1840, a North Carolina winery led the nation in wine production. Then the Civil War wiped out commercial winemaking—for the first time.

By 1904, the state's winemakers had recovered. Virginia Dare, a North Carolina wine, was the best selling in the country. Blended from California, New York and North Carolina grapes, the Virginia Dare brand owed its popularity to the predominant flavors of North Carolina's native muscadine.

North Carolina went dry in 1909 and is not entirely "wet" yet. By 1950, there wasn't a single winery left in the state, although several vineyards were supplying grapes to out-of-state producers.

The Hinnant family planted their first vines in Johnston County in 1971. Today

continued



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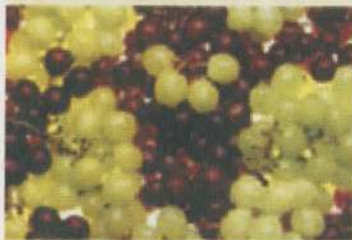
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A taste of Stanly County



Shelton Vineyards are in the heart of the Yadkin Valley, which has its own wine appellation. Photo courtesy of N.C. Department of Tourism.

their 75 acres form the largest muscadine vineyard in the state. They started selling wine made from their grapes in 2002.

Duplin Winery in Rose Hill is the oldest winery in the state. The Fussell family began bottling wine in 1976 and is now the largest muscadine wine producer in the world, producing 175,000 cases annually. Dave Fussell Sr. used to market his wines out of a converted hog trailer.

European "vinifera" grapes also began to appear in North Carolina in the 1970s. Biltmore Estate planted its first vinifera vines in 1972, and Westbend pioneered the introduction of vinifera in the Yadkin Valley the same year.

The grape divide

One grape is much like another, you think? Not so to the wine connoisseur. Old-world vinifera grapes, including cabernets, chardonnays, merlots and the like, have the great grape reputations, and are the most familiar to consumers due to their prominence in the California wine industry.

On the other hand, muscadines, native to North Carolina and the Southeast, have been looked upon as "country cousins." Statewide, about 65 percent of grapes grown are vinifera.

Largely, it's a question of sweet vs. dry. Muscadine wine, especially that made from the scuppernong, a white variety, tends toward sweet. Wine connoisseurs tend to prefer a drier wine.

Many of North Carolina's new winemakers at first shared the same prejudice.

"In the start-up stages of Old North State, we swore we'd never do muscadine," Wade Nichols says. Nichols helped establish the Old North State Wine Cooperative that makes wines from grapes grown at dozens of vineyards in the Yadkin Valley and markets them at a tasting room in Mt. Airy.

"Today," he says, "our top-awarded wine is a muscadine."

Winemakers have learned from experience that many consumers, at least in the South, actually prefer a sweeter, smoother wine—even if they won't admit it out loud. Many wineries now offer a muscadine right alongside their cabernets and merlots. Native grape varietals such as the noble and carlos muscadines are getting the fine-wine treatment, sometimes aged in oak for a tannin twang, creating a drier wine.

Some winemakers, among them Mark Brown at the Old Stone Winery in Salisbury, dare to blend muscadine and vinifera juice with exciting results.

There's more than old-world vs. new-world competition dividing vinifera from muscadine, however. Something winemakers call the "PD line" runs right across North Carolina. It refers to Pierce's Disease, currently the worst enemy of vinifera vineyards. The bacteria, spread by insects, have seriously damaged many California vineyards. Despite intense research at many universities, there is still no cure, although rapid and aggressive pruning slows it down.

Most muscadine varieties, however, are naturally resistant to Pierce's Disease.

The hot, wet, insect-laden environment that makes our native grapes such a good source of antioxidants (*see sidebar, page 20*), also challenges them to develop strong natural defenses. South and east of the PD line, only muscadines are safe.

Cold weather is the one thing that halts the spread of the Pierce's Disease. Research at N.C. State University indicates that four or five days of low temperatures protect vines from attack. Unfortunately, the mild winters of recent years have moved the PD line relentlessly north and west, leaving fewer acres that are safe for vinifera.

But North Carolina winemakers aren't giving up on the European varieties. Research continues to find a cure and develop disease-resistant hybrids.

Marek Wojciechowski, owner and winemaker at Chatham Hill Winery in Morrisville, is taking the proactive approach. While head of research and development at Alderon Biosciences, a Durham firm, he helped develop technology to quickly test blood for lead poisoning, detect bio-agents and screen for DNA mutations. Realizing that the same technology could be used to screen grapevines for PD, allowing them to be pruned in time to stop the infection, he encouraged licensing of the technology to a company that developed a PD test kit. The new technology gives results in just two hours, a significant improvement over the two weeks required previously.

N.C. State researchers are currently using the kit to determine the extent of PD infestation across the state.

The grape-tobacco connection

Although the state Department of Agriculture has long sought to promote viticulture, grape-growing didn't really take off in North Carolina until Golden Leaf (the Long-term Economic Advancement Foundation) entered the picture with its first grants in 2000. Empowered to distribute half of the state's tobacco settlement funds, the foundation supported communities transitioning from a tobacco-based economy to one based on grapes.

One of Golden Leaf's first grants helped establish a viticulture program at Surry Community College, where many students were affected by reduced tobacco income. Later grants added enology (the science of wine-making) to Surry's curriculum, helped build a winery, and extended continuing education classes into the community.

The program's director, Dr. Bob

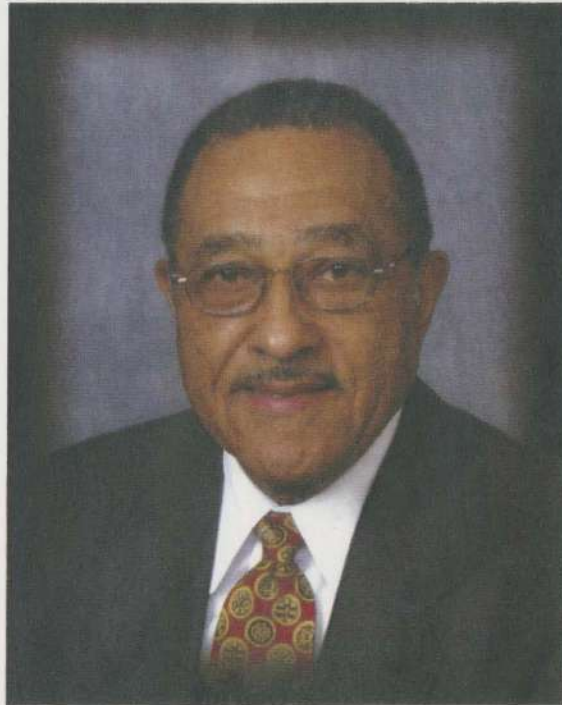
McRitchie, points out that Surry's vocational program was an immediate success. "The classes fill up right away," he says. "We get students coming from all over to enroll. Many of our graduates are employed in the industry and a fair number are operating their own vineyards." Every quarter, Surry offers the popular "So you want to be a winemaker" seminar.

The connection between tobacco and grape takes on a personal aspect at many farms across the state, where acreage once

devoted to North Carolina's top cash crop is now planted in vines.

"Three years ago, my sister and I inherited this property from Mom and Dad and could not decide what to do with it," says Sheila Little, one of the owners of Grapefull Sisters Vineyard, due to open in Columbus County this April. "We had two tobacco barns on the property, but had to destroy them. We're rebuilding one of the barns and will have a bed and

continued page 21



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Take Your Grapes!

Editor's Note: Research on possible health benefits resulting from wine consumption underscores for those who choose to consume wine, the importance of doing so responsibly and in moderation.

FOR Larry Cagle, starting a winery was a matter of taste and health. "Heart disease is rampant in my family," he says. "My father had heart bypass surgery at 52 and afterwards, his doctor told him to drink a glass of red wine every day. He didn't like the taste, so I started looking around and discovered that muscadine wine is ten times better for you than regular red wine. I'm a scientist employed in the nuclear industry and the research looked good to me."

Cagle's WoodMill Winery will open in a few months near Lincolnton producing muscadine wine from five acres of grapes.

The discovery that wine is good for your heart began with what scientists dubbed "The French Paradox." Why did the French, who eat notoriously high-fat diets, have so much less heart disease than Americans?

Researchers comparing diets zeroed in on the wine that the French drink with meals as the determining factor. Further research discovered a wide range of antioxidants in wine. Resveratrol was singled out as one of the most powerful in combating cardiovascular disease.

All this research tested French varietal grapes. The healthful properties of muscadines remained unknown until Prichard Dennis, father of winemaker Sandon Dennis, sent a bottle of his son's red wine made from Noble muscadine grapes to Cornell University to be tested in 1999. The results amazed the scientists and sparked a flurry of publicity.

"Our '98 Noble came back as the fourth-highest content of resveratrol of any wine they had tested and the second-highest available to consumers," Sandon Den-

nis says. "From there it just snowballed. We got calls from researchers everywhere wanting samples to test. It really put us on the map."

Dennis Vineyards in Albemarle today produces 26,400 gallons of muscadine wine a year. The Noble wines continue to test highest for resveratrol, followed by the Ison muscadine and blueberry wines.

"Muscadine Medicine," a book by Dr. Diane K. Hartle and her associates at the University of Georgia's Nutraceutical Research Laboratory, reports that published research on grapes and their byproducts increased from just a couple in 1998 to over 100 appearing in journals in 2005.

"We call muscadines 'the smarter grape' because it has an extra set of chromosomes," Hartle says. "Whereas European grapes and the American Concord grape have 19 pairs of chromosomes, the muscadine has 20." Hartle and other scientists theorize that the extra genetic information allows muscadines to thrive in the high heat and humid, hostile environment of the Southeast.



Muscadines have the highest amounts of substances researchers believe promote heart health. *Photo by drewimage.com.*

One widely reported study done at Mississippi State University found that muscadine seeds from both red and white varietals contained over 40 times the resveratrol found in other types of grape seed. Other researchers discovered muscadines contain a potent mix of antioxidants including quercetin, gallic acid and other flavinoids, in addition to resveratrol.

These antioxidants combat free radicals, implicated in a wide range of conditions from cancer and Alzheimer's to aging. Laboratory tests, many of them cited in Hartle's book, show phytochemicals found

in muscadines can help the body counter a wide variety of ailments. Among them are cardiovascular disease, inflammation, arthritis, gastrointestinal problems, certain types of cancer, diabetes and pre-diabetic conditions.

"Muscadines are an excellent power choice in health maintenance because they are a concentration of the right stuff," Hartle says. Research indicates that the highest concentrations of the "right stuff" in muscadines are found in the seeds and skins.

Jerry Smith, founder and CEO of Le Bleu Corp., a company that distributes bottled water to 50,000 customers in the Carolinas, had a chance to test the potency of muscadines for himself. His doctor wanted to put him on prescription drugs to counteract a high cholesterol count, but Smith looked for a more natural solution. A friend suggested he try a supplement made from muscadine seeds.

"In 10 months, his triglycerides fell 157 points, his good cholesterol rose 25 points and his bad cholesterol fell 75 points," says Sandra Bass. Bass is vice president of marketing and sales for Nature's Pearl, the new company Smith formed to market muscadine supplements last year.

Headquartered in Davie County, Nature's Pearl plans to make the health benefits of muscadines available year round through a wide variety of products. First to reach the market are grape seed capsules, to be followed by a cosmeceutical line of anti-aging skin products, juices, jams and jellies, even cooking oil.

David Fussell Sr., founder of Duplin Winery, is another believer in the health benefits of muscadines, which were named the state fruit in 2001. "We've formed a separate company, Nutragrape, to market nutraceuticals made from our muscadine extracts," he says. "We're just now perfecting the capsules." Duplin is the largest maker of muscadine wine in the world.

Fussell sees another benefit to muscadine supplements—this one to North Carolina farmers. "We work with 43 contract growers, and buy from about 12 more on the open market," he says. "We've been throwing away 42 percent of what we buy from them. We've been giving away the skins and seeds for fertilizer. If we can make that 42 percent profitable, it would make a big difference in what we can pay the farmers for their crops," Fussell says.

"I firmly believe the future of muscadines is health," he concludes.

—Renee Wright

breakfast on the top floor. We call it the Inn d'Vine."

Several of North Carolina's 1,600 "century farms" have become wineries including Flint Hill Vineyards and Stony Knoll Vineyards, both in the Yadkin Valley. The Century Farm program, operated by the state's Department of Agriculture and Customer Services, enrolls farms that have remained in the same family for 100 years.

Many former tobacco farmers looking for options that will let them stay on their land are turning to grapes. "The revenue per acre is similar," says Knight. "There's a lot of potential." High-volume wineries like Biltmore and Childress buy large quantities of grapes every year.

"We bought 300,000 tons of grapes last year," Jerry Douglas, senior vice president of marketing and sales for the Biltmore Co., says. "We crush more grapes than the state grows. We'll spend \$2.5 million in California this year, but we'd rather spend that money on North Carolina grapes."

N.C. State played a vital role in the rebirth of the grape industry. Its researchers study pests and diseases, and N.C. Cooperative Extension agents help farmers



Visitors enjoy a tour of The Biltmore Estate's wine facilities.
Photo courtesy of The Biltmore Estate.

throughout the state. Golden Leaf grants have equipped extension agents with laboratory equipment and funded studies of improved juice and wine technologies.

Recently, Golden Leaf announced a grant to help Rockingham Community

College establish a vineyard-specialist training program. Another Golden Leaf grant goes to Appalachian State University to create a mobile testing laboratory that will help growers and winemakers

continued



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Appalachian State University is the current hotspot for wine research. In addition to the grant for the mobile lab, the university received \$1 million in federal funding to establish the Appalachian Enology and Viticulture Services Center in Boone. The center will provide training, quality monitoring, marketing assistance and site-specific analytical services to the wine industry.

The U.S. Department of Defense also will fund a \$1.1 million, two-year study by Appalachian researchers into the effects of quercetin, a naturally occurring substance found abundantly in red grapes. The defense department hopes quercetin can be used to boost a soldier's immune system in battle situations.

Surry Community College and Appalachian State are talking about a collaborative B.A. or B.S. degree in wine-related studies, Dr. McRitchie says.

Grape legislation

Much of the growth of the state's wine industry has been made possible by support from Raleigh. In 1972, the state began passing legislation intended to stimulate the development of new wineries. It slashed the annual winery license fee from \$1,000 to \$100 and cut the state tax on native table wine from 60 cents per gallon to 5 cents per gallon. Then, in 1987, it established the N.C. Grape



Stony Mountain Vineyards provide a dramatic view of the Uwharrie Mountains. *Photo by Renee Wright.*

Council to help farmers expand the state's grape industry.

North Carolina is among 38 states that allow wineries to wholesale their own products. A recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that permits interstate sales by wineries does not directly affect North Carolina. State winemakers are watching the situation carefully, however. In Virginia, new developments in state legislation may prohibit winemakers from self-distributing their products at all, a devastating blow for many small wineries.

"The N.C. Legislature has been extremely supportive of the wine industry," says George Denka Jr., president of Shelton Vineyards. "We lead the country in progressive wine laws."

The 2005 session of the N.C. General Assembly was especially good for the wine industry, with a series of bills ratified that will make doing business easier for winemakers. Wine-related legislation passed last year:

- ◆ Allows winery employees to conduct wine tastings at other retail locations, festivals and events.

- ◆ Permits a college with a viticulture/enology program to hold wine tastings and sell the wine it makes.

- ◆ Clarifies a law allowing wineries to act as their own wholesalers.

- ◆ Increases the amount of wine that can be commercially transported without a permit to conform with the amount of wine that can be purchased without a permit.

- ◆ Eliminates the application fee for a wine shipper's license for both in-state and out-of-state shippers, putting North Carolina wineries on an equal footing with those in other states.

- ◆ Transfers the N.C. Grape Growers Council from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Commerce.

- ◆ Increases the cap on the quarterly distribution of excise taxes to the N.C. Grape-Growers Council from \$350,000 to \$500,000. The council is funded by excise taxes collected on wine sales.

continued

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At the N.C. Department of Commerce, the council joined the Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development and added "wine" to its name. Although some claimed party politics influenced the change, Knight, executive director of the council, says the move made sense. "That's where we can grow as an industry," she says. "Our advisory board voted 10 to one for the move."

The Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development immediately integrated information on the state's wineries and wine events, including an interactive "North Carolina Wine Experience," into its main visitor Website, www.visitnc.com. The site receives more than 5 million visitors a year.

With its new affiliation, the N.C. Wine & Grape Council will be able to plug the wine industry into wider tourism initiatives, both domestically and in foreign countries, Knight says.

Wine roads and grape escapes

The move to the Department of Commerce recognizes the fact that wine's largest economic impact comes not

from sales but from tourism.

"Every dollar spent in state wineries generates another \$4.35 in economic activity," says Norm Oches, administrative secretary and education committee chair of the N.C. Winegrower's Association, making his remarks to a ballroom filled to overflowing with winemakers at the first annual N.C. Western Wine Conference. "We are California in the '60s, Washington State in the '80s. Put your vineyard where you think tourism will follow."

A look at the latest map of wineries put out by the grape and wine council shows that many wineries are taking Oches' advice. Wineries cluster close to interstate corridors, especially I-40, a route that takes travelers from the muscadine producers of eastern North Carolina to the Yadkin Valley vinifera fields in the western Piedmont.

New N.C. Department of Transportation signs on interstates and other major roads help tourists find the wineries. They really work, says Amanda Hinnant, vice president of marketing and sales at Hinnant Family Vineyards and Winery in Pine Level. Hinnant, the largest muscadine

grower in the state, opened its winery in 2002. It's located just four miles off I-95.

"The winery opened a couple of weeks before our DOT sign and billboards went up, and we had no business at all," Hinnant says. "Then we got the signs and the people started pulling off the interstate. We get lots of people just stopping on the spur of the moment."

North Carolina wine tourism received a boost when Richard Childress, the owner of some of NASCAR's best-known teams, opened a 35,000-square-foot winery in Lexington in 2004. "It's been my dream to locate a winery in my native state and in the county that's been so good to me and my racing business," Childress says. Sources say his investment in the winery tops \$6 million.

The racing-related vineyard has proved a public relations bonanza for North Carolina wines, attracting racing fans and sparking feature articles in the national press. USA Today, The New York Times, "ABC World News Tonight," Sports Illustrated, Autoweek, Wine Spectator, Food and

continued



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Wine and many other publications all picked up on the NASCAR celebrity angle—and spread the word about the state's wines.

Many tourists plan daytrips or whole vacations around wine, especially when they can visit several vineyards close together. Across the state, wineries are banding together to form wine trails for tourists to follow. "A cluster makes more of a tourist destination," says Knight.

One of the newest is the Haw River Wine Trail, connecting five diverse wineries on either side of I-40/I-85 between Durham and Greensboro. Golden Leaf recently funded a plan to help Alamance County raise awareness of the wineries and organize a petition to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms for an American Viticultural Area (AVA) in Alamance, Caswell, Chatham, Guilford, Orange, Person, and Rockingham counties.

If the petition is successful, the area will be designated the Haw River Appellation, a unique terrain where local soil, weather and other factors create wines with unique qualities. Vineyards within the region can display the AVA designation on their labels.

Several other regions of the state are pursuing their own appellations including four vineyards on Swan Creek in the Yadkin Valley, several wineries around Tryon, and vineyards on Currituck Sound in the state's far northeast corner.

While an AVA designation is nice to have, its real value is the name recognition it gives to the area among wine tourists and consumers. The Yadkin Valley received the state's first appellation after an intense campaign led by Charles and Ed Shelton, founders of Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, the state's largest family-owned estate winery.

The Sheltons' initial investment topped \$10 million, and they continue to help the Yadkin Valley develop as an attractive tourist destination. They recently broke ground on a \$44.75 million commercial development at the I-77 exit nearest the winery. It will include a 102-room Hampton Inn & Suites, retail shops and restaurants.

"We need more rooms and hotels large enough for groups," says George Denka, the vineyard's president. "The Sheltons hope to address this."

Denka is excited about the recognition his winery recently received as the first North Carolina wine to be named to an international "Top 50" list. The Wine Report singled out Shelton's 2003 Riesling among all the world's vintages.

"We make all our wine from our own fruit," Denka says. "We had a great year last year. Eight out of our 13 wines sold out."

Like most winemakers in the state, Denka cites recognition—or the lack thereof—as the biggest obstacle faced by North Carolina wines. "Our biggest challenge is the misconception that East Coast wines are inferior to West Coast wines," he says. He's come up with the Shelton Vineyard Challenge to help change this conception. He invites a wide variety of consumer groups to a blind taste test of wines. The bottles' identities are hidden in brown paper bags.

"Our wines have been selected as best 59 times out of 79 tests so far," he says. "It's amazing the difference in the results when they can't see what they're drinking. We've changed some opinions." **NC**

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