



Community Leaders Release

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Valley Vintners and Growers Host Community Leaders

(SONOMA, Calif.) -- The Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Alliance (SVVGA) showcased several vineyard projects and sites on May 3, 2002 when they took more than forty community leaders from city, county and state departments and commissions on the Community Leaders Tour 2002.

"Spring is an exciting time to tour vineyards," said SVVGA President Ned Hill, "and the Community Leaders Tour is important as we can highlight sustainable agriculture, feature examples of the best vineyard management practices and point out projects that were funded in part by CalFed Grants." "Unlike other more formal meetings, the tour also provides an ideal conversational setting which allows us to interact with leaders and answer any of their questions," Hill added. The community leaders, representing organizations that ranged from the Sonoma County Agriculture Commission, to the Citizens Advisory Commission, to the Planning Commission, to the California State Legislature, toured the following vineyard sites:

Gloria Ferrer Champagne Caves - Mike Crumly of Gloria Ferrer led a walking tour of the winery's Circle Bar Ranch site on the west side of Highway 121 south of Viansa Winery. The project began when they prepared to plant in 1997. Because of the close proximity to wetlands, a very special restoration of the seasonal creek on the property ensued. Today the site, which was once barren of indigenous plants, is flourishing with native plants (seeded from original mother plants on the property) such as: wild rose, willow, spike brush, valley oak, coastal oak, bay laurel and buckeye. Bluebird boxes have also been installed.

Parmelee-Hill Ranch - Ned Hill of Parmelee-Hill Vineyards took the group out onto their ranch located in the western hills of Sonoma Valley. Hill discussed the importance of the relationship that growers have with neighbors (those that own properties bordering the vineyards that they work). Growers that take care of their vineyards take care of their neighbors too by opening up lines of communication and keeping neighbors in the loop on vineyard activities. Hill regularly touches base with his neighbors and attempts to schedule vineyard work during the optimum time frame for efficiency and to be non-invasive.



Benziger Family Winery - Mike Benziger of Benziger Family Winery explained several of the practices at Benziger which include recycling everything on site. Due to their composting, water recycling and cultivation of cover crops and beneficial insects there are unique microorganisms and indigenous yeasts on site which impact the grapes and are a signature their wines. The estate ranch at the winery is a closed system and the waste stream a valuable commodity.

Additional speakers included SVVGA President Ned Hill, Gail Davis and Marilyn Vernon of the Agricultural Commissioners Office, SVVGA Executive Director Jonnie McCormick and SVVGA Board Members Julie Atwood and Peter Haywood. The Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance is located at 17964 Sonoma Highway, Sonoma. For more information or to schedule a SVVGA speaker for your group call 707.935.0803.

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DIGITAL PHOTOS AVAILABLE