



## **COUNTY OF LAKE**

### **MARKETING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 10, 2009**

### **LAKE COUNTY WINE AUCTION TO BE HELD SEPTEMBER 19, BENEFITS ARTS, HEALTH, AND COMMUNITY**

#### **NEW LOCATION AND SPECIAL PRE-EVENT WINERY DINNERS**

**LAKEPORT, CA** — The Lake County Wine Alliance will hold its 10<sup>th</sup>-annual Lake County Wine Auction, a benefit for the arts, health, and community of Lake County, on Saturday, September 19, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

This annual gala is a must-attend event with live and silent auctions, wine and gourmet foods from local purveyors, and music. This year's event is chaired by Andy Beckstoffer, chairman and CEO of Beckstoffer Vineyards; the evening's auctioneer will be Tom DiNardo, founder of DiNardo & Lord Auctioneers. Rob Roumiguere, partner in Roumiguere Vineyards and treasurer for the Lake County Wine Alliance, is this year's master of ceremonies. Black-tie is encouraged. The Wine Auction begins at 5:00 p.m.; tickets are \$100 per person.

The Lake County Wine Alliance is a nonprofit organization of Lake County wineries, winegrape growers, and community supporters whose mission is to foster the arts, benefit health services, and support the community. The Lake County Wine Auction has contributed more than \$714,000 to local programs since the first event was held in 2000.

DiNardo has appeared as a featured celebrity auctioneer on TLC's "Wrecks to Riches" television program and is a regular contributor to WineSquire.com, AuctionZip.com, and GlobalAuctionGuide.com. Prior to entering his chosen field of auctioneering, DiNardo worked in the wine industry in both California and Washington and is a sommelier diplomate with the International Sommelier Guild, giving DiNardo the

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unique opportunity to marry both his passion for benefit auctions and wine together in pioneering what is today one of the most exciting and newly emerging trends – charity wine auctions. He also is a freelance writer for Wine Enthusiast, Decanter, Santé, and Wine Adventure magazines, and continues his passionate pursuit today as a wine consultant and wine educator who teaches others about oenology and wine collecting.

Each year, artist John Clarke creates a watercolor-on-silk painting and donates it to the Wine Alliance both to be reproduced as a fine art poster and to be auctioned off as original artwork. This year's piece is titled, "Sunset Waltz." Prints of Clarke's painting will be on sale through the summer in Kelseyville at the Saw Shop Gallery Bistro, where the original is displayed until the event, Focused on Wine, and the tasting rooms of Wildhurst Vineyards and Steele Wines, as well as in Lakeport at Inspirations Gallery. Other auction items include weekend and weeklong getaways, wine packages, wine tasting events, and a variety of goods and services like massages and other luxuries.

In addition to the gala festivities on Saturday, ticket holders are given an opportunity to purchase tickets for one of two exciting dinners being held on Friday, September 18, for an additional \$60 per person.

Tulip Hill Winery and the Blue Wing Saloon and Café will join forces to pair exclusive, small-production, award-winning wines with four courses of unique and tantalizing culinary creations that will both excite the palate and satisfy the senses. Held in Upper Lake at the Tallman Hotel's beautifully decorated and intimate Riffe's Meeting House, the evening with Tulip Hill Winery's winemaking and hospitality gurus will include discussions on the sensory attributes of each wine varietal, including how and why these wines pair with each course. The winery staff looks forward to sharing this evening of fine wine, fabulous food, lively discussion, and fun with a limited number of guests.

If an outdoor dinner in the vineyard is more to your taste, join hosts Joy Merrilees, Steele Wines' assistant winemaker, and her husband, Bruce Merrilees in the vineyards overlooking the agricultural scenery of the Big Valley with stunning Mount Konocti in the background. The evening will begin with some light appetizers and Shooting Star Sauvignon Blanc, followed by Lake County-raised lamb chops on the grill. Dinner will be paired with Stymie Syrah and Stymie Merlot, both of which are grown on site, followed by a delicious dessert and a brief walking tour of the vineyard at sunset.

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The Wine Alliance board of directors annually selects the recipients to benefit from the auction proceeds. A record number of applicants submitted their funding requests to the Lake County Wine Alliance this year, demonstrating the number of programs seeking financial assistance. Seven nonprofit organizations, five high schools, senior centers, and health programs have been selected as beneficiaries of this year's event, announced Margaret Walker-Stimmel, president of the sponsoring Lake County Wine Alliance.

## BENEFICIARIES

**The Arts:** The Allegro Scholarship Program assists exceptional music students with financial needs and will receive \$2,000. The fine arts programs at each of the five high schools in Lake County (Clear Lake High, Kelseyville High, Lower Lake High, Middletown High, and Upper Lake High) will share the balance of funds in this category.

**Health:** The Lake County Hunger Task Force will receive \$2,500 to assist senior centers and food banks with produce from its community gardens. The balance of funds will be shared equally by the five senior centers that provide "meals on wheels" or nutrition programs and the St. Helena Hospital Clearlake Medical Imaging department for its no-cost mammograms to low or no-income women.

**Community:** The Stitch and Give Knitters will receive \$1,000 to help them provide knitted items to the women's shelter, pregnant teen program, Head Start program, and newborn hats to area hospitals. The Lake County Chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America will receive \$5,000 for its advocacy and outreach programs, including the Avenue of Flags at local cemeteries, and providing gifts to patients at extended-care facilities. Remaining funds in this category will be shared between People Services, Inc., and Senior Law Project, Inc. People Services has been meeting the needs of the developmentally disabled in Lake County for 35 years. The Senior Law Project provides legal help to elder clients in Lake County.

The Ely Stage Stop & Country Museum project of the Lake County Historical Society will receive special attention through a "fund a need" live auction lot. The recently re-located structure is considered to be Lake County's oldest "stick-built" building, dating to the late 1850s. It will be the centerpiece of a new interpretive museum for Lake County's agrarian past.

## LOCAL SUPPORT

Participating wineries include Bell Hill Vineyards, Brassfield Estate Winery, Ceago Vinegarden, Dusinberre Cellars, Gregory Graham Winery, High Valley Vineyards, Langtry Estate & Vineyards, McDermaid Family Vineyards, Moore Family Winery, Noggle Vineyards & Winery, Ployez Winery, Robledo Family Winery, Rosa d'Oro Vineyards, Shannon Ridge Vineyards & Winery, Shed Horn Cellars, Six Sigma Ranch, Vineyards & Winery, Snows Lake Vineyard, Sol Rouge Vineyard & Winery, Steele Wines, Tulip Hill Winery & Vineyards, and Wildhurst Vineyards.

Participating restaurants and caterers include Angelina's Bakery & Espresso, Aromas at Yuba College, Bigg's 55 Diner, Blue Wing Saloon and Café, Brix Grill, Cache Creek Catering, Ku-Hu-Qui Café at Konocti Vista Casino, Lindy's Quality Catering, Molly Brennan's, Manzanita at Twin Pines Casino and Hotel, Park Place Restaurant, Riviera Hills Restaurant & Lounge, Rob Roy Golf Club, Saw Shop Gallery Bistro, WaterColor Restaurant, and Zino's Ristorante & Inn.

In these times of challenging economic uncertainties for many local nonprofit programs and agencies, the sponsors recognized the need to limit expenses in order to donate more funds to the beneficiary groups so the Lake County Wine Auction will be held at the National Guard Armory, located at 1431 Hoyt Avenue in Lakeport.

For tickets to the Lake County Wine Auction and information on the Friday evening dinners, contact (866) 279-WINE, [www.winealliance.org](http://www.winealliance.org)

Though Lake County is still often referred to as "The Undiscovered Wine Country," its grape-growing history dates back to the late 1800s with Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino as its next-door neighbors. The influence of the area's temperate climate combines with the terroir imparted by its distinct volcanic soils to produce ultra-premium winegrapes that have attracted the interest and investment of several famous winemakers. Visitors will experience these award-winning wines poured in casual tasting rooms that reflect the area's friendly, relaxed lifestyle. Lake County is part of the North Coast AVA, and within Lake County, five other AVAs exist — Clear Lake, Benmore Valley, Guenoc, and the recently approved Red Hills and High Valley AVAs.

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Located in beautiful Northern California, Lake County is just two hours by car from the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sacramento Valley, and the Pacific Coast. Lake County is home to Clear Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in California and possibly the oldest lake on the continent. Visitors to Lake County experience the state's cleanest air basin, spectacular scenic beauty, fine wines, headliner concerts, and unsurpassed recreational opportunities — from hiking, biking, golf, and off-road adventures to boating, fishing, kayaking, birding, and even rockhounding. Lake County is part of the North Coast AVA, which also encompasses Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties. Within Lake County, five other AVAs exist — Clear Lake AVA, Benmore Valley AVA, Guenoc AVA, and the recently approved Red Hills AVA and High Valley AVA. The local area code is 707. For visitor information, contact the Lake County Visitor Information Center at (800) 525-3743 or [www.lakecounty.com](http://www.lakecounty.com)

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