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Cornell's Fredonia Vineyard Laboratory Wins Grape and Wine Industry Award

By Joe Ogradnick

Geneva, NY: The New York Wine and Grape Foundation (NYWGF) presented its Research Award for major contributions in research and education to benefit the New York grape and wine industry to Cornell University's Vineyard Laboratory during their recent Unity Banquet. The lab, located in Fredonia, N.Y., is a component of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y.

"Cornell's Vineyard Laboratory has a long history of research and extension excellence that has contributed to the New York grape industry," said Experiment Station director Thomas Burr. "Knowledge generated by scientists and staff doing research at the Lab continues to have state, national, and international impact. It was very fitting and deserving that the lab was honored with the Research Award from the NYWGF at their Unity Banquet this year."

"The accomplishments at the lab are the result of cooperation and teamwork among all the program's participants," said Rick Dunst, a research support specialist, who accepted the award on behalf of the lab. "Cornell University has maintained support for the program over the years and has worked to make it attractive for faculty to conduct research at Fredonia. The program now has cooperative projects with over a dozen researchers from Cornell, Penn State, and the USDA."

According to Dunst, local industry has strongly supported the program over the years. "We have cooperated with many growers to develop innovative approaches, particularly in the areas of mechanical pruning and mechanical crop estimation and adjustment in vineyards," he said. "Area grape processors have supported the program through annual voluntary contributions that are based on fruit deliveries from their growers. These funds have been used to support the research and extension efforts at Fredonia and across the region, and they are often matched by contributions from NYWGF and other sources."

Dunst pointed out that research conducted at Fredonia has been aimed primarily at increasing yields and lowering the costs of juice grape production. According to Dunst, based on this research, major advances have been made, particularly in the areas of vineyard mechanization, grapevine physiology, and development of economic thresholds and effective control programs for insect and disease pests of grape.

"I want to recognize the hard work and dedication of the Fredonia research team, both past and present," Dunst said.

The Lake Erie grape belt contains over two-thirds of all New York vineyard acreage, and the Vineyard Laboratory at Fredonia has been a source of research and information to the hundreds of grape growers in the area.

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