

Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association Newsletter

THE OLDEST AND LARGEST CONCORD GRAPE REGION



Spring 2008

Lake Erie
Concord
Grape Belt

President's Message

I want to thank everyone that attended our annual meeting in November. We enjoyed a presentation by Lisa Gensheimer from Main Street Media. Her topic was: "Delicious Destinations: Hot New Trends in Tourism." With the ever increasing emphasis on AGRITOURISM--this topic gave all of us a real insight into regions of our country that have targeted promotion of agriculture and foods for economic growth.

Part of any annual meeting is recapping the events of the past year and the accomplishments made. Throughout this newsletter you will see articles that tell you about many of these items.

As we work together with the Wine Trail and the Chautauqua Visitors Bureau we hope to see our area benefit from increased awareness of the tourism possibilities along with promotion of our area grape products.

More signage promoting the grape industry will become evident as we progress into 2008.

The most challenging goal we will continue to work on is the creation of a CONCORD GRAPE HERITAGE CENTER to promote the history of the grape belt and to highlight the many products and tourism venues available in this area of New York and Pennsylvania. This project could have a huge impact on the area economy.

To accomplish the goals we continue to highlight for the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association we will need more members and more involvement of the members. Please talk to your neighbors about joining the organization.

Grapefully,
Helen Baran, President

Discovery Center Update

Plans for a Grape Discovery Center continue to take shape. This effort is a cornerstone project for the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association. The Discovery Center Committee and members of the Board of Directors have commissioned an architectural firm and a business plan consultant to assist the group in our planning process. The Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center www.discovercranberries.com is being used as a model for our Grape Center.

The project has built considerable momentum over the past 8 months. Potential funding partners have stepped forward asking, "What do you want to build?" and "How much is it going to cost?" We hope to answer these questions sufficiently to continue on to the next steps of funding approval and construction. Stay tuned.

Annual Meeting Minutes

The Annual Meeting of the Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association was held November 7, 2007 at the Chautauqua Inn and Suites in Mayville, NY. There were approximately 80 people in attendance.

Co-Chairperson Helen Baran welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the members of the board. Mary Ellen co-chair of the board then introduced Lisa Gensheimer of Main Street Media who spoke on "Savor the Flavor - Romancing America's Grape."

Brief reports were given by the Association Committee Chairs. Andy Dufresne gave the Treasurer's Report and the Executive Director's report. Tom Davenport reported on behalf of the Nominating Committee and introduced those board members whose terms expire this year.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to elect the following to a three-year term of office: Helen Baran, Andy Dufresne, Rick Dunst, William Daly and Debbie Phillips

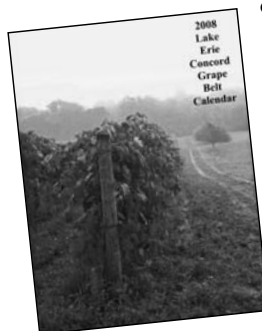
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9PM.

Economic Impact Study announced award winning Grape Belt Photos

On August 24, 2007, the results of the Grape Belt Heritage Association's grape industry economic impact study was announced along with a press conference attended by local and county leaders. The press conference was held at Barlow's Mill in Fredonia among the backdrop of our photo contest display. The economic impact summary is presented on the following page. The full study can be found in the press release section of our website www.concordgrapebelt.org

Grape Belt Calendars are a Big Hit

The 2008 Concord Grape Belt Calendar was unveiled at the Annual Meeting. Approximately 250 calendars were printed for distribution to members who attended the Annual Meeting and for sale. Our thanks to the local wineries who have assisted us with calendar sales.



The calendar photos came from entries in last year's I Love my NY Heritage Area Photo Contest. Thanks to Andy Dufresne and his committee for their fine creation. This is certainly a product to be proud of.

Enhancing Our Regional Flavor Conference

Recently Held in Mayville

By: David Munsee, Extension Resource Educator, CCE-Chautauqua County

Enhancing Our Regional Flavor – a Tool for Economic Development was a conference that was hosted recently by the Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chautauqua County, in Mayville at the Chautauqua Suites Meeting & Expo Center. Over 80 farmers, local officials and folks involved with tourism were on hand for the conference.

The conference was held as an effort to increase collaboration amongst individuals, organizations and businesses in Chautauqua County as well as in other areas of the grape belt. The group heard from different presenters on successful collaborative efforts from around the Northeast, as well as the United States.

Leslie Schaller from the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACE NET), led the day off with a talk on her experiences from Southern Ohio with using Regional Flavor as a strategy for economic development. ACE NET has worked with many different communities and types of businesses to collaborate and network to create “clusters” that appeal to experiential tourists by creating a destination.

Dave Eson from Pittsburgh gave a presentation on branding regional food products and an effort called Buy Fresh, Buy Local that was undertaken by the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture and farmers in Western Pennsylvania. He also reviewed some consumer research that had been performed in Western Pennsylvania regarding locally grown and produced food, in the last few years. Dave revealed that consumers that were surveyed wanted it all, they wanted food that is convenient to purchase, fresh, flavorful, locally produced, reasonably priced and safe. Dave concluded that with the current economic conditions locally grown and produced foods have some exciting prospects in the near future.

Mary Jeanne Packer, President of Ghostwriter Communications and current executive director of the NYS Maple Producers Association, NYS Forest Owners Association and NY Farms gave a presentation of successful examples of collaboration. She highlighted many examples of businesses or groups who have the same focus or are selling the same product that have collaborated and through their joint initiative have positively affected all parties involved.

Jan Joannides of Renewing the Countryside of Minnesota added some more stories about successful collaboration efforts from around the country.

Participants of the conference were broken into three smaller groups to share examples of successful collaborative efforts they had been a part of. The individual groups were asked to identify ways in which members and businesses in the local area can collaborate to maximize effectiveness while still retaining individual efforts and programs. The information from the breakout sessions will be used by the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association for future initiatives.

At the end of the day participants were treated to a tasting session of some of our areas finest in locally produced food items. Exhibitors at the tasting session included; Brick Village Gourmet, Growers Cooperative Grape Juice Company, Maple Producers Association of the Chautauqua Region, Lapp Farm Dairy and members of The Chautauqua - Lake Erie Wine Trail.

Special thanks to Conference Supporters, whose financial contributions made the conference possible; Association for Enterprise Opportunity, Chautauqua County Economic Development, Chautauqua County Farm Bureau, Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau, and Growers Cooperative Grape Juice Company. And thanks to the Conference Partners who helped promote the program; Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce, Chautauqua County Maple Producers, Erie County (PA) Farm Bureau, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program, National Grape, NYS Heritage Area Program, North East Area Chamber, P.A.S.A, and Visit Erie.

New Study Finds the Concord Grape Belt Supports Over 1,900 jobs and



Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt

A new study conducted by the Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association, with assistance from Cornell University and Pennsylv-

ania State University, confirms that grapes are an important foundation of the economies of Chautauqua County, New York, and Erie County, Pennsylvania. Each year, about 800 growers produce 150,000 tons or more of grapes on 30,000 acres of vineyards. Value added products like juices, jellies, and dozens of other products, are processed locally and sold across the United States and exported around the world. In addition, the local wine industry, including both growers and vintners, is undergoing rapid expansion and creating opportunities for

increased destination based tourism in the region.

This value-added chain has a substantial impact on the region's economy. Based on survey and secondary data collected and processed using IMPLAN economic impact software, the researchers estimated that grape-related production activities (i.e., growing, processing and wineries) supported **1,923 jobs** and contributed **\$340 million in total economic impact** to the two-county economy in 2004. They estimated that *total* fruit and vegetable processing annually support 5,281 jobs and contributes over \$1 billion to the two-county region by processors who became established here largely because of the grape industry.

Supported by some of the largest grape-juice and winery operations in the world and dozens of allied support businesses, the Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt is home to one of the largest

Branding Effort for the Lake Erie Grape Region Announced

Mayville, NY- America's Grape Country, a branding initiative for the Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt was announced at the Enhancing Our Regional Flavors Conference held at Chautauqua Suites on Wednesday. The America's Grape Country branding campaign is the result of a collaborative effort between the Chautauqua-Lake Erie Wine Trail, the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association and the Chautauqua County Visitor's Bureau as part of a regional branding grant provided by the New York State Wine & Grape Foundation.

Stephanie Burdo, Communications Coordinator with Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau is serving as the regional branding project team leader. Burdo noted that "America's Grape Country incorporates the themes of Heritage, Hospitality, and Health to describe the grape region from Silver Creek, NY to Harbor Creek, PA. Historically known as the Concord Grape Belt, the region boasts the oldest and largest Concord grape growing region in the world and the largest grape growing region in the United States outside of California. In 2006, the Lake Erie Grape Region became the first Agricultural Heritage Area in New York State."

The region is also rich with farm markets and fruit stands, over 85 in Chautauqua County alone and by this summer, 21 wineries will be open for tours and tastings along the Chautauqua-Lake Erie Wine Trail. In addition to agriculture, the region is known as "Steelhead Alley" for the abundance of steelhead trout in Lake Erie's tributary creeks and as a major watch spot for migratory birds and raptors. Concord grapes share a distinction with blueberries and cranberries as one of only a few fruits native to North America. According to the website, www.healthyconcordgrapes.com, Concord grapes yield a high concentration of vitamin C and antioxidants to promote heart health and support a healthy immune system.

Burdo added that the goal of the initiative was to unify the varied perspectives of regional grape growers, juice producers, wine makers, and tourism promotion agencies to create a single brand incorporating the common objectives of all. The group identified a lack of public awareness as their first challenge to overcome. Over 800 farms cultivate 30,000 acres of vineyards in this region that runs approximately 50 miles along Lake Erie. The New York portion of the Lake Erie Grape Region produces more than 60% of the state's overall annual grape tonnage, whereas the Finger Lakes Region is commonly misidentified as New York's primary grape region. At the conference, Duncan Hilchey, Senior Extension Associate and agriculture development specialist with the Community Rural Development Institute at Cornell University described the uniqueness of the grape region. "You may not realize this," he said, "but there is no where else on earth like the Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt."

The new brand and awareness building campaign will promote the unique history and local flavor of the grape region located within Chautauqua County, New York and extending into Erie County, Pennsylvania. Plans include print advertising in major regional and women's magazines, a new website incorporating photos and stories from America's Grape Country, and a map of the natural and cultural history of the region created by local artist Mark Baldwin. Guidelines and use of the new logo will be by permission of the regional branding group.



Contributes Over \$340 Million to the Regional Economy

fruit processing industry clusters in the eastern United States. The industry is the economic backbone of the towns and villages in the region, and contributes substantially to the economies of the two counties and states of the region.

The Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt has faced many challenges over its more than 200 year history. The industry has been and continues to be successful because of its strong infrastructure and ability to adapt to change. Cooperation among industry producers and processors, the development of leading edge technologies by Cornell and Penn State Universities, and the adoption of these technologies by producers, have all been major factors in the success of the industry. An example is the recent commitment of over \$5 million by the state of New York to build a new research and extension education facility in the region.

For more information on this study, email inforequest@concordgrapebelt.org

Jobs Supported:	1,923
Total Economic Impact:	\$340 million*
Wages Paid:	\$54 million
Number of Producers:	800
Bearing Acres:	30,000+
Retail Value of Juice Sales:	\$208 million
Retail Value of Wine Sales:	\$17.5 million
Wine-Related Tourist Visits:	35,000

* Total Economic Impact is the total value of sales generated by juice processors, growers and other businesses from whom they purchase.

The Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association would like to welcome the following new members from 2007/2008:

Lisa & Rich Gensheimer	Main Street Media, Inc.	North East, PA
J. Lechter		North East, PA
Michael & Janet Baker		North East, PA
Noble Winery	L. Diane & Alton Noble	Westfield, NY
Timothy E. Martinson		
NYSAES	106 Headrick Hall	Geneva, NY
Thomas G. Davenport		Dewittville, NY
John Glovack		Perrysburg, NY
Jean Stebell		Westfield, NY
Florida Bulk Sales	Ron Clarke	Eaton Park, FL
RA Koerner & Company		Westfield, NY
Matthew & Marian Wolford		Erie, PA
Raisin Ranch Farms	Darren & Laura Meehl	North East, Pa
John T. & Kate Issler		Westfield, NY
Willaim Ducey		Ripley, NY
Harold Smith		Brocton, NY
Thomas A Webb, Attorney At Law		Tonawanda, NY
Fred Croscut-Chaut. County Legislator		Sherman, NY
Mason Selkowitz McDermott Inc	Helen McDermott	Penfield, NY
Penn State Cooperative Extension-Erie	Holly Hedstrom	Erie, PA
Kurt G. Lindstrom		Silver Creek, NY
Supervisor Martha R. Bills	Town of Westfield	Westfield, NY
David S. & Sandra K. Brown		Westfield, NY
Michelle A. Twichell		Fredonia, NY

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 Heritage Association, Inc.
 Concord Grape Belt
 Grape Belt
 Concord
 Lake Erie