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NEWS RELEASE

Winemakers Pressing Toward Future

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. – Continuous improvement. Total quality management. Important words for Indiana vintners in today's competitive wine industry. "Improving Everything We Do" is the focus for the 1999 Indiana Grape and Wine Symposium. Area grape growers and winemakers will convene in Bloomington, Ind. on February 26-28th to address continuous development in Indiana's wine and grape industry.

Speakers from Ohio, as well as local experts, will offer advice on improving wine quality, grape growing, marketing direction, and industry relationships. In addition, participants will taste experimental wines made from grape cultivars new to Indiana. The wines were created using grapes grown in different regions throughout the state. There is a widely held belief that location, or terrior, effects the flavor and growth of the grape varieties. Furthermore, a variety of production methods were used to demonstrate winemaking techniques.

Indiana wine sales increased 26 percent in 1998 to total sales of 156,308 gallons. "The continued rise in sales figures shows the increasing importance of the Indiana wineries," said Steve Thomas, President of the Indiana Winegrowers Guild and owner of Thomas Family Winery. "Indiana's wines are growing in popularity and the wineries, with the Council's assistance, are striving to continue improvements in both quality and quantity."

The Indiana wine industry has experienced a growth rate higher than 20 percent for the past five years. Increased quality contributed to Indiana wineries winning a record 207 medals in the 1998 Indy International wine competition, one of the five largest competitions in the nation.

Registration fees for the 1999 Grape and Wine Symposium are \$45.00 for the first person on the registration form, and \$40.00 for each additional person. After February 20, fees increase \$10.00 per person. The Symposium will be held at the Bloomington Convention Center, Bloomington, Ind. For more information, call Thomas Family Winery at 812-273-3755.

For information on starting a commercial winery or vineyard, call the Indiana Wine Grape Council at 800-832-WINE and request a *Start Up Kit*.

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Credentialed media have the registration fee waived to attend all or part of the Symposium (excluding Saturday night dinner). Please RSVP 48 hours in advance to Sally Peart, Marketing Director at 765-496-3842. We understand that breaking news may prevent actual attendance.

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