

## Long-time vineyard owner re-elected grape and wine association president

By Char Gust

Rodney Hogen, co-owner of Red Trail Vineyard near Buffalo, was re-elected president of the North Dakota Grape and Wine Association in February. He is a charter member of the association and was their first president in 2006.

While grapes have been grown in North Dakota for hundreds of years, it wasn't until the 1990s when interest grew with gardeners and others. Hogen notes that Greg Krieger of Galesburg was probably the first grape grower of any scale in ND.

In April 2002, Jeff Peterson and Ken Eggleston of Pointe of View Winery in Burlington were granted the first ND license; this was the first time all 50 states had at least one federally-bonded winery.

During that time, additional wineries slowly cropped up in the state, including local wineries such as Maple River Winery in Casselton, Bear Creek Winery and Vintner's Cellar, both in Fargo.

Over the years, the ND Grape and Wine Association has fostered collaboration with

ND vineyards and wineries in a variety of ways. They've held training and classes geared towards helping these businesses grow and add new skills, informed the public about local grapes and winemaking and worked to encourage support for research and educational programs.

It hasn't been all work though. During conventions, they typically hold wine tastings, allowing all attendees to taste wines made in other parts of the state. They also hold a summer winery and vineyard tour.

They also petitioned the ND legislature in 2013 to allow wineries to sell directly to consumers.

"We have come a long way since tasting some undrinkable wines years ago," adds Hogen.

Currently in ND, there are eight wineries located in Cass County. They include 4e Winery, Mapleton; Cottonwood Cider House, Ayr; Bear Creek Winery, Fargo; Kesselring Vineyards, Kindred; Maple River Winery, Casselton; Prairie Rose Meadery, Fargo; Rookery Rock Winery, Wheatland; and Red Trail Vineyard,

Buffalo.

"Wineries have become one of the most important stops for tourists that pass the state every year," says Hogen.

Hogen started growing the King of the North grape variety at Red Trail Vineyard in 2003 and opened for business on Memorial Day Weekend in 2005. He says he still has about 100 of those vines in the vineyard. Today he grows 12 grape varieties on 8 acres. He estimates that he has about 2500 vines.

"Currently there are more ND grown grapes made into wine from this vineyard than all the rest of the wineries in ND," he adds.

Hogen notes that Red Trail Vineyard isn't a winery. The grapes grown there are made into wine by Dakota Vines Vineyard and Winery in Colfax.

The vineyard encourages visitors each summer. The tasting room opens Memorial Day weekend. Red Trail Vineyard also offers private tours, room rental and wedding events.

The Friday Night Supper Series at Red Trail Vineyard is very popular. They are by



COURTESY PHOTO

Rodney and Susan Hogen own Red Trail Vineyard in Buffalo

reservation only and each Friday, Hogen features a different menu, such as steak, prime rib, salmon or even a lobster boil.

"I call them suppers," says Hogen, "because if I called them dinners, all the farm boys would be there at noon."

According to Hogen, the

suppers are unique in that all guests are eating the same meal and other people that you didn't come with may be seated with you. It's all home-cooked and dessert is often included.

And of course, guests can purchase Red Trail Vineyards wine to enjoy with their meal.

## Succession plan critical to passing the farm to next generation

By Char Gust

It's probably the last thing a farmer wants to think about but determining what happens to their farm when they die is an important topic to consider while still living. It's typically called succession planning and it's defined as the process of passing on the ownership of your farm to another person smoothly and successfully.

"I find that the majority of farmers don't have a succession plan," says Del Losing, an attorney at Ohnstad Twichell in Casselton.

When a farmer starts the process of succession planning for a family farm, it can feel overwhelming. It takes consideration for what it will take for the farm heirs to succeed, but often requires an assessment of how to ensure that the plan is fair and equitable.

From Losing's perspective, the process of passing on the leadership of a farm is similar to passing on ownership of a family business. He feels one difference for farms versus most businesses is that both the land and farm equipment are very high cost. And for a farm to be successful, they need an adequate amount of land.

A variety of resources are available to farmers to help with a succession plan. They can work with a professional, such as Losing, or spend time researching and planning on their own. NDSU Extension Service also offers multi-session workshops to help farm families begin plan-

ning and prepare individuals for working with a professional.

Losing says that it's often a team of people working on the plan. In addition to an attorney, it can be helpful to bring in the accountant or person that prepares the tax returns and any financial advisor they work with. He says they start by having the farm owner share what they want to accomplish, the goals of the plan.

That discussion can help

identify options for a plan that will keep the farming operation intact and do what is necessary for it to thrive in the next generation.

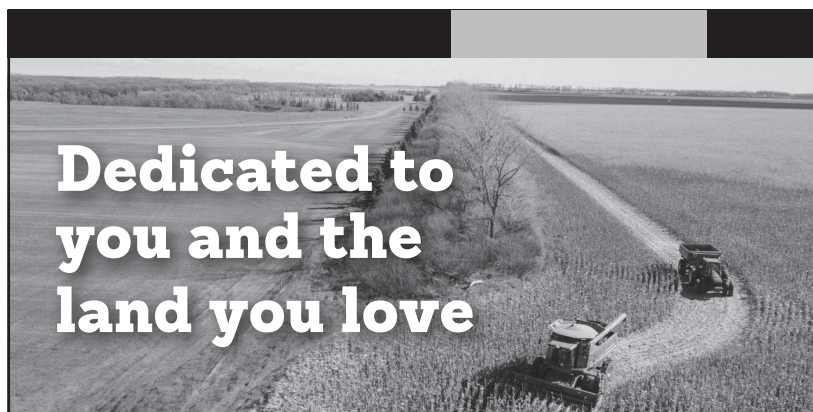
"It's your estate plan," says Losing. "It's not my estate plan." One tip he offers is to be open and honest with the team working with you. While he understands the topic is personal, he feels that the more he understands all perspectives, even potential areas of conflict

or tension, he can make better recommendations or adjust the planning.

"You want to make sure you have a plan that can succeed," says Losing.

Once the plan is put together,

family communication is recommended. Losing says that when parents sit down with the family and share what they wish to happen, the planning is often more easily accepted.



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