

Business Buzz

Putting a Personal Face on Local Business

Valerie Hotz



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Lamorinda Wine Growers Association

While hunting for good ground cover for their three-acre property that happened to have an excellent southwest exposure, Leslie and Jim Ward stumbled upon the concept of planting grape vines. A consult with friends who are in the wine business in the Los Robles area, an aerial survey and a report from a soils engineer led to their planting 1,500 pinot noir vines and the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association was born.

“Our superb microclimate of cool evenings and warm days makes Lamorinda the perfect location for many varieties of the lighter red wines and of course all the white wines,” explains Leslie Ward. “We recently petitioned the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau to designate Lamorinda as an American Viticultural Area (AVA) and anticipate having a decision soon.” The AVA are federally recognized regions in the U.S. and essentially define the distinguishing features of a grape-growing area.

AVA designation is a benefit to the wine grape grower, the winery that uses grapes from a specific AVA and to the consumer as well. “Knowing where a wine comes from is important because it provides more information about the unique characteristics that define grapes grown in a specific

AVA,” says Ward. “The farmer growing grapes within the AVA will have more of a story to tell, essentially tying his or her grapes to the land.” Ward is excited about securing the AVA because it will draw visitors to the area.

Many members of the Lamorinda Wine-growers Association have 10 to 12 acres



DAVID DIERKS

Leslie Ward, president of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association.

and cultivate up to 5,000 grape vines, while most members farm 200 to 400 vines. The organization hosts special events throughout the year, including a speaker series which recently focused on sustainability

and erosion control.

“We are trying to connect with everyone who has vines and are on the lookout for new vineyards,” says Ward. “We encourage the public to attend our meetings, especially individuals interested in planting vines. Our number one priority is to help our members to make the best wine and in the process to build the Lamorinda region.”

To view a map of the proposed Lamorinda AVA and for more information about Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, visit www.lamorindawinegrowersassociation.com. Leslie Ward can be reached at 510-406-5680.