

Harvard vineyard yields fruits of labor in its third season

By **KURT BEGALKA**

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HARVARD – Blue Star Vineyard owner Jeff Pankow enters his third grape-growing season with a little added anticipation.

This year the vineyard, located on a portion of 30 rolling acres off Vander Karr Road, will yield a partial crop from the 1½ acres of vines he and cadre of volunteers planted in 2008. Since an acre of grapes – some 545 vines – can yield between 3½ and 4 tons of grapes, he anticipates easily having enough to produce the 200 gallons he can make without being officially licensed from the state. But he can't sell it ... at least not just yet.

"I can age it, but I just can't sell it," Pankow said. "This year was going to be the year when we started construction on the winery. Unfortunately, the economy took a turn for the worse. ... Frustrating is a very good word for it. I'm excited but I'm also a realist. I know I can't really move forward because I'm running another company."

Pankow, 45, of Wood-

stock, is president of the family business, Allied Spring & Manufacturing Inc. in Elk Grove Village. So although he and his wife, Sue, hope to turn 10 acres into a vineyard, with a processing building and maybe a gift shop, he will first gauge the marketplace. Commercial grape processing require large tanks, pumps, a crusher, destemmer and bottling line.

"Next year I'll make a decision. I have a couple of op-

tions [Prairie State Winery in Kingston and Fox Valley Winery in Oswego] that I know of," Pankow said. "I know most of the farmers in the area are looking at me with amused curiosity, but I think if I continue to be a good steward of the land the vineyard is on, I'll be accepted."

Blue Star Vineyard hosted 73 volunteers May 8 who planted more than 800 wine grapevines off Vander

Karr Road. They included Girl Scouts from Woodstock Troop 553, each of whom earned patches. Each vine is planted 18 inches deep and 8 feet apart. Vines eventually will grow 5 feet high, climbing in "T" fashion to a wire suspended between 4-by-4 posts. The vineyard now boasts 4 acres of wine grapes in five different varieties. They include winter-hardy French-American hybrids with names such as Marechal Foch, Marquette, Frontenac, LaCrescent and Frontenac Gris. The first three varieties will produce red wines while the latter two are white wine grapes.

Pankow's goal is to have Blue Star Vineyard become the first vineyard/winery in McHenry County, although he acknowledged he likely is a "a couple years off" from reaching that goal. But he has been encouraged by the initial response. Blue Star (www.bluestarvineyard.com) is one of several vineyards in McHenry County, including Back Venti Vineyard in Harvard (www.backventi.com) and Salute Farm & Vineyard in Woodstock (www.salutefarm.com).



Photo provided

Blue Star Vineyard family member David Pankow (left) was among those who gathered May 8 to plant grape vines. Others pictured (left to right) are Tony Spaldon, Sam Farler and Katie Spaldon.

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TIME CAPSULE

Making bricks in McHenry

The clay soils in McHenry County are good for making bricks. Consequently, there were several brickmaking businesses. One of these, Elgin Brick and Tile Co., opened in McHenry in 1882.

The proprietors were Amos Whiting and Isaac Wentworth, the "boss" brick-maker.

They were running full blast in 1899, the fires from the kilns lighting up the night sky. Three men in the clay holes dug the raw material. It moved to a pit where horses powered a wheel that broke it up. Other horses turned the wheel of the mixing machine, which made the bricks.

Production stopped around 1917. Abandoned clay holes were first used for fishing or ice skating and then eventually filled in. Pictured is one of the old clay holes, west of McHenry.

More information about brick-making in the county can be found at the McHenry Historical Society.



McHenry County Historical Society archives

NEW BUSINESSES:

New businesses:

- Harvard Food & Liquor, 100 Admiral Drive, Harvard, IL 60033. 815-943-1313. Beer, wine, hard liquor, beer, milk, juice, cigarettes. Aslam Alimohd, owner.

- Thyme to Share, 10273 Vine St., Huntley. 847-669-1914, www.thymetoshare.com. Offers all-inclusive, prepackaged meals ready for cooking in an effort to encourage families to eat together. Menu changes every two to three weeks. Delivery to central locations offered. Sharon Host, owner.

- Legendary Premier, 2650 Corporate Parkway, Algonquin, 60102. 224-293-0803; www.legendarycheer.com. Competitive cheerleading and tumbling gym for ages 3 to 18; private lessons, step classes, choreography, facility rentals, birthday parties. Competition-size, 42-by-54-foot spring floor. Stephanie Lee, Sherrie Cantrell, Lauri Heffron and Kim Brunner, owners.

- Papanani Landscape Services Inc at Castle Gardens, 31776 N. Route 12, Volo, 60073. 815-344-9000; www.castlegradens.com. Mulch, stone, water features, plant installation, landscape designs, snowplowing and salting. Chris Liebeck and Jackie Williams, owners.

- Paradise Nutrition, 10436 Route 47, Suite 103, Huntley. 847-669-1698. Nonretail private nutrition club focusing on fitness, weight loss, nutrition. Wellness evaluations. Beth Sherman, owner.

- Woodstock Mixed Martial Arts and Fitness, 701 S. Eastwood Drive, Woodstock, 60098. 815-334-9662; www.woodstockmma.com. Kickboxing, fitness equipment and classes, KidFitness program, fitness bootcamp, mixed martial arts courses. Carolyn and Kurt Schulenberg, owners.

- 2K Adventure Gear, 10310 N. Main St., Richmond. 815-862-1400, www.2kadventuregear.com. Camping, fishing and outdoor gear, kayaks and canoes, apparel, cross-country skies, snowshoes. adventure trips nationally and internationally. Christina and Rick Landre, owners.

- Scoops Dairy & Dogs, 203 N. Madison St., Woodstock 60098. Red hot Chicago-style hotdogs, footlongs, Polish sausage, Italian beef, nachos and cheese, pizza, soft serve ice cream, artichoke swirls. Mark Cooper, owner.

Faces & Places