



## President's Message

# SWGGA Picnic

## Event Chair & Location Needed

June, our target month for the SWGGA picnic, is not far off especially when planning an event. As we've previously shared, Al Schaefer needs to reduce his

social coordinator role but has agreed to use his experience to help guide our two big events (picnic and holiday party). But we need event chairs for each and the picnic is our top priority!

Besides a picnic **event chair, we're looking for a location.** If you have or know of a location that could work for our picnic, or are interested in working with Al as our picnic chairperson, please contact either Al, at [afsarch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:afsarch@sbcglobal.net) or me at 562-972-2407 or [diane.houston@managementtrust.com](mailto:diane.houston@managementtrust.com)

## SWGGA Survey

Only five members have returned our membership survey, so we'll be sending it out again. In addition, we'll have hard copies at the March meeting and plan to dedicate the first 10 minutes of the meeting for you to complete the survey – that's how much we want to hear from you! To make it easier, we ask that you do your "homework" ahead and bring the completed survey to the meeting. We really appreciate and care what you have to say.

Cheers! Diane



See the survey on pages 9 and 10 in this Trellis Wire. Print them, fill them out, return them. Please, & thanks.

## Next Meetings

**Thursday, March 20,**  
Ponderosa Hall

### Great Cuts

*All About Pruning*  
See Page 2

**Thursday April 17,**  
Ponderosa Hall

### What Should You Do Next?

See Page 2

### Field Trip

**Thursday May 17,**  
Tom Martella's Vineyard  
Chicago Park

**Details to Follow**

### Annual Picnic

**Late June**  
**Details to Follow**

## In This Trellis Wire

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Social Hour begins at 6:30. Meeting begins at 7:00

**March Meeting, Thursday, March 20th at Ponderosa Hall**

## **Great Cuts . . . . Pruning Talk**

It's one thing to talk about pruning, but unless you are in a vineyard actually watching someone doing it, it is very easy to get confused. Our chances of getting you all out to a vineyard are slim. Consequently, we're going to bring the vineyard to you. That's right. Vines at Ponderosa.

You might wonder, how exactly are we going to do that? Like a wretched turkey at Thanksgiving, we're going out in the field, or in this case vineyard, and whack some vines. Haul 'em home, just like Thanksgiving.

We have asked Jackson Starr, viticulturist at Sierra Starr Winery, to come to the meeting to give us his thoughts on pruning in general, and more specifically, lead us in an actual pruning demonstration. Cut by snip, while talking through it.



Basically, we are going to bring in some actual grapevines, some head pruned, some cane pruned, and talk about different pruning techniques, while we're actually pruning the vines.

Maybe we could even get a few of the growers in attendance to demonstrate how they prune vines.

Even if you don't have grape vines, you probably prune something. It all counts.



April Meeting, Thursday, April 17th at Ponderosa Hall

### **What Should You Do Next With Your Wine?**

Following up on February's "In The Cellar" program, in April we will assemble an expert panel of commercial winemakers to offer advice about what you should do next with your wine.

I am happy to report we already have quite a number of wines lined up that have been produced from some of our newer winemakers.

The question is: could they do something to improve their wines? Maybe it's a blending solution, or maybe an oak, or acidity possibility, or maybe even a fining question. Or maybe nothing? What should you do next?

It requires two bottles of each wine. Contact me at [rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com](mailto:rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com) if you are interested.

- 2024 Rosé
- 2024 Syrah Rosé
- 2024 Barbera
- 2023 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2024 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2023 Petite Sirah
- 2024 Petite Sirah



## **In Case You Missed It . . . February Meeting . . . by Bernie Zimmerman**

The February meeting featured Dave Elliott exploring the mysteries of fining wines. A crowded Ponderosa Hall listened to Dave talk about what to do in the winery during the winter. Since the wines are now about six months old, they should have stabilized enough so you can start thinking about optimizing their flavor, which sometimes involves fining. Dave went through various fining products, such as egg whites, gelatin, and bentonite, and discussed the benefits and drawbacks of each one. See Dave's slides here. A key message was that fining can improve flavor by mitigating the impact of excessive tannins or other organoleptics (any substance that affects the senses-word of the day). We were then treated to a tasting of two wines: Dave's 2015 Syrah, which he thought was bitter, and Bill Betts'



2024 Petite Sirah, which he thought was tannic. We compared the base wine to two variants which had been fined differently. There was a lively discussion about which version of the respective wines was more enjoyable, which established that fining is more an art than a science. Many thanks to Dave and Bill for lending the wines and to Dave for imparting his knowledge.

### **Bernie sent this note in as well. Curiously interesting. Shockingly crazy.**

*Written by Erik Castro, Special To The Chronicle.*

Todd Anderson wants to be known as the guy who makes the most expensive wine in the world.

Unlike other high-end vintners, where explicit discussions of money are considered gauche, Anderson wears his price tags proudly. At his Napa Valley winery Ghost Horse, he sells new releases for between \$500 (Chardonnay) and \$5,500 (Premonition, the priciest of his Cabernet Sauvignons).

Want to visit Anderson in St. Helena for a tasting? That will be \$750, \$1000 or \$5000 per person, depending on which option you choose. The fees are not waived if you buy a bottle, but they do include a charcuterie platter.

Now, Anderson is preparing to release his most audaciously priced wine yet. Effrayant ("scary" in French) is still in barrel, but when it's ready in 2027 - all three cases of it - he plans to charge \$25,000 a bottle.

The label, an update on the silver equine etching on his other bottles, features a horse on fire, its mane ablaze in orange. Ask him what makes this wine so distinctly special and he demurs, refusing to divulge trade secrets. With Burgundy's Domaine de la Romanée-Conti around \$20,000 on release, Effrayant may indeed catapult Anderson to the superlative status he's been chasing for 25 years.





## Nevada Joint Union High School District Ranch Project



In 2021 Jim Phelan donated his 86 acre ranch, located in the south county, to the Nevada Joint Union High School District for “educational, recreational, conservation, and agricultural purposes”. It was a very generous gift.

The project falls under the auspices of the department of Career Technical Education (CTE). Luke Browning, a seventh generation county resident, is the High School CTE Director. His job is to create a real-world ranching and agricultural model for the students. In addition to a workable saw mill, cattle and pigs, they will also have a farm with row crops, an orchard, and hey, why not, a vineyard.

Luke’s vision is to have as many different industry standard levels of ranching and agricultural activities as possible. They will be building classrooms out there as well. Think of it as an apprenticeship program for FFA kids. The kids will graduate with real, actual hands-on experience. The idea is to partner with as many local organizations as possible relying on each organization to supply their particular expertise.

The 86-acre property includes NID Ag water, three ponds, an office, two barns and a caretaker house. They intend to build class rooms as well as a community center.



Luke reached out to SWGGA for advice about putting in a vineyard.

In February Diane Houston, Susan Clarabut and I went to see what it was all about. First of all, gorgeous property. We met with Luke who explained the program to us. It was hard not to be impressed and we all left thinking we should do something. Plus the whole concept dovetails with our Scholarship Program.

To be clear, they are not asking us for money or labor. Just advice.

We discussed this topic at length at our recent Board of Directors meeting on February 26th. The upshot of that was that Dave Elliott volunteered and a motion was passed to have Dave be our representative on their Advisory Board. He is the perfect choice. He has done it and knows how to do it.

There is really nothing to be done right now as even preliminary decisions have yet to be worked out. We will keep you posted about this project as details develop.



**The Ranch**

This is the time of year when the Scholarship committee selects the 2025 recipient. While there is nothing to report right now, the pot is stirring. We have 10 candidates who have applied for our scholarship. On March 10th the committee will select one of them. It's actually quite exciting in a scholarship-kind-of-way.

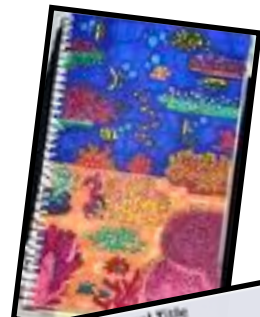
That doesn't mean we don't have a Scholarship update. The following is a recent e-mail from our most current recipient, Nina Best. And right back at ya, Best to you, Nina.

**Hello, happy holidays and I hope you are doing well!**

"I excelled in my studies, taking courses like chemistry and environmental science and sustainability, achieving all A's and keeping my 4.0 GPA! My transcript is attached below. I was not expecting to do this well, and I am so proud of myself, I feel like I fully understood the concepts as well, which is such a relief, especially as I struggled with chemistry during high school. We even surprised our teacher by dressing up like him for mol day! (pictured below). For my environmental science and sustainability class, I created some art, linked below, and participated in volunteer events like the lonely meadow cattle fencing/clean up and the Yuba River annual cleanup where I made some friends at SYRCL!



(And potential future job opportunities!) Next semester I am taking classes in Rocklin for the first time like Biology and Calculus, so I am super grateful for all the support you have given me as I am able to pursue opportunities like these in my career thanks to you! I am considering transferring to Cal Poly Humboldt as it would be closer to my family, but I am going to try my best in the 2nd semester of chemistry to be able to go to U.C. Santa Cruz! Also, I have been working on getting a small business together for my arts and crafts (@beanie.bee.inc on instagram!) so feel free to share if you know anyone who would like art or keychains (pictured below) made all by me! :) Please let me know if there is any other information you need for the 2nd payment of the scholarship or any events you would like me to attend (I'd be happy too) and I hope you had happy holidays!



Thank you so much again, and if you would be willing to pass this on as I am missing

some email addresses I would greatly appreciate it! "

Sincerely, Nina Best

Subject	Course Level	Title	Grade	Credit Hours	Quality Points
CHM	0001A	CR	A	5.000	20.00
CHM	0001X	CR	A	1.000	4.00
ENGL	0001A	CR	A	4.000	16.00
ISS	0001	CR	A	3.000	12.00
DEV	0005	CR	A	3.000	12.00
Term Totals (Credit)					





# The Want Ads

Have something you want to mention, trade, buy, sell, or give away? Send the details to: [rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com](mailto:rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com).

## This note about a vineyard came in from Bill Betts

“The Petite Sirah that I have been making over the last several years is from my friend, John Petrera’s Vineyard. John has decided that he doesn’t want to manage the 110 Petite Sirah vines anymore. The fruit (Clone 3, the best Petite clone) is what I made the 2023 Petite from – one of 5 gold medals from last year’s Nevada County competition.

**Here’s the pitch...** An SWGGA member or a group takes over management of the vineyard this year. They would need to prune, spray for powdery mildew, put up bird nets and harvest. I and friends would help with the pruning and harvest. I would consult with all aspects of the process. The person or group would in return get all of the fruit (1000 pounds minimum). If they would like, I would also consult on the winemaking.

John’s vineyard is on a beautiful piece of property in a gated community west of Auburn and near Hidden Falls Regional Park. I think that this would be a great opportunity for someone to get the end to end experience of grape growing and wine making. Please pass this on to our members. Anyone interested can contact me at 530-863-3107.” *Cheers, Bill*



## Anyone Want A Wine Rack?

Free. Two custom-made stainless steel 54 bottle wine racks, on wheels.

[rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com](mailto:rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com)



## Meeting Schedule For 2025

March 20	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
April 17	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
May 15	Field Trip	3rd Thursday
June	Picnic	TBD
July 17	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
August 21	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
September 11	Ponderosa Hall	2nd Thursday
October	Field Trip	TBD
November 20	Ponderosa Hall	3rd Thursday
December 11	Ponderosa Hall	2nd Thursday

We're looking for **Volunteers** to plan and arrange the site for our **June 28 or 29 Picnic**, 4-8 PM. Also, looking for a **Vineyard** or attractive **Site** for about 40 guests and 20 cars.

Thanks. AL. [afsarch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:afsarch@sbcglobal.net)

**Winemaking partners Peter Willcox and Ron Hlavac** invited me over to their winery operation where they make Machine Shop Red. You've tasted it at our meetings.

Last month we focused on best winemaking practices in the cellar, in winter. An important one we didn't mention was bottling. A lot of that goes on this time a year. On March 1st, I went to see what theirs is about.



Isn't this how everybody starts a day of bottling?

In 2023 Peter and Ron purchased Zinfandel from the Russian River in Sonoma, a Pinot Noir also from the Russian River and a Cabernet Sauvignon from the Oak Knoll district of Napa Valley. On this day they were bottling the Zin and Pinot.

They age the wine in flex tanks and use a pump to move the wine through a pad filtration system into a carboy. It was only a coarse filtration so the wine moved through the system pretty well.

"2023 was a late harvest," Ron explained. "Chardonnay was mid-October. Zinfandel was in November."

Ron and Peter follow a pretty traditional program including using yeast, enzymes, nutrients, and staves for oak. "Whites really move along fast, usually in 4 or 5 months. It goes fast," Peter explained. Generally, they are trying to make their wines faster. Whites bottled in less than six months; reds less than 18. The Zin and Pinot are at 15 months. The 2023 Chardonnay is already bottled.

"In 2023 the reds were very low in pH and very high in acidity. We needed to correct that." They added potassium bicarbonate to drop the acidity while hopefully raising the pH. "You need to be careful about how you do it," Peter said. "Add it too fast and it will erupt like a volcano."





## It kind of reminded me of ice fishing



Ron explained that they had to learn how to do their own calculations regarding how much potassium bicarbonate to add. “We were getting different results than from what their chart suggested.”

They prefer adding less than needed at first, easier to add more. Impossible to undo. It is a fast reaction and once done, it’s finished. It is easy to do it again.

“We used to think that bulk aging was beneficial but now we think it is better to get it in the bottle sooner. Let it age there. It’s safer.”



No matter how perfect, it always takes some tinkering.



←  
There’s always some of this  
before finally ending here  
→  
At day’s end, 15 cases of  
Pinot, 13 cases of Zin.

## How do you know when it is time to bottle?

“When we have done everything we wanted to do,” Peter said. “When we have finished with any adjustments, done with the oak treatment, and it tastes good. If there is nothing else left to do, put it in the bottle.”





# Sierra Wine and Grape Growers Association

## Membership Survey, Fall 2024

This survey is intended to identify the interests of our current membership. The Board of Directors will use the results to plan future meetings, events and educational programs.

### Membership

1. How long have you been a member of SWGGA: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please indicate your interest level on the following, either High, Medium or Low:
  - a. Winemaking: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Grape Growing: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Wine Education/ Appreciation: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Social Events: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Networking: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Would you be interested in helping with a program or event: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Maybe
4. Would you be willing to serve on a committee: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Maybe
5. Would you be willing to serve on the Board of Directors: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Maybe
6. Are you likely to renew your membership next year: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Maybe
7. Regarding #6, if No or Maybe, why: \_\_\_\_\_

### Programs and Social Events

8. Roughly, how many Programs and Social Events have you attended this year: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Please rate your interest in the following Programs/ Social Events:
  - a. Vineyard Related Topics: \_\_\_ High \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Maybe
  - b. Winemaking Related Topics: \_\_\_ High \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Maybe
  - c. Wine Tasting and Evaluations: \_\_\_ High \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Maybe
  - d. In depth Technical Sessions: \_\_\_ High \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Maybe
  - e. Winery/ Vineyard Visits: \_\_\_ High \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Maybe
  - f. Pre-meeting Social Sessions: \_\_\_ High \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Maybe
  - g. Annual Picnic: \_\_\_ High \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Maybe
  - h. Annual Holiday Dinner: \_\_\_ High \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Maybe
10. What program would you be interested in hosting: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Picnic/ BBQ

11. What Annual Picnic format do you prefer: \_\_\_ Catered \_\_\_ Pot Luck \_\_\_ Combination
12. Which location do you prefer: \_\_\_ Winery \_\_\_ Member's Home \_\_\_ Rented Space (Fairgrounds)
13. What has prevented you from attending in the past: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Picnic Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Holiday Dinner

15. What Holiday Dinner Format do you prefer: \_\_\_ Served \_\_\_ Buffet \_\_\_ Pot Luck
  16. Which location do you prefer: \_\_\_ Rented Space \_\_\_ Restaurant \_\_\_ Ponderosa Hall
  17. What has prevented you from attending in the past: \_\_\_\_\_
  18. Holiday Dinner Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_
-

**Communications:**

19. Other than The Union, where do you get local news: \_\_\_\_\_

20. Is the SWGGA website important to you: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

21. What features should it have: \_\_\_\_\_

22. Do you read the emails sent from SWGGA: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_

23. Do you read the Trellis Wire: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_

24. Please rate the following Trellis Topics:

a. Meeting Announcements : \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

b. Meeting Reports: \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

c. Photos: \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

d. Board Meeting Reports: \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

e. Member Profiles: \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

f. Technical Articles: \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

g. For Sale/ Wanted Notices: \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

h. Advertisements: \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

i. Wine Industry Related Articles: \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Low

j. Other Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

25. If you use Social Media, which site(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**General Comments:**

26. What do you like most about SWGGA: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
27. What do you like least about SWGGA: \_\_\_\_\_

28. Additional comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your Name

(optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone# (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks for your help with this survey!**

We promote an interest in grape growing and winemaking in the Northern Sierra foothills by providing educational opportunities, information exchange, and offering a social venue where members can share experiences.

**Ways To Return The Survey**

Print and return it by mail to: Tom Martella, 16255 Orchard Springs Road, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Print it out, fill it out, scan it and e:mail it to Tom at: [48vines@gmail.com](mailto:48vines@gmail.com)

Print it out and return it as a hard copy, in person at our March 20th meeting at Ponderosa Hall.



## Board of Directors

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# SWGGA SWAG

Check the website, [www.swgga.org](http://www.swgga.org) for product descriptions. Contact Susan Clarabut at [sclarabut@gmail.com](mailto:sclarabut@gmail.com) if you have questions, wish to check pricing, or, best of all, would like to make an order.

Vineyard Sign	\$57
Woman's Long Sleeve Shirt	\$35
Men's Short Sleeve Shirt	\$35
Cap	\$18
Corkscrew	\$13
Wine Glass	\$3



**Please Support Our Commercial Members**

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