

November Means Business Annual Meeting

Ballot
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President's Message

Board Election: At our last meeting, the Board approved a slate of candidates for the 2026 Board of Directors. We are pleased to include **two new candidates** for our Board. Now it will be up to the membership to formally elect our Board members, including officers, at our **November 20 election & general meeting**.

Our Bylaws say we can have “up to” nine directors. We currently have eight and the 2026 approved slate reflects the same number. Read on for the list/sample ballot. Voting is easy. Everyone that attends the November 20 meeting will be given a ballot in case there are nominations from the floor. Otherwise, everyone present can elect the proposed slate by acclamation (voice vote). Then on to our program for the evening!

November Program Background - Tasting Nevada County & SWGGA History:

A couple of months ago, I was contacted by Cindy Hren whose husband was a former SWGGA member and long-time (20 years) local winemaker. Due to her husband's passing, she had a lot of wine and equipment she wanted help with finding homes for. During our conversation, I learned she had several older vintages of wine made from my very own Red Paws vineyard. What an unexpected & exciting treat! We met and after tasting multiple vintages and varietals, it was time to bring in an expert, enter Rod. After more tasting, a program was born.

Read on for more information and don't miss our November 20th meeting! *Details on page 4.*

Cheers, Diane

Gary Mondolfo and Diane during last year's Holiday Party gift exchange. Details page 2.





SWGGA Holiday Party



Thursday, December 11th, 2025 5:00 p.m.

Ponderosa Hall Nevada County Fairgrounds (Gate 2)



5 PM: Appetizers & Libations

6 PM: Buffet Dinner



Warm & Cold Appetizers with your shared wines

Choice Of: Prime Rib, Roast Chicken, Vegetarian Lasagna

Dinner Includes: Salad Mashed Potatoes Vegetables

Cake and Coffee

Evening activities include a Wine Raffle & "Cheap Santa" Gift Exchange.

Guests Are Welcome. Reservations Required.

What To Bring?

Bring some wine for enjoying and sharing.

Bring a special bottle for the raffle (optional)

Bring a wrapped gift for the gift exchange (optional)



\$60 Per Person. Reservations & Payment Required by Thursday, December 4.

RSVP to Lisa Whittet at lwhittet@sbcglobal.net or call her at 530-401-7256

Please provide check, credit card, or cash at our November 20 meeting or

Mail your check to SWGGA, P.O. Box 1264, GV, CA. 95945.

A credit card fee of \$1.75/person will be added for charges.

Sierra Wine & Grape Growers Association**Annual Meeting Notice**

Let this serve as notice of the SWGGA Annual Meeting to be held on **November 20th, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Nevada County Fairgrounds; 11228 McCourtney Road, Grass Valley, CA in Ponderosa Hall.** The purpose of the meeting is to elect the 2026 Board of Directors.

**Ballot 2026 Officers and Directors**

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | President – Diane Houston |
| _____ | Vice President – Dave Elliott |
| _____ | Secretary & Event Coordinator – Al Schafer |
| _____ | Treasurer - Lisa Whittet |
| _____ | Director & Program Coordinator – Rod Byers |
| _____ | Director & Outreach Coordinator – Tom Martella |
| _____ | Director At Large – Paul McKimm |
| _____ | Director At Large – Jason Blank |
| _____ | All of the above |

Write – In

Position

Social Hour begins at 6:15 p.m.**Meetings at 7:00 p.m.****Next Meeting, Thursday, November 20th**

Annual Business Meeting

We will start the evening with the election of the 2026 Board of Directors. See page 3. No doubt some other stuff will accompany that. Gotta do it. But then we'll get on to other things like

Can Old And Good Live In The Same Bottle?

What wine drinker hasn't tasted a wine and wondered if it might not be better with a few years of aging? What wine drinker hasn't considered stashing a wine or two to save for a later occasion? But when? And when you do finally open it, is it still too soon, at the peak, on the decline, or worse, done?

This month we have a pretty cool opportunity to look inside that window.

A Bob Hren Retrospective Tasting

I first became aware of Bob Hren back in the day when Bob, as a home winemaker, would enter his wines in the Nevada County Fair Wine Competition. I took note of him because more often than not he was winning a Gold Medal for his efforts.

Bob and Cindy Hren moved to Nevada County in 1999. Bob had never actually made wine but he did have it in his blood. One of his goals in retiring to Nevada County was to become a home winemaker. He joined SWGGA, planted a vineyard, started making wine. A lot of wine.

Sadly, Bob passed a few years ago leaving a legacy of bottled wine in their wine cellar basement. Cindy is moving and the wine has got to go. What should she do with it? Was it any good? The vintages stretched from 2003 to 2020. Remembering their old SWGGA connection, Cindy called Diane to ask what she might do?



L to R, Diane Houston, Victor Estrada-Hildebrand, Michael Hildebrand-Estrada and Greg Brown met at Cindy Hren's house for a tasting of Bob Hren's well-aged wines. Some bottles were left almost untouched. Some bottles were left almost empty. It was a fascinating tasting of how wines progress as they age, good or bad. Cindy offered us enough wine to create another tasting at the November meeting.

Join us for a tasting of aged wines when we ask, is there still time to go? Is it at a peak? Is it ready to begin its descent? Is it already over the hill?

What would each of those things taste like and how would we decide?

And maybe, even when an aged wine is really good, do we actually like it?

Lost vines among the pines. Bob's old vineyard just outside Nevada City.



In Case You Missed It . . . *The Last Meeting Field Trip*

By Bernie Zimmerman. Photo by Bernie as well.

A marvelous Indian summer evening found us enjoying the hospitality of the Frescas at their home and vineyard. A delightful spread of appetizers was provided by the 30 or so people who attended. Many took a tour of the vineyard. There followed a discussion of the experience of various members with the recent harvest. Finally, a number of "old" wines, some from the 1970s, were opened. Some of them should have been opened a few years ago. Many thanks to the Frescas for their hospitality and to those who brought the food and wines.



SWGGA Market Place

Equipment for sale by SWGGA member Diane Tosse

Diane has some vineyard spray and tank equipment available. Make an offer.

Contact Diane at: diane@tosse.com. 530-263-0346



Last month I asked a few of our backyard growers how their harvests went. This month I asked Mark Henry and Jackson Starr what they thought. As an interesting footnote neither winegrower had completed picking before the end of September rains arrived. Not surprisingly, at the start of October when I did the first report, they both said “let’s wait and see.”

Mark Henry, Montoliva Winery and Vineyards

“this year...it's been a bit of mixed bag, mainly because of institutional arrogance. As I'm sure you've heard from others, it was, relative to the recent past, a cool growing season. Looking back at historical records here at Montoliva, 2025 was very 2000-2010-ish. Most every thing came in nicely. I jumped the gun a bit on the Vermentino, harvested at 19.9 brix and 2.99 pH (I really need to make nice with my refractometer). It had all the other physiological ripeness factors going for it, so I picked it. Now wish I'd waited another week or so. it will be interesting to see how it plays out. Could be a light, bright, 12% alcohol summer blockbuster. And then again it could be a light-weight, take the enamel off your teeth bomb.

Everything else (except one, I'll get to that) came in nicely ripe, moderate in brix, as you would imagine from this growing year, most everything came in around 24, with a mid 3 pH. Overall, pretty happy with it. The few rain squalls we got late season had no practical effect whatsoever (of course, I don't grow Chardonnay).

The one exception - Montepulciano. This has been a troublesome varietal for me since I planted it back in 2015. The last couple of years I started feeling like I was getting it dialed in. After last year I thought...ok, I'm going to push the yield just a bit, maybe try to squeeze out 20% more. And then we had a cooler year. I finally harvested it just this last week (end of October), and it was still only about 22.5 brix. Not the end of the world, but....

One of the "cooler" things about this year is we had a couple of weeks in early October where it was really cool. Everything I harvested during that period of time, including the Teroldego and Sangiovese, experienced significantly cooler fermentation temperatures than I typically see. It will be fun to see how that plays out.

As I write this right now (beginning of November), I have only pressed our Dolcetto. Everything else is still in extended post fermentation maceration. So, harvest isn't over yet. Given that we just picked the Montepulciano, I anticipate having everything in barrel the first week of December.” Mark.

I wondered what ‘institutional arrogance’ meant? So I asked.

“Institutional arrogance? . . . too much success, leading to misplaced confidence in abilities. I felt like I had things pretty dialed in in the vineyard. Mother Nature slapped me down by delivering a year that was pretty atypical to what should be expected.”



Mark Henry supervising the harvest at Montoliva

Jackson Starr, Sierra Starr Winery and Vineyards

When I talked to Jackson at the end of September he still had petite sirah and cabernet franc to harvest. He was very concerned about one, and not so much at all about the other. I checked in again at the beginning of November wanting to hear what he thought about the harvest in general but also about those tardy varieties. How did that all turn out?

“The harvest went pretty well. There was favorable weather for the most part. It was cooler than last year’s scorching summer weather that had so many heat spikes, but probably still hotter than the average summer temperatures of harvests a decade or more ago. This year’s harvest was slightly earlier than last year’s. We picked Sauvignon Blanc in August, used to be typically around Labor Day. The rain we had in early September had no ill effect at all. By the end of September we had everything picked except the franc and petite.

They just weren’t ready to be picked before the storm so the only choice was to ride it through. After the storm ended I was out in the vineyard on the tractor with a big blower driving along the rows trying to dry the vines. I was really concerned about the petite sirah, it has a tendency to turn to mush once it gets really wet from a storm. The cab franc is seemingly indestructible. I wasn’t barely worried about that at all.

We picked the petite sirah a week after the first storm. I was happily surprised. It was in really good shape. The franc was still hanging and then went through a second storm wave. Risk. Reward. The weather cleared up, the vines dried up, we were rewarded with some unexpected hang time for the fruit. We finally picked it at 3.6 pH and 24 brix.

I just topped all the barrels yesterday. Good color. Everything looks good. Check back in February. Then we’ll see what we’ve got but so far, so good.” Jackson.



Phil and Jackson Starr in the winery

Board of Directors

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SWGGA SWAG

Contact Lisa Whittet,
lwhittet@sbcglobal.net, if you have
questions, or, better yet, want to make an
order. She will bring it to the next meeting.
Pick it up there.

Vineyard Sign	\$60
Woman's Long Sleeve Shirt	\$40
Men's Short Sleeve Shirt	\$40
Cap	\$20
Corkscrew	\$15
Wine Glass	\$5



Please Consider Getting Involved.
SWGGA is looking for new Board Members
and Committee members for events
We Need You.