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Showcasing some of the leading wineries and vineyards committed to sustainability
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Accepting the 2015 California Green Medal Awards were: (L-r) Cindy DeVries for Fetzer Vineyards, Bob Torres for Trinchero Family Estates, Julie Nord for Nord Vineyards and Mike Benziger for Benziger Family Winery

SAN FRANCISCO — Winners of the first annual California Green Medal: Sustainable Winegrowing Leadership Awards were announced and honored at a lunch reception and ceremony today at University of California, Davis. The California Green Medal was developed by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA), California Association of Winegrape Growers, Lodi Winegrape Commission, Napa Valley Vintners, Vineyard Team and Wine Institute as a way to showcase some of the leading wineries and vineyards committed to sustainability. More than a dozen of California's regional winery and winegrowing association partners also helped to promote the new awards which were selected by a panel of wine and sustainability experts.

Winners of the four Green Medals are as follows:

LEADER AWARD, given to the vineyard or winery that excels in the "3 E's" of sustainability—Environmentally sound, socially Equitable and Economically viable.

Winner: Fetzer Vineyards. As a true pioneer in sustainability in the wine industry, Fetzer Vineyards has been blazing a trail for earth-friendly practices since 1968. Fetzer Vineyards was the first winery in California to operate on 100% renewable energy in 1999, and is the largest U.S. producer of organic winegrapes certified by CCOF and the first Zero Waste certified wine company in the world. Energy, water, waste, vineyard inputs, packaging, recycling, and many other metrics have been measured at Fetzer since its early history. The company has a full-time sustainability manager and an eco-team made up of employees in all departments who work together to integrate sustainability innovations and activities.

ENVIRONMENT AWARD, given to the vineyard or winery that best demonstrates Environmental Stewardship through maximized environmental benefits from implementing sustainable practices.

Winner: Benziger Family Winery. With all of its estate properties Demeter Certified Biodynamic, this family winery created "Farming for Flavors," which was third-party certified by Stellar in 2007 before other sustainability certifications were available. Benziger also had the first Biodynamic wine in Sonoma County. The winery holds annual "Hot Topic" seminars for growers that focus on water conservation, reduction in inputs, biodiversity, soil biology, composting and efficient use of equipment. Over the past two years, Benziger has focused on using technology and industry experts to learn more about practices that guarantee the most efficient use of resources.

COMMUNITY AWARD, given to the vineyard or winery that is a Good Neighbor & Employer using the most innovative practices that enhance relations with employees, neighbors and/or communities.

Winner: Nord Vineyard Services. With 400 acres of family partnership vineyards at 10 locations throughout Napa Valley, Nord Vineyards recognizes that the long-term viability of the vineyards requires sustainable business and farming practices. Nord frequently invites professionals and the public to its vineyards, including hosting hundreds of neighbors as part of Napa Grapegrowers' and Napa Valley Vintners' "Afternoon in the Vineyards." Nord Vineyards owners and employees are active in the industry and in their community by serving on numerous boards, committees and task forces. They also participate in research experiments and extension of new technologies and techniques.

BUSINESS AWARD, given to the vineyard or winery that best demonstrates Smart Business through efficiencies, cost savings and innovation from implementing sustainable practices.

Winner: Trinchero Family Estates. Committed to environmental stewardship, charitable giving and responsibility, Trinchero Family Estates is being recognized for efficient and innovative sustainability practices that serve as a model for the wine industry. Vineyards are managed to balance desired quality, necessary inputs and water use, while wineries strive to minimize water, waste and energy use in both their Napa and Lodi facilities. Trinchero also focuses on sustainable packaging - such as light-weighted bottles and recycled glass as well as alternative packaging such as Tetra Pak and 100% recyclable and lightweight PET mini bottles. The expansion of the company's Lodi facility with state-of-the-art bottling and warehousing means being closer to the majority of its grape supply, reducing the associated truck miles and emissions.

"The new awards program provides an exciting opportunity for California growers and vintners to be recognized for their hard work and dedication to sustainability," said Allison

Jordan, CSWA Executive Director. “The challenge was selecting four winners from the 39 strong applications we received from vineyards and wineries of all sizes from throughout California. The committee and judging panel were impressed by the breadth and depth of sustainable practices being used to conserve water and energy, maintain healthy soil, protect air and water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, and enhance relations with employees and communities, all while improving the economic vitality of vineyards and wineries.”

The first annual California Green Medal was judged by a panel of wine and sustainability experts. They include: Peter Granoff, MS, Owner/Partner, Ferry Plaza Wine Merchant; Matthew Hoffman, PhD, Grower Program Coordinator, Lodi Winegrape Commission; Allison Jordan, Executive Director, California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance; Steve Lederer, Napa County Green Business Program and Napa County Director of Public Works; Cyril Penn, Editor in Chief, Wine Business Monthly; Rhonda Smith, Viticulture Farm Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension; Ann Thrupp, PhD, Executive Director, Berkeley Food Institute; and Beth Vukmanic Lopez, SIP Certification Manager, Vineyard Team.

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