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WINE COUNTRY CELEBRATION AND GRAND GALA AUCTION RAISES OVER 265K TO PROMOTE WASHINGTON'S WINE COUNTRY REGION

SEATTLE, Washington (June 22, 2009) - More than 400 people attended the 7th Annual Wine Country Celebration throughout May and June and the Grand Gala Auction on June 20, raising over \$265,000 for Washington Wine Country, a non-profit organization that promotes wine-related tourism and rural revitalization in the vineyard region.

For the first time ever, this year's Wine Country Celebration focused on the economic impact that the wine industry has on our state's economy. The theme for the event, "Sip and Savor the Local Flavor," clearly resonated with attendees who recognize that Washington's world class wine growing region provides a unique opportunity for our state's economic growth and success.

Throughout May and June, 200 people attended Winemaker Dinners at restaurants around Greater Seattle - Canlis, Crush, and Pearl - and at wineries in Eastern Washington - Long Shadows Vintners in Walla Walla, Bookwalter Winery in Richland, and Gilbert Cellars in Yakima, raising \$17,000 and introducing people to pairings of the local region's best wines and foods.

The final event of the celebration, the Grand Gala Auction on June 20, attracted more than 200 people and raised a total of \$250,000, including \$45,500 from 28 donors in a "Raise the Paddle" auction and \$23,000 in sponsorships from 12 different companies.

Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen welcomed the crowd at the Grand Gala Auction on Saturday evening, stating, "The wine industry is one of the most promising industries that we have in our state. What other industry, with the possible exception of software, has grown so much in so relatively short of a period of time? I applaud the efforts of Washington Wine Country to promote wine-based tourism in this region because it is good for our economy, and of course right now our economy needs all of the help it can get."

Despite the fact that the Grand Gala was literally taken by storm as cold winds blew across the event grounds, Washington Wine Country's dedicated supporters stayed on and showed their support for the organization and its mission. All funds raised will go to support a variety of programs to promote winery tourism and year-round culinary travel to Washington's vineyard region, including a collaborative regional public relations campaign, dynamic marketing programs, and initiatives to spur economic growth and revitalization of the region.

ABOUT WASHINGTON WINE COUNTRY:

Founded in 2003, Washington Wine Country is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting wine-related tourism and economic vitality by fostering collaborative regional partnerships throughout the celebrated wine growing region of Eastern Washington, where 99 percent of Washington State's wine grapes are grown. The region includes the Yakima Valley, Columbia Valley, Walla Walla Valley, Red Mountain and the newer appellations of the Columbia Gorge, Horse Heaven Hills, Rattlesnake Hills, Wahluke Slope, Snipes Mountain, and Lake Chelan. For more information on Washington Wine Country, please visit www.winecountrywashington.org.

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