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Buena Vista Winery honors its heritage with a Hungarian sister-city donation

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From left: Rev. Sandor Farkas, Cecily Wallis, Sylvia Toth, Bill Boerum and the Count of Buena Vista (George Webber) with a donation held by Tom Blackwood, retail director of Buena Vista Winery.

Buena Vista Winery celebrated its Hungarian roots with a \$5,796 donation to the Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee.

The donation celebrates both the winery's founder, Hungarian-born Count Agoston Haraszthy, and Sonoma's new sister city of Tokaj, Hungary.

Since early 2012, Buena Vista's new owner, Jean-Charles Boisset, has donated \$1 for every bottle of The Count's Red Wine sold in the winery tasting room for the Hungarian sister city program.

The Count of Buena Vista – in the persona of George Webber – was on hand with other officials to accept an oversized check representing the donation. The winery sponsors the Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee, which was created last spring.

In September, a delegation from Tokaj, led by Mayor János Májer, visited Sonoma to celebrate the count's birthday and sign the official documents making Sonoma and Tokaj sister cities.

The sister city committee includes Hungarian-Americans in Sonoma and the Bay Area as well as fans of Buena Vista and its founder. Buena Vista is the oldest premium winery in California.

The donation helped fund Hungarian cultural events in Sonoma and assisted with costs for the Hungarian visit to Sonoma. Additional funds will go toward a winemaker exchange program between Tokaj and Sonoma this year.

"I am very grateful for this generous donation from Mr. Boisset," said George Webber, chair of the Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee.

"I am thankful to politicians in Tokaj and Sonoma and to Bill Boerum, president of the Sonoma Sister Cities Association, for helping make this relationship come to life."

WRITER SPOTLIGHT



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Webber is more than a little familiar with Buena Vista and Haraszthy – he dresses as the count for first-person historic presentations and tours at the winery.

The Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee operates under the auspices of the Sonoma Sister Cities Association (SSCA), a registered nonprofit organization.

Born Aug. 30, 1812 in what is now part of Budapest, Haraszthy was the first Hungarian to settle permanently in the United States. He often is referred to as the “father of California viticulture.”

In addition to founding Buena Vista, he was an early writer on California wine and viticulture.

Haraszthy’s winery recently has been undergoing an extensive restoration and earthquake retrofit of historic winery buildings.

– *Dianne Reber Hart*

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