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The perfect blend

Buying wine for its label - for a cause

By Theresa Goffredo
Herald Writer

The Arts Council of Snohomish County might have come up with the perfect blend.

Take original art. Wrap it around a tasty bottle of wine. Sell it, and people will feel good, drinking the wine and helping a worthy cause.

The council, along with Artspace Inc. and Northwest Cellars, is selling five custom wine blends to help raise money to build a new visual arts center in downtown Everett.

The idea to sell wine adorned with collector art was also a blend: Lanie McMullin, executive director of economic development for Everett, and Judy Tuohy, executive director for the arts council, came up with it together.

"How much fun for those people who want to help the project or who just want to have a nice bottle of wine or have a beautiful label," Tuohy said. "And it keeps the enthusiasm for the project going."

The art works on the bottles are reproductions of five of the 35 glass tiles that make up a huge glass "quilt." The glass quilt project brought together local artists who each depicted his or her idea of home on an 8-by-8-inch fused, painted and etched glass tile. The quilt raised \$20,000 for the new arts center.

The arts council and Artspace Inc., both nonprofit organizations, are collaborating to build this multiuse visual arts education center at the city-owned garage at 2919 Hoyt Ave. The center will provide 40 affordable apartments for artists and their families on the upper floors.

The building will also house a street-level visual arts education center owned and run by the arts council; Artspace will manage and maintain the building.

This first series of five bottles in this wine fundraiser will be followed by a second series planned for the end of February, Tuohy said. More may follow should interest continue.

"One of the artists liked the idea so much she bought a whole case of wine and is giving them away as Christmas presents," Tuohy said. "It's a perfect housewarming gift; what can I say."

The Washington and Oregon wines were crafted by Northwest Cellars, which produces and distributes wine with custom-designed labels. Founder Bob Delf said his goal is to sell 500 cases before the new arts center breaks ground in 2008. He thinks people will buy them because they are unique blends and collector items.

"I do a lot of nonprofit work and mostly I'm a big arts supporter so it's a perfect blend for me," Delf said, quickly realizing his pun. "I didn't really mean the pun but that kinda works."

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The five wines

2003 Cabernet-Merlot (Columbia Valley & Red Mountain), artwork by Stan Price

2003 Merlot (Yakima Valley), artwork by Susan J. Russell

2005 Chardonnay Viognier (Walla Walla Valley), artwork by Janet Walker

1999 Oregon Sparkling Wine (Willamette Valley), artwork by Carie Collver

1999 Brut Rose (Willamette Valley), artwork by Dona Anderson

The bottles run from \$15 to \$25.

The wines can be ordered directly from Northwest Cellars. Two dollars a bottle goes directly to the visual arts center project.

The wines are also available at The Dirty Martini in Everett, the Everett Yacht Club, Il Bistro Vino in Everett, Seattle's BluWater Bistro and Wicked Cellars in Everett.

Any wine retailer or restaurant may carry the wines by contacting Delf at bob@northwestcellars.com.

Kevin Nasr, owner of Wicked Cellars, 2616 Colby Ave., Everett, said he wanted to sell the wines for two reasons: It's wine and it's art.

"Having the ability to support local artists and wrap art around wine, in this case it's literally wrapped around the bottle, I think it's fabulous," Nasr said. "It's a fun way for people to support the arts and enjoy a little vino themselves."

Girls Night Out

The five bottles of wine will be available for tasting and buying during the arts council's ninth annual Girls Night Out: Wearable Art Festival.

The free festival runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday in the lobby of the Historic Monte Cristo hotel, 1507 Wall St., Everett.

More than 30 local designers will participate. In addition to clothing, jewelry, accessories and vintage clothing, games and performances will be part of the festivities, which include:

- * Queen of the Hula Hoop contest
- * Troupe Arkena's tribal-style belly dance
- * Pretty Pretty Princess games for grownup girls

This event, designed by women for women, encourages women to laugh, dance and play. Several participating businesses in downtown Everett will be holding their own events to enhance the day. For more information go to www.girlsnightout.us.

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