

**Media Contact:** Janet LeDuc  
206-285-0514  
[janet2docs@msn.com](mailto:janet2docs@msn.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**New Initiative Announced to Promote the Yakima, Columbia and Walla Walla Valleys' as Washington Wine Country**

YAKIMA, Wash. -(June 27, 2003) On Friday, June 27 standing amid the grapevines in Zillah, Washington, Al DeAtley, prominent Columbia Valley businessman, announced a new non-profit consortium of Eastern Washington businesses that will strengthen the Columbia Valley's economic base while building recognition of the region's emerging assets.

"Our mission is to ensure that each resident in Washington state become aware of and take pride in the celebrated vineyard regions of Yakima Valley, Columbia Valley, Red Mountain, and Walla Walla Valley that together will become known as Washington Wine Country. We have a tremendous advantage here with world class, award-winning wines being produced and sold to an ever increasing base of sophisticated wine consumers and tourists."

With the goal of increasing tourism to the Columbia Valley AVA by 15% a year, Washington Wine Country plans to launch educational programs among businesses, lobby for DOT signage, develop advertising and promotional events, and create an engaging website <http://www.winecountrywashington.org> with links to events, wineries and businesses.

One of the major regional events slated for this summer is the Grand Vin! Wine Celebration. Washington Wine Country will partner with the Yakima Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross to sponsor the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Gala Auction on Saturday, August 2, 2003. Proceeds from this year's auction – expected to be over \$200,000 – benefit Red Cross, helping families in Yakima County and providing education and support for Washington Wine Country development.

"This concept creates a business-to-business marriage that is unique to the wine world so we're behind the Washington Wine Country initiative 100%. It will become a tremendous resource for informing state residents and visitors about the fabulous quality of our wines by encouraging them to visit Wine Country," said Allen Shoup, of Long Shadows Vintners.

For more information of Washington Wine Country, contact Janet Leduc at 206-285-0514 or [janet2docs@msn.com](mailto:janet2docs@msn.com).

For more information on Grand Vin! Wine Celebration, contact the Yakima Valley chapter of the Red Cross at 509-457-1690.

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*Thank You*