

BROCK UNIVERSITY MEDIA RELEASE

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Grape King hails from Brock – again

Beamsville grape grower Ed Hughes is the 2011 Grape King, and when the Brock University grad received the chain of office in a vineyard ceremony on Wednesday, it was from his former professor Debbie Inglis – last year’s Grape King who is also a Brock scientist and area grape grower.

This is the latest honour for Hughes, who recently won a Premier’s Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence, for his use of natural ecosystems and insect-attracting plants that help negate the need to spray pesticides.

As Grape King, he becomes Ontario’s grape and wine ambassador and will promote the industry at such events as the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival and the Spring Okanagan Wine Festival in B.C.

“I’m thrilled,” said Hughes, who was conferred at Brock in 2007 with a Certificate in Grape and Wine Technology. “It’s a little overwhelming, but it is a big honour, and I’m really happy to be able to represent grape growers in this way.”

Hughes began growing grapes in 1995 on a three-acre farm, then in 1999 expanded his operation by purchasing an established 21-acre vineyard. He enrolled at Brock to study how to improve grape quality.

Today he farms more than 20 acres of VQA premium quality vinifera grapes. He also has a business selling high quality grapes to amateur wine makers and a number of wine clubs in Southern Ontario.

In handing over the Grape King title, Inglis called Hughes an ideal representative for the industry.

“Ed is a wonderful choice,” said Inglis, who is Director of Brock’s Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI). “His training at Brock is now helping him set up research trials to achieve vine balance and pest control, reduce costs and improve fruit quality. It’s a great example of innovation by a grape grower toward the sustainability of our industry.”

Each year the Grape King is selected from a list of nominees, judged by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

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PHOTO CAPTION: Brock scientist and 2010 Grape King Debbie Inglis hands off the title to 2011 Grape King Ed Hughes.



Photo courtesy of Grape Growers of Ontario