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MEDIA RELEASE

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Brock University wine researchers headed to Parliament Hill

Jeff Stuart and his team of research students from Brock University in St. Catharines will showcase industry-changing grape research in an event on Parliament Hill this week.

Stuart, a biologist in Brock's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI), has partnered with Niagara-based company Sweet and Sticky to research ways of fortifying the company's ice syrups, a non-alcoholic product made from icewine grapes that is sold as a gourmet ingredient throughout the world.

After a similar presentation at Queen's Park in February, Stuart along with Brock student researchers Breanne Gillie and Shehab Selim, and Sweet and Sticky president Steve Murdza, will take part in a university research showcase event in Ottawa Wednesday, May 18 organized by Research Matters.

Stuart says he's looking forward to talking about the research.
"The project received almost $50,000 in funding from the Ontario and federal governments, so it's important to show that the investment produced results."

The University/industry collaboration is studying how to introduce resveratrol and other polyphenols extracted from grape skins into the company's non-alcoholic products. Resveratrol, which is found in wine, has been shown to slow the growth of cancer cells and tumours.

But, "in ice syrup, the levels of resveratrol and related molecules are lower, because it's not a fermentation process, so there is no alcohol and therefore

lower solubility of the molecules of interest," explains Stuart. "Our challenge was to increase these levels."

To increase the concentration of the molecules in ice syrup, Stuart and his team came up with the idea of using a tasteless carrier molecule.

"One resveratrol molecule fits neatly inside the carrier molecule's structure and there it is shielded from water while the outside structure of the carrier is interacting with the surrounding water," he says.

The carrier molecule's structure is shaped like a donut or a life preserver, which has the added benefit of protecting resveratrol during the initial stages of digestion.

"This is a way to go from having relatively low levels of these resveratrol molecules in ice syrup to having potentially more than is found in any wines," explains Stuart.

More testing is needed before the Brock innovation makes its way into Sweet and Sticky's products, "but the preliminary results are promising and the research continues to be funded to progress toward commercialization," he says.

In addition to the importance of research and development work happening in Niagara, Stuart says the project is "really about job creation.
"If we are successful and develop new products, the company will need to recruit and employ more people," he says.

The research team's visit to Parliament Hill in Ottawa is part of Research Matters' Pop-Up Research Park, an annual event in which researchers from universities across Ontario showcase their work to MPs and staff.

Stuart, Gillie, Selim and Murdza are all available to speak with the media in Niagara or Ottawa this week.

For more information or for assistance arranging interviews:

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