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Brock University – Communications & Public Affairs

**NOTE - Attached to this release are two photos that are free for media use. Captions: Tony Aspler, left, presents Ian D'Agata with the Tony Aspler Cuvée Award of Excellence at the 2017 Cuvée Grand Tasting Friday at the Scotiabank Convention Centre in Niagara Falls; The Cuvée Vineyard of Excellence Award was presented to Gerald Klose by Oleta Larush, of BASF Inc., on Friday at the Scotiabank Convention Centre in Niagara Falls.*

Top honours showered on grape and wine industry champions

Hundreds of people packed the Scotiabank Convention Centre in Niagara Falls on Friday, March 24 to cheer on a set of award-winners who were recognized for supporting Ontario's increasingly vital grape and wine industry.

The occasion was the Cuvée Grand Tasting, which each year launches the weekend-long Cuvée celebration of Ontario VQA wines, organized by Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI). Researchers at CCOVI conduct ongoing work to support grape growers and wineries in an industry that generates more than \$4 billion annually in revenue, tourism and job creation.

Friday's celebration saw more than 750 people turn out to savour the province's finest wines along with fine cuisine. The popular event raises thousands of dollars to fund academic scholarships and research.

This year's prestigious **Cuvée Vineyard of Excellence Award** went to **Gerald Klose**, whose Niagara-on-the-Lake vineyard has some of Ontario's oldest vines. Sponsored by BASF Canada Inc., the award recognizes a grape grower who promotes excellence in vineyard practices. Klose was chosen by an expert panel for maintaining a high level of quality in his Chardonnay vineyard. Besides running his family farm, Klose also manages other vineyards across Niagara for Constellation Brands.

The **Tony Aspler Cuvée Award of Excellence** was presented to internationally known wine journalist **Ian D'Agata**. The Aspler Award is given to the individual or institution that best furthers the aims and aspirations of Ontario's wine industry. Canadian-born but now living in Italy, d'Agata is an award-winning author who has twice been named Italy's best wine journalist. His articles appear globally in magazines and newspapers, and he was recognized by the award committee as being a "great ambassador for Ontario wines on the world stage."

The **VQA Promoters Award** winners in various categories were also announced Friday, recognizing individuals who support VQA wines through promotion or education with “unselfish enthusiasm, constructive input and unsolicited promotion.”

- Toronto restaurateur **Roberto Martella** received the **VQA Promoters Award for Lifetime Achievement**. The long-time owner of the Grano Italian restaurant has been “pulling corks on Ontario wines for as long as he has been putting plates in front of Toronto diners.” He was recognized for supporting local VQA wines and routinely reaching for Canadian wines in his establishment.
- **Barb Tatarinic** of Brock University received the **VQA Promoters Award for Education**. Tatarinic, manager of Continuing Education and Outreach at CCOVI, was recognized for her commitment to connecting wine lovers and wine makers to CCOVI and its programs in order to advance wine education over the past two decades.
- Melissa McFadden received the **VQA Promoters Award in the LCBO**. An LCBO customer service representative in Owen Sound, McFadden was cited for promoting VQA wineries, a high level of product knowledge and willingness to promote Ontario wines, including by organizing events that help elevate local wines.
- Sommelier **Mike Fish** received the **VQA Promoters Award for Hospitality**. The owner of Glassroots Restaurant in London, Ont. was recognized for a decade of promoting VQA wines in bars, clubs, golf courses and as a wine representative. Fish promotes the industry in his restaurant by pairing locally sourced vegan food with London’s only all-Canadian wine list.
- **Brian Hanna** received the **VQA Promoters Award in Retail**. A sommelier at Huff Estates Winery in Prince Edward County, Hanna was recognized for his ability to share his deep knowledge about Ontario wines in a manner that educates, promotes sales and enriches the lives of those he interacts with.
- **Angela Aiello** received the **VQA Promoters Award for Media**. Aiello is founder and editor of Toronto’s iYellowWineclub.com as well as Wine, Drinks and Cuisine Editor of Chloe magazine. She was recognized for a career of helping wine lovers of all demographics “taste, learn and meet” while vibrantly promoting VQA Ontario in print as well as television and radio appearances.

Cuvée also celebrated the next generation of winemakers and grape growers by providing scholarships to Brock University Oenology and Viticulture students through the Cuvée Legacy Fund. This fund has already awarded more than \$15,000 in academic scholarships and \$13,000 towards industry driven research priorities.

The Cuvée Scholarship winners are:

- Cuvée Hosting Award for Academic Excellence: **Jacob Johnsson-Werner**
- Cuvée Award for Academic Excellence: **Stephanie Van Dyk**
- Cuvée Award for Academic Excellence in OEVC: **Hannah Lee**
- Cuvée Graduate Scholarship: **Jennifer Kelly**

For more information, to request photos from the event or for assistance arranging interviews:

* Dan Dakin, Media Relations Officer, Brock University ddakin@brocku.ca, 905-688-5550 x5353 or 905-347-1970

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