

By Henry Bury
THE INTELLIGENCER

Brock Hart and Jeff Vance are longtime friends who regularly enjoy sipping wine.

They are now in business together to promote the Prince Edward County wine region.

"We want to make it the next Niagara-on-the-Lake," Vance said.

They recently formed their promotional company, Vancehart, with the sole purpose of introducing Canadians to the county's growing wine region through events like wine tasting and wine festivals, bus tours of the county wineries and even a new wine magazine featuring the county and other wine regions.

They have already organized their first event, A Midsummer Night's Sip, for July 17 at the Belleville Club on Pinnacle Street. It is being billed as a special opportunity to sample some of the Prince Edward County's finest wines and also help raise money for the Three Oaks Foundation in Belleville.

Both Hart and Vance have extensive experience planning school and community events and they now want to make a living at it.

"Both of us have tried to start different businesses with varying levels of success because we were both in school at the time and now we have stumbled upon something that we feel really works," Hart said.

Added Vance, "We should have thought of this business years ago because we were always planning events like assemblies and banquets at Quinte, university and in the community."

Both are native Belleville residents who met and became friends at Quinte.

Hart, 21, earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Queen's University in Kingston this past spring.

The 22-year-old Vance studied history at Trent University in Peterborough and left in 2002 to travel across Canada "on a personal adventure to discover the land and myself."

The entrepreneurs are running their promotional company out of their homes but they plan on moving into a downtown Belleville office in the near future.

There is a good reason why they are focusing their efforts on promoting the Prince Edward County wine industry.

"We both enjoy wine and we think it should have a larger role in people's lives in North America," Hart said.

"In Europe, wine is a staple. It's treated like food and it would be lovely for us to be able to change that perception in this area."

Vance said the county is a beautiful

region and not enough Canadians know about it.

"The county's wine region is certainly growing at an astounding rate ... we are trying to put the Prince Edward County wine region on the map so that Canadians know about the treasure we have here."

They say there are more than 30 wineries operating in various stages of production in the county.

"They are all making quality wines at a great value but not enough people outside this area know about them," said Vance.

They hope to change that by organizing special wine tasting events and wine festivals, holding special bus tours of the county wineries and even starting their own wine magazine.

Four county wineries — The Grange of Prince Edward County, Carmela Estate Winery, Huff Estate and Black Prince Winery — will be participating in their first official event next month.

Each will be bringing two wines for sampling to the July 17 event at the Belleville Club. The festivities begin at 7 p.m. and will also feature musical entertainment and an art display.

Tickets are \$40 each and they will be donating half the proceeds to the Three Oaks Foundation.

"We hope to open people's eyes to Prince Edward County wine by bringing the wine to them," said Vance.

To reach Vancehart, call (613) 885-0465.

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