

Oregon's heart-warmer

12 Sep 2010 by Jancis Robinson

Oregon, like California, has been experiencing one of the coolest summers in living memory and so far signs are that 2010 could be the coolest Oregon vintage in 20 years. While waiting for the ripening rays, the Oregon wine community is preparing for its 19th annual wine auction in aid of ¡Salud!, the Oregon wine industry's valuable and much-valued health service for the vineyard workers who make it possible for us to enjoy Oregon wine. They need your support more than ever this year.

As these pictures suggest, demand for ¡Salud!'s services continues to rise. In 2009, 3,575 workers and family members registered for help - an increase of 9% over 2008. The number of people touched by the mobile wellness, dental and vision clinics in the vineyards, as well as major medical care and beyond, is probably far greater than any outside observer would imagine. More than a thousand wellness screenings were given at the worksite, 3,492 dental procedures were performed, and 1,232 medical clinic visits were documented. There are similarly significant numbers for emergency care grants, discounts negotiated with healthcare providers and so on. It's an essential service but one that's being increasingly squeezed by demand.

The major fundraiser, the Big Board auction at Domaine Drouhin, takes place on the weekend of 12/13 Nov this year and the organisers are hoping for a reversal of the downward trend in total receipts that has been experienced since the peak of \$775,000 in 2007. The auction tally may be creatively supplemented by several wineries and organisations, but ¡Salud! finances are still facing a shortfall.

Quite apart from what is unarguably such a worthy cause, the auction constitutes the best possible preview of the 2009 vintage, and is presented by all of Oregon's top Pinot producers who donate so much of their time and wine to help the people without whom the wines would not be possible. Over the last 20 years it has developed into one of the defining traditions of Oregon wine - both worthwhile and a great deal of fun.

Find out more at www.saludauction.org