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# ST. MARYS STAR

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## KANSAS WINERY PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Heather Perry  
Star Reporter

An award-winning bottle of Blackberry Cabernet isn't the only specialty that Rosewood Winery, based out of Great Bend, Kan, should be known for. With its smooth taste of blackberry, complemented by a slight acidic tartness, the drink is a signature blend because of its sweet but strong personality, not unlike qualities expressed by

the real champions of Rosewood- its employees.

Rosewood Winery employs people with developmental disabilities who produce and hand-bottle quality wine that is distributed throughout Kansas, now including DeVader Liquor Store in St. Marys. The winery itself is located on Rosewood Ranch, one of the facilities of Rosewood Services, a fully-licensed

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Photo courtesy of Rosewood Services

**Model Employee**— Rosewood Winery employee Jimmy Wonsetler holds a bottle of wine in front of Rosewood Winery, located in Pawnee Rock, KS. The Winery job helped Wonsetler prepare for a career outside of Rosewood as well. He currently works at Walmart in Great Bend, while still working a few days a week at Rosewood Winery. The winery opened on Oct. 18, 2012. Although there are hundreds of wineries in the nation, and a couple dozen of them in Kansas, Rosewood Winery is the first in North America devoted to providing employment opportunities to people with developmental disabilities.



Photo courtesy of Rosewood Services

**Creations from the Heart**— Rosewood operates a winery outlet store in downtown Great Bend, known as Rosewood Wine Cellar. The store provides a rustic, ranch-elegance shopping opportunity for customers. Not only are shoppers able to purchase award-winning handcrafted wines, but they can customize a gift basket and fill it full of special products that include specialty meats, jellies, honey and wine crackers, bath products, candles, and horsehair pottery. All Rosewood Creations products are made by Rosewood client-employees, so any purchase helps to employ people with developmental disabilities. The bronze, shown outside Rosewood Wine Cellar, is titled "The Bucket List" and provides a distinct appearance for a distinct store. Rosewood owner Tammy Hammond donated three bronzes to the City of Great Bend in 2012, which are all showcased in the downtown area.





*Photo courtesy of Rosewood Services*

**Grape Grower—** Rosewood client-employee Amy Wigren holds up a grape bunch during harvest. Rosewood maintains several acres of grape vineyards on its ranch, north of Pawnee Rock, where client-employees help to grow and harvest the crops. Along with several varieties of grapes, Rosewood also grows blackberries, strawberries, pears and apples at its ranch. Besides making wine with some of the fruit that is grown, Rosewood utilizes its harvest to make jellies at its Industrial Kitchen on north Washington in Great Bend.

## ROSEWOOD

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service provider for people with developmental disabilities that was founded in 1998. According to its website, Rosewood strives to “foster independence, inclusion and productivity through education, work, recreation and housing.”

The organization provides case management, residential, medical and employment services while offering job training opportunities for its horse ranch, furniture gallery, greenhouse and garden, art studio, industrial kitchen and winery. There are about 170 clients at Rosewood and about the same number of employees.

“We provide our clients with a network of security so that they can operate to the independent level that they are able to, but still have that safety net to help them through their lifetime,” said Michael Dawes, Director of Marketing for Rosewood Services.

Some of Rosewood’s clients partake in minimal services, while others utilize most all of them. It’s up to the individual or his or her guardian to choose what they become involved with. The goal is to mainstream clients into the community with regular jobs. All of the client-employees that apply and interview for Rosewood jobs go through the hiring process and then are measured by job performance reviews. Some that do end up working at jobs in places like Dillons and True Value

still choose to work one or two days a week at Rosewood to maintain a connection with the organization.

The ranch offers its client-employees the opportunity to take part in therapy riding. According to the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA), therapeutic riding helps children and adults with physical, cognitive and emotional challenges find independence and strength through horse interaction. About 12 specifically chosen and trained horses at the ranch have calm temperaments that provides a safe, nonjudgmental base that riders who experience challenges like autism, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis can feel comfortable around. Rosewood also has a children’s day each Friday, where about a dozen kids get to experience therapy riding.

The winery produces over 20 varieties of sweet and dry wine. All of the wines that are sold out of Rosewood Cellars in downtown Great Bend and other liquor stores across Kansas are named after the most memorable horses used in its therapeutic riding program, both past and present. Dawes said that it takes a “special horse to become a therapy horse,” which is why the horses are revered for their service.

Names include: Peponita Pop Top (used to name a Pinot Noir), Ermosa (a Merlot), Daisy May Good (a Moscato), Ima Flashy Investment (an exotic fruits Zinfandel) and Boots Made For Walking (the signature Blackberry Cabernet).

A winery might seem like an odd choice for Rosewood, but Founder and Executive Director, Tammy Hammond is unorthodox in her approach towards providing services to the developmentally disabled.

“She definitely does not want any institutionalization of her agency,” Dawes said. “She wants to assure that people get real and unique opportunities, not just something everyone else is doing.”

Dawes said that client-employees at the winery develop a sense of worth knowing that the items they are producing on a daily basis are actually being sold to the public and being joyfully consumed.

Rosewood Winery does not just have quality wine, but quality people that make it all possible. Its employees work passionately to develop skills that will be used throughout their lifetimes. As they pursue their dreams, they celebrate life, as we all should, while drinking a glass of robust Boots Made For Walking.

That’s just what I’ll do.

**Please see the Mothers Day  
DeVader Liquor Store ad on pg 10**



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