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## SHELBY TOWNSHIP

# Get a taste of wineries on Michigan's east coast trail

By Gina Joseph

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Michigan is home to more than 100 wineries, and Thumbs Up Wine Trail want you to know not all of them are on the west side.

To give you a taste of what you might be missing, the group will host its second annual Wines of the Thumb Taste Fest, May 22 from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Packard Proving Grounds in Shelby Township.

"There's a whole gamut of wineries on the east-side of the state," said Denise Bell, co-chair for the event and administrator for Thumbs Up Wine Trail, a cluster of wineries along a trail that follows the shores of southeastern Michigan from Lake St. Clair up to the St. Clair River and Lake Huron to Bad Axe dedicated to promoting the wine industry in southeastern Michigan. "On this trail, we currently have 12 wineries, but we know of at least one more planning to join. There are wineries popping up all the time."

Pouring samples at this festival will be: Superior Lakes Handcrafted Mead and Wines, Harrison Township; Filippo Marc Winery, Clinton Township; Washington Street Wine House, New Baltimore; Fieldstone Winery, Rochester; Westview Orchards Adventure Farm and Winery, Washington Township; Village Winery, Romeo; Blake's Ciderhouse and Winery, Armada; Sage Creek Winery, Memphis; Green Barn Winery, Smiths Creek; Sandy Shores Winery, Jeddo; Blue Water Winery & Vineyards, Lexington; North Vines, Crosswell and Dizzy Daisy Winery of Bad Axe.

Wine is a luxury item.

But the event is a casual, come-as-you-are, come-when-you-can festival that



THE MACOMB DAILY — GINA JOSEPH

Tressa and Gerard Giacona, owners of Filippo Marc Winery in Clinton Township are among the members of the Thumbs Up Wine Trail hosting the Wines of the Thumb Taste Fest at Packard Proving Grounds, May 22.

not only features wines, meads and hard ciders but a large selection of food.

"We have 12 different restaurants coming, and they're all wonderful," Bell said.

While many of the members have been part of Michigan's wine industry -- which produces 1.3 million gallons of wine annually, the group is fairly new.

"We are the little guys, the mom and pop wineries, who all have something special to bring to the table," said Gerard Giacona, co-owner of Filippo Marc Winery in Clinton Township. Giacona

and his wife, Tressa, purchased the winery more than 10 years ago, and moved it to a larger location to accommodate special wine-tasting events including fundraisers, birthday parties and wedding showers. Giacona admits that a lot of smaller operations are often intimidated when someone asks about other wineries to visit. "I myself have always believed that we should embrace each other because there is strength in numbers," he said.

Thus the formation of the Thumbs Up Wine Trail. "Our goals are to raise

awareness of the wine industry in the Thumb and Southeast Michigan, promote tourism in the region and raise funds for worthy organizations in the community, all while having a great time," Bell said. That proceeds from the event will go to the wine trail and several community groups, including Rising Stars Academy and Shelby Township Optimist International.

"It's a great event for everyone," Giacona said, recalling the inaugural event last year. "We saw a spike in sales immediately after the festival, and it was di-



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rectly related to it."

Attendees will be treated to an afternoon of wine-tasting, food and live music at a place known for its architectural style, history and park-like atmosphere.

"Have you been there?" Bell said. "It's a very unique and interesting place. Wine lovers and car buffs alike are sure to enjoy their stay."

"The Thumbs Up Wine Trail is a great example of wineries working together to promote their region. Their 'Wines of the Thumb Taste Fest' event is the perfect opportunity to try a variety of wines and hard ciders from one of Michigan's lesser-known wine regions," said Karel Bush, executive director of Michigan Grape & Wine Industry Council.

*Tickets for the event (open only to adults 21 years of age and older) are: \$30 if purchased before April 30; \$35 if purchased between May 1 and 21 and \$40 at the door or in this case -- at the gate. Tickets can be purchased online at eventbrite.com. The Packard Proving Grounds is at 49965 Van Dyke, Shelby Township.*

For more information call 586-202-1971 or visit thumbsupmi.com

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