

Ground broken at Viticulture Center



Mike Hibbard / Finger Lakes Times

Officials involved in the Finger Lakes Community College Viticulture Center project scoop up shovels of dirt during a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday at the Cornell Agriculture and Food Technology Park in Geneva.

FLCC-Cornell collaboration slated to open in 2014

By MIKE HIBBARD

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GENEVA — A balky back kept Lt. Gov. Bob Duffy from attending Thursday's groundbreaking ceremony for the Finger Lakes Community College Viticulture Center.

However, Duffy's absence didn't dampen the moods of the more than 100 people who showed up.

The center, which will be used by students in FLCC's wine technology and viticulture program, is slated to open in August 2014 near the Cornell Agriculture and Food Technology Park on Pre-Emption Road in Geneva. It's expected to bolster the Finger Lakes' reputation as a world-class wine region.

"As the art of winemaking continues to gain in popularity, we are witnessing an unprecedented growth in the number of wineries here in the Finger Lakes region. The construction of the viticulture center will support the continued growth of this important, job-producing industry," state Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, said Thursday. "The new viticulture center will enable our state's future winemakers to study at the same site where some of the most innovative agricultural research in the nation is taking place every day."

FLCC President Barbara Risser said Nozzolio and Assembly Minority

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VITICULTURE

Geneva center will be centrally located

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Leader Brian Kolb, R-131 of Canandaigua, were instrumental in securing \$3.26 million in state funding for the \$3.65 million project. The FLCC Foundation is raising another \$200,000 through private donations; the state will match that number.

New York State Agricultural Experiment Station Director Thomas Burr and several Ontario County and Geneva city officials attended Thursday's ceremony. Duffy was expected to be there as well, but health issues shelved those plans, Nozzolio said.

Nozzolio credited Risser and FLCC Professor Paul Brock, a Cornell University graduate and local winery owner — Brock owns Silver Thread Vineyard in Lodi — with getting the project rolling. Brock heads the college's viticulture and wine technology program,

The center will be a collaboration between FLCC and Cornell. Graduates of FLCC's program will be able to transfer directly into Cornell's four-year viticulture program.

"Virtually within hours of taking office as president of Finger Lakes

Community College, Dr. Risser saw the wonderful potential of partnering with Cornell University on this project," Nozzolio said. "The viticulture center will help train the next generation of vintners, grape growers and others who will work in this growing industry."

The energy-efficient center will include a teaching winery, winemaking lab, grape-crushing pad, rooms for storing and aging wine, classroom space and a teaching vineyard. Each room has been designed based on input from industry professionals and Cornell representatives to provide students with extensive, hands-on experience.

The entire facility is expected to encompass about 9,000 square feet. Nozzolio and Kolb said its construction will support the local economy, create local jobs and continue to put the Finger Lakes region at the forefront of agricultural research and development.

"Today's groundbreaking is a culmination of hard work, extraordinary vision and a commitment to investing in an emerging industry here in our area," Kolb said. "The Finger Lakes region has distinguished itself as a world-



Spencer Tulis photos / Finger Lakes Times

The proposed viticulture center (above, left) to house FLCC's wine technology and viticulture program will be on this site near the Cornell Agriculture and Food Technology Park on Pre-Emption Road in Geneva.



New York State Agricultural Experiment Station Director Thomas Burr said a few words to the audience during the groundbreaking ceremony Thursday.

class area for its wineries, tourism and agriculture, and the new viticulture center will expand on that progress. This is an investment in our community, in job creation, in education and in the future of our area."

Risser said FLCC's program is the only one of its kind in the northeastern U.S. for community colleges. An advisory board of vineyard and winery owners and professionals in wine and grape research, education and marketing

assisted with the development of the program.

"This center will enhance the excellent quality of wine in the region," she said. "What an incredible opportunity for our students. They will make an impact on the wine industry for years to come."

The center will be:

- Minutes from the 34-member Seneca Lake Wine Trail and less than 30 minutes from the Keuka Lake and Cayuga Lake wine trails.

- Two miles from FLCC's Geneva campus center, providing students with additional course options and services.

- Fourteen miles from the joint, 2 1/2-acre Cornell Cooperative Extension/FLCC teaching and demonstration vineyard at Anthony Road Wine Co. in Torrey, Yates County.

- Fifteen miles from the main FLCC campus in Hopewell, allowing for collaboration with other programs such as culinary arts, tourism management and professional development and continuing education.

Geneva was chosen over a potential site on Lincoln Hill Road, not far from the FLCC main campus.

"It's really a perfect project for this area," county Supervisor Charlie Evangelista, D-city of Geneva, said. "This is a project we needed to have here in the city. The project fits here."

Work at the site began earlier this month after the county Board of Supervisors awarded a bid for preparatory earthwork to Montemorano Brothers Inc. of Clyde. Construction is expected to begin in January.