

Judith Olney, editor

July 28, 2014

Westside Area InfoZone

Dear Judith,

I have been looking over your website and thought it would be a good idea to introduce myself and my family. After reading the details about our project online I thought your members might appreciate a bit more information about our plans. Before the purchase of Westside Farms became final in December of 2012, we were already familiar with the ranch as we took our then young children to the Kaiser's pumpkin patch a number of times along with their school communities. We have since learned that hundreds of local children, now grown, have shared this wonderful experience.

My husband David has been involved with making wine and buying grapes for over 30 years, mostly in Sonoma County. Working originally for other wineries, such as Simi, Matanzas Creek, Chalk Hill, and Rudd, to name a few; he/we started our own business in 1996 with 250 cases of Chardonnay. Today we make approximately 40,000 cases of wine per year, much of which is Chardonnay from the Russian River Valley. We lease 2 buildings in Healdsburg from the Deas family and a partnership which includes the Deas'. They are warehouse-type buildings on Haydon Street and Healdsburg Avenue.

Our children were born and attended school here in Sonoma County. Our daughter Claire, age 23, and her husband Ivan, live in the old farmhouse on Westside Farms which the Kaisers vacated in December. They have 12 chickens and hope for some goats. Ivan, originally from Montenegro, became a US citizen a few months ago. He grew up on a farm and is very handy to have on the property. Claire has come to work for us full-time at the winery since graduating from college.

Our son Alan, now 22, works for us during the summer between college terms and will be graduating next May. I handle the books, payroll, compliance, and multiple administrative tasks for our business. At the winery buildings we have 11 fulltime local Sonoma County employees, many which live here in Healdsburg. They make it all possible for us and I invite you to visit our website to meet them online. [www.rameywine.com](http://www.rameywine.com)

Redwood Empire Vineyard Management has been farming the 42 acres of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir for some time now and is careful to make sure the grapes are farmed sustainably. We have 6 honeybee hives adjacent to the vines, lovingly cared for by Agustin Carrasco, who originally worked for the Kaisers and now works for us as a full-time ranch manager. Planting of bee friendly gardens is on-going. We take our responsibility as caretakers of this exceptional property very seriously.

Last year we commissioned BioEngineering Associates to repair severe erosion along the Russian River at the northern boundary of the property, the same company that the Rochiolis used up river. The natural approach of using layers of willow saplings, gravel, burlap and rock to stabilize the bank allowed

us to retain riparian land and preserved vegetation. Tree root wads were placed in the Russian River along our property by the Russian River Wild Steelhead Society and State Fish and Game to create slow water habitat for salmon.

Our property has been in agriculture for over 100 years. It was originally planted with oats, hay and beans, then hops, and when that crop fell to mildew, prunes. Grapes were finally planted in 1990--the crop that enables the majority of local farmers to stay in agriculture and sell their fruit to wineries. We are proud to continue the tradition of supporting agriculture here in Sonoma County and feel that the purchase of this amazing property is the realization of a dream for our family and business.

We are in the process of re-submitting our use permit after receiving suggestions from Traci Tesconi, our planner, for additional studies which should help the planning commission get a clearer picture of our intentions and the state of affairs on the parcel.

Our plan is to refurbish the hop kilns and baling barn and convert them into tasting rooms. We have worked with our architect, Olle Lundberg, to preserve the shape and footprint of one of only eight hop kilns remaining in northern California. We will preserve the furnace and ducting on one side so visitors can see how the hops were processed. I have attached a photo to show how little the buildings will change with the renovation. A large vegetable and flower garden will be planted in front of the kilns with a small orchard planted off to the side. We also plan on building a winery on the upper side of the parcel hidden from the vantage of the road, half buried (cut and fill) so it will save energy and disappear into the slope. The winery will not be open to the public and all shipping fulfillment and case goods storage is off site at the Sonoma County Vintners Coop in Windsor. Not only is this arrangement more convenient for trucking, it also cuts traffic and wear and tear on a rural road. Our completed traffic study found that we would produce significantly less traffic in one year than the pumpkin patch generated in two months.

If you take the time to research our winery you will see that we are in the wine business, not in the event (i.e. wedding) business. None of the facilities we propose will be available for rental or use by outside parties. This August marks only the 3<sup>rd</sup> consumer event we have ever hosted, an invitation to our mailing list customers to taste our new releases. Most of the popular wine tasting weekends held locally are not attractive to us--our wines carry a higher price point than would be attractive to a large audience. We hope you will come to welcome us as new neighbors of the Westside Road community. As residents of Westside Road ourselves, can understand your concerns.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. My family and I welcome your questions.

Sincerely,

Carla Ramey

Ramey Vineyards/Ramey Wine Cellars

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