



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

State Grant Creates "grape Discovery Center In Westfield"

Catharine Young

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Westfield - A major investment in economic growth was announced today by Senator Catharine Young, who has secured \$1.05 million through the Upstate revitalization capital investment fund to create a Grape Discovery Center in the Westfield area

The attraction will be modeled after the successful Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center that draws tens of thousands of visitors every year. The Grape Discovery Center will feature educational and interactive exhibits that showcase Chautauqua County's grape and wine industry, celebrate the region's grape heritage, and promote grape products. It will feature a gift shop and snack bar, and future plans include establishing a Wine Tasting Center and offering vineyard tours.

"I am very excited because this project weaves together several of our area's economic engines. Tourism is one of our top industries, and we are the largest grape-growing region outside of California. We have 800 growers tending about 30,000 acres of vineyards that support over 1,900 jobs and generate about \$5.4 million in wages. We are averaging 35,000 visits annually to our 21 wineries that

result in sales in excess of \$17 million. With the Grape Discovery Center, I fully expect those numbers to grow," Sen. Young said.

"We've seen the loss of some jobs in Westfield over the past few years, and local restaurants and other small businesses have seen a drop in their revenues as a result. This new attraction should pump new life into our small businesses and boost the local economy," Sen. Young said.

The Grape Discovery Center is the brainchild of the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association, a group founded in 2002 to encourage and support the dynamic economic development of the grape and wine industries. This new venture is a partnership between the state and growers, processors, wineries, universities, tourism and industrial development agencies, and local governments.

"The broad-based enthusiasm for this project is enormous, and I am grateful for everyone's commitment to making this happen. These funds are a smart investment in revitalizing the upstate economy. It will promote and preserve our grape heritage and turn it into an opportunity for renewed prosperity. Agriculture-related projects are the future for economic growth in our state, and as Senate Agriculture Committee Chairperson, I couldn't be more thrilled," Sen. Young said.

"The Lake Erie Concord Grape Heritage Association extends a most sincere "thank you" to Senator Young for this grant that will allow our organization to begin the establishment of a Concord Grape Discovery Center," said Helen Baran, Grape Farmer and CoChair of the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association. "The Concord Grape Belt, which extends from Silver Creek, New York to Harborcreek, Pennsylvania will be the central focus of this agritourism destination which will showcase the grape history of the region as well as the products, wineries, communities, special events and other tourism activities. The efforts of the Lake Erie Concord Grape Heritage Association coupled with the Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau and the Chautauqua County Wine Trail will ensure that the Grape Discovery Center will be a 'GRAPE' success."

"What a wonderful announcement from Senator Cathy Young," said Greg Edwards, Chautauqua County Executive. "This has been the culmination of a great deal of hard work by the Board of the Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association. It is a true testimony to regionalism because that group is made up of grape growers and wineries stretching from Erie, PA, to Silver Creek here in Chautauqua County.

Senator Young has once again stepped forward to promote Agri-Business and Agri-Tourism in her district. The Westfield area is certainly a fitting site for this announcement. and the area is a great location for the Grape Discovery Center. I offer sincere thank yous to her and all the members of our regional community who have worked on this. Congratulations!"

"Westfield is very pleased to be selected to host the Grape Discovery Center," said Martha Bills, Supervisor of the Town of Westfield. "A great deal of time and energy has gone into efforts to adjust to changing times and find ways to boost the local agricultural economy. Having this plan for economic development come together is excellent news for the entire grape growing region. We are grateful to Senator Young for supporting the work of the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Association through each step on the way to make this project a reality."

"A new Grape Discovery Center promises to be a magnet for the Lake Erie Grape Region, drawing visitors off the Interstate highway to taste, feel and smell the flavors in this region we call America's Grape Country," said Stephanie Burdo, Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau. "It will compliment existing attractions like the Chautauqua-Lake Erie Wine Trail, farm markets and community festivals, as well as provide an educational tool for all ages to experience the history and culture of the region."

"I think that the new Grape Discovery Center is great," said Bill Merritt, owner of Merritt Estate Winery. "The Center will function as a focal point around which we can develop increased economic resources and recognition for our area."