

## SUMMER 2009

GROWERS' CO-OPERATIVE GRAPE JUICE CO., INC. • A PUBLICATION FOR OUR PRODUCERS

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

May 31st registered another excellent retail sales month for Grower's--nearly topping all of the last year's total sales with four months more until the end of the fiscal year. Melissa Carlson attended the "Taste of Home Show" in Hamburg last month with friends and now orders our grape juice for their women's buyers club. Patty points out that when a quality, local product is available, people will go to great lengths to get it.

Since 2001 we have been making annual payments to Co-Bank and our long term debt level continues to decline and our goal is to reduce the figure to under 1 million dollars.

Sales of grape juice, grape juice concentrate and bulk concentrate continues to increase in demand and prices are higher than a year ago. Grape seed oil has been sold out since last month and plans are to increase production which involves drying, pressing and filtering of the 2009 crop. Cherry juice is new

this year and is proving to be a very popular addition to our product line.

There are many exciting, profitable projects underway including processing sour cherries from Ontario, Canada, blueberries from Nova Scotia and the State of Maine, U.S.A.

General Manager Dave Momberger outlined some positive, strategic plans for Growers Cooperative at our June board meeting. He plans to direct the company to continue to focus on concord products and to increase profitability to grower members.

Today there is increasing emphasis from consumers to purchase "local" foods and consumers are also looking for the word-"cooperative" on labels. Our Cooperative--being "grower owned and grower directed"--is in a perfect position to take advantage of this "locavore" trend.

*Steve Baran, President*

### GM'S REPORT

I decided to take a rest from the long winded analytical tone of these reports and try to communicate some of the "essence" of working for Growers Co-op. I will be entering my 10th harvest this Fall and I have learned quite a bit from this experience. Grower's 80 year old business is still here due to the long term thinking and commitment of you the Grower. The two people who have influenced me the most in my time here have been Al Hall and John Ellis. These two men exemplified the ideal of long term commitment and thinking that has been the strength of this business.

I think of Al often as I sit behind this old desk of his, typing away on a computer which was a very foreign machine to him. He would have enjoyed our most recent up cycle. He had pride in the quality product we produced and loved the art of the deal, especially when he had the upper hand in the negotiation.

On the last page of this newsletter you will find a farewell article from John Ellis. The old cowboy has decided to ride off into the sunset, quiet and strong like Charlton Heston or John Wayne. John's support and intuition have been invaluable to me over the years. He

has always communicated directly and clearly but with a folksy tone that reflects the core values which have served him well during his 90 years on this earth.

You, the Grower have understood the values reflected in these men and put them in a position to lead this Company. Your current Board and I hope to preserve these values as we work to lead this business and insure our mutual benefit.



## SEASON PREP 2009

With season approaching the pace has really picked up making the necessary changes to the plant's equipment and the recruiting of people. We have been recruiting an anxious and vibrant work force for the past several weeks.



For the next several weeks we will be contract processing Blueberries, Tart Cherries and Cherry juice. This contract processing will provide the time for the recruiting and the training of this seasonal work force. It also gives the people time to familiarize themselves to the plants policies and procedures while giving us the time we need to train them on the essential equipment to make it a successful season.

Along with the training, and equipment modifications there will many hours spent planning for upcoming Puree runs, contract processing of local grapes, grape seed extraction and drying as well as the set up and timing of Kosher processing.

We will also spend many days over the next few weeks preparing an inventory build up to support customer demands during harvest. Inventory build up has been an important part of diversifying our sales and given us the ability to supply our customers during harvest, so that they can still meet their needs with very little inventory on hand. So please help me thank our employees and the management team for a job well done. We all appreciate their time and effort.

*Todd Donato, Plant Manager*

## FIELD REPORT

Time sure has flown by since the last news letter was sent out. In that time many changes have occurred in our belt. Bud break occurred on 4/30 in most areas which is slightly earlier than average. The growing season appeared to be progressing well until the morning of May 18th when temperatures fell into the upper 20's and even lower in some isolated areas. There was a large amount of damage covering the entire belt, the estimates are figured to be close to 20%. The secondary bud push is occurring at a very slow rate and in many places it appears there is no secondary bud push but rather a vegetative tertiary bud.

Today as I am writing this there has been some blooms showing up in vineyards along Rt. 20, it appears that our bloom date will be about on average or slightly ahead of normal. The node and cluster counts this year on our test plots are below average. There is an average of 1.6 clusters per shoot which seems to be the best indicator of the crop at hand. Last year the average was 2.0.

With the reduced crop size this year the additional acreage is going to play a big role in keeping the plant running at optimal speed and also keep our share of the market place. Throughout the winter and spring we successfully added the 300 acres that the Board approved, bringing the total to just over 2800 acres of Concords.

If you have any questions or concerns you can reach me anytime on the cell at (716) 753-6843 or you can email at [andy@concordgrapejuice.com](mailto:andy@concordgrapejuice.com).

Have a Safe Productive Summer!!

*Andrew Knight, Field Rep.*

## ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

There is a financial lure of raising organic Concords. Our 2007 organics returned 414 \$/ton vs conventional at 229 \$/ton. The demand for eastern organic Concord juice may be great enough so that it will avoid much of the cyclical juice prices of the past 20 years. Still, going organic can be a daunting task. While most farmers could re-learn the care and feeding of organic vines if they truly wanted to, the documentation required for organics might scare people back to conventional.

The forms to apply for organic status are about a quarter inch thick. There is a three year transition period before any land can be certified. During that time, the farmer must adhere to the National List of approved, allowed, and banned agricultural chemicals (the OMRI lists). The farmer must ensure there are buffer areas so any neighbors don't affect the operation. While the county might want to spray for West Nile virus carrying mosquitoes, doing it right near an organic vineyard leads to problems. Worst of all, all agricultural applications and operations must be documented and retained for five years! There seems to be so much passion from the people purchasing organic foods about how they don't want it grown, that the process of producing the organic foods has become very complex.

Most of the organic Concords we have run in the past have been purchased. We are working to get one small 4 acre vineyard certified this year. Stay tuned. If organic can lead to consistent, higher returns, we would welcome more organic fruit in the Co-op. It will require time and effort on everyone's part though, but after the first certification, the process becomes much smoother.

*Steve Cockram, Technical Director*

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## **EMPLOYEE PROFILE - KARL HOEBENER**

Karl Hoebener is a new employee who started work on April 6th in a newly created position of Plant Engineer. Karl has lived in the area for 3 years and was formerly a service engineer for GE Betz servicing boiler and cooling water systems for factories throughout the WNY region. Karl brings a wealth of industrial plant process experience with him. His longest work experience was with IBM in Austin, TX. Karl currently resides in Westfield with his wife Natalie, daughters Haleigh, and Hannah and son Karl.

Welcome Karl! We wish you all the best in your new career here at Growers.



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## **GOOD FOR WHAT AILS YOU**

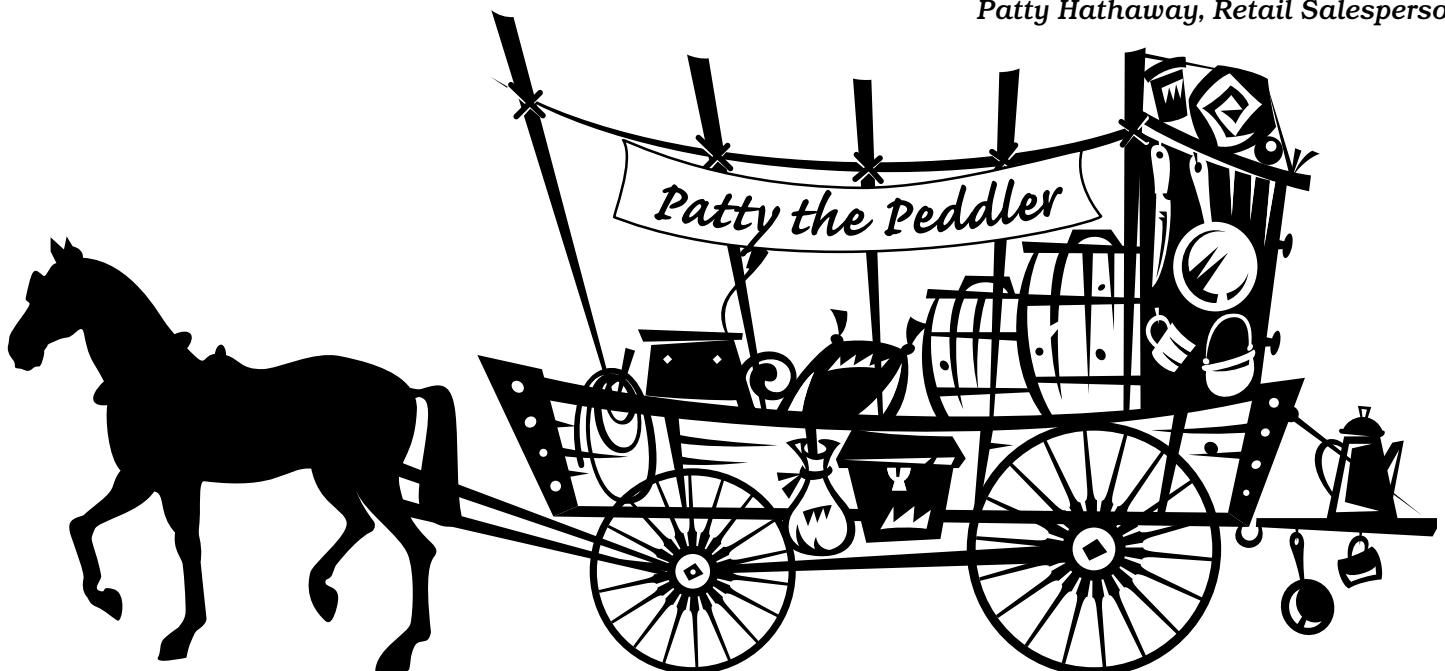
Summer time brings lots of fun, an abundance of sun and fun filled weekends. There are lots of festivals and vacations for all. I will be traveling down the roads of New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio to many different locations to tell the people about our delicious and healthy Concord grape product. Many days I feel like the old time peddler driving my horse and buggy which is now a little red Chevy wagon. I drive into town shouting out all the health benefits of Concord grape juice.

The old time peddler had an elixir that was sure to make you feel better. I have a Concord Grape Juice concentrate that is full of antioxidants; helps lower your cholesterol; thins the blood; it can even improve your memory and physical dexterity. So, come to my wagon and get your Concord Grape Juice concentrate it comes in 8 ounce bottles or quart sizes, then I also have a Concord Grape Juice in a 8 ounce ready to drink. Next you can find an amazing Concord grape puree in a 16 ounce jar which is just enough to make a 9 inch pie. We even give you the recipe!! But I mustn't forget that 8.4 fluid ounces of golden Concord Grape Seed Oil. Now this is the best cooking or salad oil around. Tastes so buttery and nutty you will have to have a bottle in your kitchen.

Dabbling in grape juice wasn't enough for the Growers so they had to mess around with Tart Cherries so now we have a Tart Cherry Concentrate. Now let me tell about this product, comes in a quart bottle and is a natural anti-inflammatory agent. So it is very good for the gout and those aches and pains from arthritis.

Look out for Patty the Peddler she will be coming to your town and surrounding areas with her elixirs sure to fix all your problems. She will be driving that big red Chevy and pulling a loaded trailer of Concord grape product, produced by Growers Grape Juice Company. Remember when you buy from this peddler you are supporting your local community.

*Patty Hathaway, Retail Salesperson*





**THE GREATEST THING IN LIFE IS  
THE MYSTERY OF TOMORROW**

The draw of the day is a new beginning, trying to remember the 5 o'clock call and a good morning to employees, customers and friends alike. After leaving Loblaw's following 44 years, coming to Growers was a special step for my future with new challenges and goals. I have now completed many years of food retailing and all on a happy note. The time has come as age looks at a new direction. For a bump on the head takes time to recover, but still leaves a little time for fun. Dave is now the key to our business. Keep his gas tank full. Our team is ready. Remember that "a good horse drives itself".

You can take the boy out of the farm, but not the farm out of the boy. I say thanks to every farmer as memories will never leave. Good Luck, Good Farming and May "God" bless you all.

*John A. Ellis*

