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Russian River Valley Winegrowers Announce New Board Members and Officers for 2016

Santa Rosa, CA (January 18, 2016) – The [Russian River Valley Winegrowers](#) (RRVW), a non-profit marketing and educational organization dedicated to promoting and maintaining the agricultural diversity of the Russian River Valley, announced the appointment of Clay Gantz as the 2016 Board President. Clay, along with his wife Celeste, farm [Gantz Family Vineyards](#), a 4.5-acre vineyard in the heart of Russian River Valley, selling their fruit to Kosta Browne Winery. Clay is an award-winning amateur winemaker who completed the certificate program in winemaking offered by the Department of Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis, Extension and is a partner in the national law and consulting firm, Manatt, Phelps & Phillips. He takes the reigns from outgoing Board President (and one of the original founders of RRVW) Rod Berglund, the esteemed winemaker of [Joseph Swan Vineyards](#) and one of the region's most respected winemakers, with strong ties to RRV history.

In addition, Giovanni Balistreri of Russian River Vineyards has been named 1st Vice President. After graduating from Fresno State University 2004 with a BS degree in Agricultural Business, Giovanni made his way back to Sonoma County where he farmed and managed his family's Freestone pinot noir Vineyard. While farming is his passion there was more on the horizon and in the fall of 2008, Giovanni and his partners took over the property in Forestville formally known as Topolos and opened [Russian River Vineyards](#).

Joining Clay and Gio is 2nd Vice President Chris Crispo of [Bush Crispo Vineyards](#). Chris' in-laws have been growing grapes in the Russian River Valley for over 30 years. Chris moved to the Russian River Valley four years ago in order to get more deeply involved in the family business. Chris and his wife, Audrey, are intimately involved with the family's vineyards and are completing the Viticulture Certificate program at Santa Rosa Junior College / Shone Farm.

Also at the helm of the RRVW organization are Treasurer Alex Klein, Vice President-Lending and Regional Marketing Coordinator of [American Ag Credit](#) and Secretary Carol Kozlowski-Every, Vice President/Secretary of [Kozlowski Farms](#).

The Board of Directors will also gain additional expertise this year, with the addition Jim Sturgeon of [La Crema Winery](#), who, as Director of La Crema, leads both the marketing and DTC teams; Mike Sullivan, Winemaker, GM and Co-owner of [Benovia Vineyards and Winery](#), which farms 72 acres in the Russian River Valley, organically and sustainably; and Kenneth Rochford, Director of Sales and Marketing at [Kosta Browne Winery](#).

Returning Board members are: Catherine Bartolomei, Owner/GM of the renowned [Farmhouse Inn, Restaurant and Spa](#); Ryan Decker Grower Relations Manager and Viticulturist at [Rodney Strong Vineyards/Davis Bynum](#); Chris Donatiello, owner of [C. Donatiello Winery](#); Nick Frey, Brand Ambassador for [Balletto Vineyards & Winery](#); Dominic Foppoli partner in [Christopher Creek Winery](#) and Town of Windsor Councilmember; Tom Fredericks owner of [Trenton View Vineyard](#); Summer Jeffus, Consumer Direct Manager at [The Calling](#); Nancy Woods, Direct to Consumer Manager of [Merriam Vineyards](#).

“As a result of the hard work and high standards of our members,” says President Gantz, “the Russian River Valley is justly recognized as being the premier American winegrowing region for cool climate grapes and wines of distinction and for providing a world-class experience for those who visit us. I look forward to working with our board and members to tell our story in new and compelling ways.”

The newly inaugurated board will continue to develop and stage the RRVW's most celebrated annual events, along with some new additions meant to reach additional markets, and educate and enhance relationships with the wine trade and premium wine collectors and consumers.

For more information about RRVW – visit [rrvw.org](#) or email info@rrvw.org