

## **VESTA Student Biography: Judy Walkingstick**

Neither fire nor ice could stop VESTA student Judy Walkingstick from establishing her vineyard, Territory Cellars, in Stroud, Oklahoma.

Walkingstick's interest in starting a vineyard and winery took root when friends of hers became involved in viticulture and enology. She decided that she would give it a try. After planting 1000 Cabernet grape vines, she needed the knowledge to grow them, and she found the help she needed in the VESTA program. She is currently pursuing an Associates Degree in Viticulture through Redlands Community College in El Reno, Oklahoma.



VESTA has played an important role for Walkingstick throughout the process of opening Territory Cellars. Her studies of viticulture and enology have helped lay the ground work for a successful business operation. She describes the VESTA course work as challenging, yet invaluable in terms of the contacts and relationships she has developed from her classes. Each semester, Walkingstick feels as though the classes become more interesting and add to the basic knowledge she learned in her introductory y courses.

Unfortunately, as is often the case in agriculture, unsuspected events put the opening of Territory Cellars on hold in November of 2006. A fire destroyed their new facility just before its opening. This caused the initial five year plan to turn into a fast six month plan. However, by July of 2007, Territory Cellars was up and running.



“We have now survived our first 6 months and are confident that the future will be good,” Walkingstick states.

Fire has not been the only set back for Walkingstick. A severe freeze destroyed her crop last spring along with most of the other grape vines in the area. In order to remain in operation, Walkingstick purchased other Oklahoma grapes. They may not be her own grapes, but Territory Cellars currently has wine in their tanks and they feel it ranks highly among other wines of the state.

“We have bought other Oklahoma wines,” Walkingstick said, “and with a lot of work have produced and bottled some good wines.”

Despite the occasional troubles, Walkingstick feels as though her work is very rewarding. For her, it is the people she has met and the places she has been that make the setbacks worth the trouble. She also loves being able to apply the information she learns in the VESTA program.

"Seeing the vines come to life and the grapes grow, harvesting and turning the grapes to wine is quite rewarding," said Walkingstick. "It is wonderful to be able to apply the knowledge that we have gained from the VESTA program. I have always felt confident in the information that we have been given and I love being able to share it through the winery."

Walkingstick believes that VESTA offers great opportunities for its students through its helpful professors and staff. She also advises that current VESTA students keep track of the contacts they make during the program, as they will be beneficial in the future.

Territory Cellars Vineyard and Winery is seldom closed and Walkingstick says that there is almost always someone around. The vineyard is located at the winery and the winemaker is usually close by, if not at the winery. Visitors are welcome and the facility is able to accommodate groups of all sizes for meetings and meals as well as parties.

They can be reached on the web at [www.territorycellars.com](http://www.territorycellars.com) or by telephone at 918-968-2575. The winery is located ½ mile north of Interstate 44, on the east side at 1521 N. Highway 99 in Stroud, Oklahoma.