

# Community Values

## Connecting with Community Values

**Background:** Napa Valley winegrape growers increasingly face hillside and watershed issues, while wineries are feeling pressure on issues such as traffic, noise and light pollution. Linda Reiff, executive director of the Napa Valley Vintners Association (NVVA) observed that members may have mistaken their consumers' affection for wine for their neighbors' affection for their practices. NVVA responded with an aggressive community relations program, and the first step was to get a handle on community sentiment toward winegrape growing and wine making.

**Challenge:** Research, not personal opinion, is essential to understanding community values. Guesswork and intuition do not provide an adequate basis for building successful strategies.

**Action:** NVVA sent a mail survey to 30,000 Napa County households. Of 436 responses, 176 had comments. While the comments were useful, NVVA wanted to conduct more thorough research before developing a game plan. They built a team of industry members to conduct one-on-one interviews with 100 people in the Napa Valley.

**Results:** The one-on-one interviews were key to connecting with the community. Their findings formed the basis of a proactive community relations program. In addition, the personal contacts established during the interview process grew into productive industry relationships with community and environmental leaders.

By working with environmental leaders, NVVA developed a joint position with them on watershed task force recommendations and is pursuing a Green Certification program for Napa County vineyards.

Among the negative feedback was concern about lack of farmworker housing. NVVA responded by supporting an industry self-assessment to increase funding for housing projects.

To help educate neighbors and earn their trust, NVVA developed a mailer about the wine industry's practices and contributions to the community. Some of the most positive feedback reflected appreciation for the industry's charitable giving. The Napa Valley Wine Auction over the past 20 years has raised \$30 million for the local community.