



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 1, 2008

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Winemaker Shawn Walters & Forty-Five North Vineyard Snatch Up 3 Double-Golds This Week at Annual Pacific Rim Competition

(Lake Leelanau, Mich) – **Forty-Five North** – Michigan’s newest wineries – has barreled onto the viticultural scene having garnered three “Double Gold – Best of Class” medals and a “Best of Show” distinction this week at the 2008 Pacific Rim International Wine Competition in California. “Double Gold” is awarded to only those wines that receive “Gold” ranking from every single judge in its respective category.

“Double Gold” medals were presented for the Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir Rosé and Dry Riesling – which also placed second overall in the competition of 2800 judged wines, earning it the distinction of “Best Pacific Rim White Wine.” Five Michigan wineries received medals in a variety of categories; only one other Michigan winery – out of 41 total wineries – was named to the “Double Gold” list. **Forty-Five North** also received Silver Medals for its Pinot Gris, 45 White and Late Harvest Vignole, while its Pinot Noir received a Bronze Medal.

“It is a feat of Biblical proportions for winemaker Shawn Walters, his abilities and a first-year winery,” says **Forty-Five North** Owner Steve Grossnickel. “Since this was a totally blind tasting in which judges tasted completely without knowledge of make, winemaker, or vintage, it seems there was more than just subjectivity to the results.”

Walters – the man with the magic touch – has honed his skills over the last six years at Leelanau Cellars in Omena and with Longview Winery in Cedar, generating an impressive list of awards and accolades. This spring, he also began making Leelanau Riesling under the Jana Label for California vintner Scott Harvey. In all, 350 cases of the “Made in Michigan” wine will be distributed at tasting rooms in Napa and Amador County. Already considered to be one of the premier winemakers in the state, Walters is poised for continued success and recognition on both a national and international level.

The Pacific Rim International Wine Competition is one of the largest and most respected judgments in the world, featuring submissions from North and South America, as well as New Zealand, Australia and other recognized wine-making regions.

Earlier this year, **Forty-Five North** brought home seven medals (out of more than 2400 wines judged) from the esteemed Finger Lakes International Wine Competition where Walters was presented with Silver Medals for his Cabernet Franc, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay and Riesling, with Bronze Medals going to the Vignoles, 45 White and Pinot Noir.

“I am extremely pleased with Shawn’s efforts on behalf of **Forty-Five North** and am proud of these results,” Grossnickel says. “I, for one, will raise my glass to Shawn for his present and future accomplishments.”

Grossnickel, an Indiana ophthalmologist and Lasik surgeon with a passion for wine and the landscape of Northern Michigan, purchased a 100 acre cherry farm near Lake Leelanau in 2006 for **Forty-Five North**. Vineyard Manager Doug Matthies of Big Paw Vineyard Services (son of Dan and Lucie Matthies, owners of nearby Chateau Fontaine) supervised the initial planting of 15 acres of vines – with Riesling, Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio being the first in the ground. Nearly half of the property is expected to be planted with vines in the future – at a rate of about 10 acres a year, for the next three years.

The 8000-square foot state-of-the-art winery began production last fall and will have an eventual capacity of 30,000 cases of wine per year. As one of the largest wineries in the area, it will be able to handle a significant amount of outside work as well.

The tasting room has its own unique story. “The 120 year old barn was rescued from Kent County and moved some 170 miles north to be rebuilt on the property,” says Cindy Curley, Tasting Room Manger. “It has taken four truck loads to get it all here.” The reconstruction is expected to be complete in time for a Fourth of July weekend grand opening.

Forty-Five North is located on the 45th Parallel, 8580 E. Horn Road in Lake Leelanau, in the heart of the Leelanau Peninsula – one of four federally-recognized viticultural appellations in the State of Michigan. You can also find them online at www.fortyfivenorth.com.

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PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

**2008 Pacific Rim International Wine Competition Results (56 page PDF)*
<http://www.nationalorangeshow.com/PacRim/2008CompetitionResults.pdf>