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Wamego Winery and Community Receive National Attention

Wamego, Kan. – After being in business for only three years, the Oz Winery in Wamego is finally gaining national attention. The national news network CNN visited our community on Saturday, April 17, to explore how the Wamego community and its small business owners have fared during the recession.

Tom Foreman, a correspondent for the CNN primetime show Anderson Cooper 360°, featured “Building up Kansas” in his most recent blog letter to President Obama. One of Foreman’s stops in Kansas brought him to the Oz Winery in Wamego, where he and his coverage have created quite a stir.

“Everybody and their dog, even Toto, have been calling,” said Brooke Balderson, co-owner of the Oz Winery. “They say yes I saw you on CNN and I couldn’t wait to place an order.”

Though the winery already had customers nationwide from New Jersey to California ordering their top selling wines like Yellow Brick Road, Witch Gone Good and The Lion’s Courage, one of their most favorite recent orders was from a woman in New York City.

“Tuesday morning a woman called and emailed dying to place an order. It was a gift for her mother. When we asked the name of the business to ship it to, the woman said Comedy Central. Evidently, the woman works in post production – what fun!” Balderson said.

The most noticeable effect CNN has had on their business has been visitors being more encouraged to stop by.

“A gentleman came in this weekend and shared with us that he’d driven by on the highway all the time, but just never stopped in to visit,” said Noah Wright, head winemaker at the Oz Winery. “When he saw the CNN coverage, he said he decided, ‘Today is the day to stop.’”

More importantly, Wright added, is the positive effect on the community as a whole.

“We’ve been pioneers in a sense of tapping into a theme and an emotion that we just happened to slap onto a bottle of wine,” he said. “But having CNN come through and feature Wamego for our recession rebounding is great for all Wamego businesses – it puts us top of mind on the national map as *the* Oz destination.”