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National attention from CNN creates big buzz for Oz Winery, Wamego community



By [Marshanna Hester](#)

It's been a busy Monday for Noah Wright and Brooke Balderson, co-owners of the Oz Winery.

"With the publicity it's become the little monster that we're trying to control now," Wright said.

"Everybody and their dog, even Toto has been calling," said Balderson. "They say yes I saw you on CNN and I couldn't wait to place an order."

From Dorothy to Yellow Brick Road to Lion's Courage, wine bottles are moving off shelves in Wamego faster than flying monkey, heading to customers and businesses across the nation, including California, Georgia, New Jersey and Comedy Central in New York City.

From fermentation, to mixing, to bottling, it all happens here.

The idea started as a hobby three years ago and has been a success ever since.

"We've been pioneers in a sense of tapping into a theme and an emotion that just happened to slap on a bottle of wine," Wright said.

The national attention of their winery opens doors of opportunities for the business owners, but they'd rather that attention put a spark in the community.

Wright would like to see more oz-themed store fronts to keep main street alive.

"We're claiming this destination Oz and when there's two or three stores it's like you don't want them to stay a couple of minutes," he said.

"You don't see a lot of thriving small town communities anywhere, and so the fact we're 3,000 to 4,000 people and have decent businesses and can keep people employed is fantastic," Balderson said.

Before prohibition, Kansas was the third largest grape producing state in the nation.

Right now, there are less than 20 wineries in the state, with 300 to 400 acres of vineyards.