

# Festival celebrates 25 years in style

Saturday's Fraser Valley Wine Tasting Festival in Langley was the biggest and best yet.

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Like the vino that the annual celebration revolves around, the Fraser Valley Wine Tasting Festival seems to get better with age.

The 25th edition of the festival at the Willowbrook Shopping Centre hit a whole new stratosphere, both in terms of attendance and money raised.

For the second time in the festival's history, it sold out with more than 1,000 tickets sold.

Early estimates have more than \$70,000 raised, and that may rise to close to \$80,000 once the final fundraising total is tabulated.

Proceeds will go to the Autism Society of B.C., the Access Youth Outreach Services Society (formerly PoCoMo Youth Services Society), and Focus BC which helps troubled youth with education and therapy. The Autism Society of BC has been around since 1974 and is a parent-based and parent-directed society providing support to individuals with autism and their families.



Troy Landreville/Langley Advance

Two members of the Rotary Club of Langley Central – president Guy Tousingant along with Michael Brown – had a chat during the festival.

Organized by the Rotary Club of Langley Central, the event has raised more than \$800,000 for local charities since its humble beginnings in 1989, when the inaugural festival at the George Preston Recreation Centre raised a modest \$900.

"It's going very, very well," club president Guy Tousingant at roughly 7:30 p.m. Saturday, early on at the gala.

Tousingant called the festival, "the social

event of Langley."

"Every year, I'm surprised at the amount of people who attend and this year is overwhelming," added

Tousingant. "The response has been just incredible."

The festival featured 38 wine merchants offering more than 200 types of wines from all over the world for local oenophiles (a.k.a. wine enthusiasts) to sample.

Club members John Morgan and David Taft co-chaired the festival. Morgan offered a "big thank you" to diamond sponsor,

BDO Dunwoody, which he noted has donated \$90,000 to the event over the past six years.

Morgan was thrilled after the event.

"We've got an awesome committee," he said. "Members have been doing this for so many years and we'd never be able to pull this off without their help. I'm absolutely ecstatic with the success we had this year. This is the most we've ever raised. This event also wouldn't be possible without the support of the community and the local restaurants that were involved."



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Troy Landreville/Langley Advance

Steve Johnston grooved on the upright bass during the 25th annual Fraser Valley Wine Tasting Festival at the Willowbrook Shopping Centre on Saturday, Nov. 1.



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Stevi Ling sported a post-Halloween look as she rubbed shoulders with Kathy Podolski during Saturday's charity event.