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SOCIETY OF WINE EDUCATORS NAMES NEW OFFICERS
AND NEW MEMBER TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sets the compass for its strategic vision

Washington DC December 2003- The Society of Wine Educators, the pre-eminent wine education and certification organization in the United States, has announced two new executive committee appointments as well as a board of directors' appointment.

Assuming the role of President of the Society is Robin Kelley O'Connor, Certified Wine Educator (CWE) and Bordeaux Wine Bureau Trade Liaison. Kimberly Charles, owner of the wine industry marketing communications firm, Charles Communications Associates, is the new Vice-President. Joining the SWE Board of Directors is Guy Stout, CWE and Director of Beverage Education for Glazer's Distributors. Geoff Labitzke, CWE and Lisa Airey, CWE remain on the executive committee as Treasurer and Secretary, respectively.

O'Connor brings to his role as President a long and distinguished career in various aspects of the wine business. His experience has included: sommelier, marketer, wine writer, retailer, international wine judge and wine industry spokesperson. A wine course while at the University of Maryland inspired him to enter into the wine business and he jumped in wholeheartedly as a student winemaker in Bordeaux at the Etablissement Jean Pierre Moueix in Pomerol and Maison Krug in Champagne. Today he travels the United States and as ambassador for the Bordeaux Wine Bureau. His dealings with various wine audiences from the consumer to top tier trade, in addition to his 9 years of service with the Society of Wine Educators as a board member and on the executive committee as Vice President, provide him with the qualifications to lead and inspire the future of this dynamic non-profit education organization. O'Connor states that his main objectives looking at 2004 and beyond are threefold: to enhance and enrich the benefits to the members of SWE, to ensure that SWE is the pre-eminent certification and professional

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development organization for the wine industry, and to build on the success of the very popular annual conference to make it even more dynamic to members past and present. He holds both the Certified Wine Educator credential from SWE as well as the Diploma from the Wine & Spirit Educational Trust (WSET) in London.

Kimberly Charles brings to her role as Vice President a diverse and successful track record in the wine industry, with a particular emphasis on strategic marketing communications. While a student at Georgetown University in Washington DC, she worked as a sommelier at the Sheraton Carlton wine bar where she met some of the most notable personages in the wine business, winery owners and winemakers, and became inspired by their devotion and passion for the trade. From there she went on to run the public relations division of Kobrand Corporation in New York, and then launched the highly successful Gallo of Sonoma publicity campaign from 1998-2001 as the Director of Communications for the E. & J. Gallo Winery. She founded her own public relations firm in May of 2003 and specializes in businesses with a philanthropic or sustainable focus. A member of SWE since 1986, she has served on the board for the past three years and has helped to shape the organization's marketing plan. She looks forward to "rolling up her sleeves" and working with a talented board of directors to realize the Society's goals. Charles is pursuing her CWE and also holds the Diploma from the WSET and judges at four international wine competitions in the U.S.

Guy Stout, CWE brings a "can-do Texas attitude" to his new position on the board. Representing one of the top five most important wine consuming markets in the United States, Stout has been at the forefront of promoting education in the trade. His role at Glazer's Distributors, which now is in eleven states, is to develop and implement the beverage training program for the sales executive team throughout Glazer's network. Stout also has worn many hats within the wine trade where he has been a partner in an importing firm, a sommelier, restaurant consultant, a retail sales person at Marty's Fine Wine Shop in Dallas and now a vintner with a 4-acre Syrah vineyard in the Texas Hill Country. Stout's trademark enthusiasm and energy brings a powerful voice to the SWE board. Much like many of the board members, Stout has the CWE certification but also

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holds credentials outside of SWE that help to make the organization a well-rounded, well-informed group of professionals. Stout also holds the Advanced Sommelier certificate from the Master Sommelier program.

Of these appointments, Executive Director Bonnie Fedchock states, “Every year, our focus becomes more and more dynamic, and our board plays a critical role in shaping and executing that vision. I’m really excited by the level of experience and talent these three bring to an already accomplished group of people on our board. You’ll be seeing lots of exciting news coming from SWE in the immediate future.”

About Society of Wine Educators

Established in 1977, SWE offers individuals the opportunity to receive certification of their professional expertise through two programs: the Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) and the Certified Wine Educator (CWE). These are offered in select cities around the United States and Japan throughout the year. A full calendar of events is available on the website www.wine.gurus.com.

In addition to its exam offerings, SWE offers additional professional development programs as well as its annual conference as forums for continuing education. The SWE annual conference takes place in either a major or emerging wine region every year, providing an educational backdrop as well as a locale that provides a living laboratory for the study of wine. Past conferences have been held in wine regions such as San Jose, California; Bellevue, Washington; and Portland, Oregon.

The 2004 conference will take place in Sonoma County, California August 2-7. For more information please visit the SWE website or call SWE Executive Director, Bonnie Fedchock 202-347-5680 or director@societyofwineeducators.org.

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