

## Following Paul Newman's Lead with Humanitas Wine

Judd Wallenbrock is a wine geek who always wanted to have his own winery, but he knew the wine industry didn't need another wine label. At the same time, the father of three young children was feeling the urge to do good. One day Wallenbrock connected the dots and realized he could have his own winery and donate the profits to charity -- a la Paul Newman's Newman's Own food products. Humanitas wines were born.

"Newman's Own is the strongest business model I have, but, of course, I don't have the benefit of celebrity to help sell it," said Wallenbrock, 45. "What I do have is the burning desire to do it."

Humanitas, which just released its first wines, is headquartered in Wallenbrock's Napa home. The company is set up as a profit-making business, based on what he calls "cause capitalism." Instead of going the nonprofit route, he wants to reap profits and reinvest them, not in shareholders or in employees, but in the community. The winery has one unsalaried



**Judd Wallenbrock**, a self-described "eno-dweeb," is proud to make wine that benefits charities.

employee (Wallenbrock) and no assets save a few wine barrels. The only overhead is a cell phone. Wallenbrock has chosen three charitable causes: homelessness, hunger and literacy. After studying which charities work best in these areas, he has decided to donate to Habitat for Humanity, America's Second Harvest and Reading Is Fundamental, all philanthropic organizations with a national or international reach.

Many industry people have told him they think his idea is the most compelling one they've seen in the wine industry in the past 20 years.

"I'm proud that I have something to sell that's more compelling to buy than every other label out there with a millionaire's family name on it," he adds. "Now I've got people thinking, 'It's such a good idea, I bet the wines suck.'" But Wallenbrock, a 22-year veteran of the wine industry whose day job is head of sales and marketing at DeLoach Vineyards, knows wine and the wine business. He also knows there are quality grapes and "juice" (already made wine) out there in the current sluggish economy, just looking for a buyer. "Humanitas wines taste good, and it feels good to be selling it and drinking it. From a consumer's point of view, what a painless way to contribute to charity," he says. "It's really good wine for a really good cause."

The self-described "eno-dweeb" has just released 1,000 cases each of 2001 Chardonnay (\$15) and 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$15), and 500 cases of 2000 Pinot Noir (\$25) bearing wine labels that say "profits to charity." Case sales receive a 20 percent discount. Consumers can order by filling out an order form found at the Web site ([www.humanitaswines.com](http://www.humanitaswines.com)) and faxing, mailing or e-mailing it to Wallenbrock.

Humanitas Pinot Noir comes from the Santa Lucia Highlands in Monterey County. "I love Monterey County as a source of grapes," Wallenbrock says. "When Coca Cola and other companies got out of the winemaking business in Monterey County and the winemakers came back in and put the right grapes in the right spots, everything changed. I think Monterey makes the best wine values in the industry." The Cabernet is also from Monterey, and the Chardonnay comes from San Luis Obispo County's Edna Valley, an area known for its intensely flavored Chardonnays. The Cabernet and Chardonnay are "negociant" wines -- meaning the wines were made by others who may have had too much to sell under their own labels. Buyers such as Wallenbrock then "finish" the wines by blending them to suit their own tastes and styles, and put their own labels on them. "We sampled about 200 different wines, and picked the handful that suited our desired style," said Wallenbrock, who gets help with the blending from a consulting winemaker (he won't say who). "This is where the art of the blend is so magnificent. We found individual wines with certain characteristics, one with intense fruit, one with great middle body, one with superb structure, and found the right blend to make the finished wine."

Unlike many wealthy philanthropists who might spend the first half of their lives making money and the second half giving it away, Wallenbrock says, "I don't have a million dollars to give away. I'm doing this winery to create the money to give away to charity. I love Sutter Home (the Napa Valley winery) because they give so much to charity, but they have it to give. I'm creating the winery so I can give." It all started with a grass roots e-mail campaign to about 200 acquaintances. Humanitas, a Latin word meaning philanthropy and character, "embraces two things very important to me -- making great wines of character and donating the profits to philanthropic causes," Wallenbrock wrote. "To me, that the profits of Humanitas will be donated to charity is a very compelling reason to embrace our wine and, for that matter, encourage others to do the same." Enjoy this wine for yourself, or think about giving it as a meaningful company or personal gift. As we like to think, we are helping to build a better community -- one sip at a time!"

In a kind of "pay it forward" campaign, Wallenbrock implores each person who buys or tastes Humanitas wine and enjoys it to spread it to others who will like the wine and the cause. Silicon Valley Bank, which has an office in the Napa Valley that lends exclusively to the wine industry, is buying the wines to give as corporate gifts. A Santa Rosa restaurant, John Ash & Co., is selling Humanitas Pinot Noir by the glass during the month of November. "What better time than Thanksgiving to release these wines with profits going to charity," Wallenbrock said. Everyone, from his publicist to the wine label and Web site designers, has worked for a discount or agreed to deferred payment (sometimes in wine instead of money), "because they think the idea is great. They're all doing their part. This is very much a communal effort." After the events of Sept. 11, Wallenbrock says, "There's more compassion in America than before, and thank God for that. People are thinking compassionately, and now they can drink compassionately."