

# Wine's Most Inspiring People 2018: A Pillar of Oregon's Wine Tourism Industry

By Jade Helm



Wayne Bailey

*Wayne Bailey*, a vintner known for sustainable farming practices advises, “The best fertilizer is the farmer’s footprint.” Bailey’s footprint has far exceeded the 50 acres of his Youngberg Hill estate in Willamette Valley to play a vital role in the Oregon wine industry. But Bailey’s feet took a long circuitous career path to Youngberg Hill. Along the way Bailey left his mark and gained experiences and business acumen that prepared him to design a business model that is unique among his wine industry neighbors.

Raised on a farm in Iowa, he began with a connection to the land and a love of tinkering with farm machinery. This led to the study of mechanical engineering at the University of Nebraska and later his own patents on mechanical control systems. His career evolved to include producing supply-chain management solutions for major breweries and food producers. He returned to school, earning an MBA from the University of Chicago and established a consultancy developing strategic market plans for several regional beverage makers. A three month consulting

contract in Burgundy became a two year return to farming in vineyards around Beaune leading Bailey to seek a new home and career in the Willamette Valley.

Bailey searched for the right property, a vineyard where he could grow Pinot Noir in the sustainable way he had learned in Burgundy. In 2003, based on research and friendly advice, Bailey purchased the 50 acre Youngberg Hill estate. Eleven acres were planted at the time and Bailey began to transition the farming to sustainable practices and expand the planting to 20 acres. Soon after getting settled, Bailey delved directly into his new business community as the President of the McMinnville AVA (American Viticultural Area) Association. This dedication to serving his industry has only increased over the past 14 years.

Also on the Youngberg Hill estate was a bed and breakfast. In addition to grape growing and winemaking, Bailey entered the hospitality industry and in 2006 began volunteering as a board and marketing committee member for the Oregon Bed and Breakfast Guild (OBBG.) Marrying the industries of wine and tourism with a tasting room,

bed and breakfast, and more recently an event center, has given Bailey a different perspective and opportunity for involvement. For a man described by fellow vintners as “passionate,” “enthusiastic,” and an “amazing asset to the Oregon wine industry,” this opportunity involves investment of time and talents. From local initiatives, to statewide direction, Bailey’s footprint can be seen through his generous volunteerism and leadership in the wine, hospitality, and tourism industries.

One of his most important contributions has been his service on the board of the Willamette Valley Winery Association (WVWA) including six years chairing the Marketing Committee. **Emily Nelson**, Associate Director, Willamette Valley Wineries Association, highlights ways Bailey has helped build wine tourism in Willamette Valley. “As a proprietor of both a boutique inn and tasting room, he understands visitor profiles. He has countless conversations with his guests from around the world about their visits. That kind of on-the-ground perspective is invaluable to our organization.” Nelson also points out that Bailey’s offerings at Youngberg Hill provide “a piece of the critical infrastructure needed to attract luxury wine travelers: high-end accommodations, amazing hospitality, and wine experiences.”

**Pat Dudley**, Co-owner, President, General Manager of Bethel Heights Vineyard, served with Bailey on the WVWA Board. She recalls it as “exciting times” explaining a new committee on wine tourism was formed. “Wayne was an important liaison making winery members aware of potential partners in the tourism industry.”

Bailey has a track record of recognizing opportunities with industry wide

benefits. Nelson points to Bailey’s leadership in bringing a new perspective to two annual events. “Wayne spearheaded an initiative to



maximize the Memorial Day Weekend and Thanksgiving Weekend wine country events. He saw potential for those events in the context of seasonal promotions as opposed to stand-alone three day weekends.”

Bailey’s leadership extends statewide through a seat on the Oregon Winegrowers Association’s (OWA) Public Policy and Advocacy Committee. **Steve Thomson**, CEO of Cristom Vineyards and Chairman of the Oregon Wine Board (OWB), has found Bailey to be an invaluable resource. “Wayne is a great natural communicator and has a breadth of industry understanding that few others have. So he is a natural for helping forge and communicate good industry perspective for the OWA members. In short – if I want to quickly get a Willamette Valley perspective especially for a smaller winery, I go right to Wayne. Additionally Wayne has been a longtime Board Director for the Willamette Valley Wineries Association and as such, he is also very wired into the various policy agendas as well as marketing objectives of our state’s largest AVA.”

Bailey’s generosity and influence also play a role in educating the future wine industry. Bailey supports Linfield College through internships, seminars, tours, and employment of graduates. **Aaron Williams**, Assistant Director, Center for Wine Education at Linfield College explains, “Wayne’s business model at Youngberg Hill has been particularly useful for Linfield students to survey. He has much to offer students of Linfield programs who are interested in learning more about wine and the hospitality industry.”

Bailey has hosted students for seminars about wine, events and hospitality for several of Linfield’s wine-related programs such as Career Development: Through the Lens of the Wine Industry, Wine Industry Immersion Program, and Linfield’s Oak & Vine Society. Bailey also contributes to Wines Studies scholarships.

Nelson acknowledges, “It takes a lot of time to serve on industry boards and committees, so willingness to volunteer, contribute, and offer expertise for the development of the industry is what has made the Willamette Valley wine region what it is today. Wayne cares a lot for this community—he’s “all in” and it really shows.” Many would agree.