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THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS IN SOWETO

Soweto, Johannesburg, 10 September 2007 –

One look at the public car park packed with thousands of nearly-new top brand vehicles and another look at all the thousands of beautifully dressed young people sipping wine in the main hall and VIP Lounge at the Standard Bank Soweto Wine Festival, one could easily be fooled into thinking that you were attending a highbrow function in Sandton. Not so. This was the calibre of consumers attending the Standard Bank Soweto Wine Festival held at the Soweto Campus in the University of Johannesburg in Soweto on the 7 & 8 September.

This year the festival attracted 4225 new and seasoned wine drinkers with over 70% being between the ages of 18 to 40. This is an increase of over 50% in overall attendance since 2006 festival and over 300% in overall attendance since the first annual festival held in 2005.

Says David Sonnenberg, owner of Diensontein Wines and instigator of Thokozani Wines, an empowerment farm attending the festival: "I have seen a 100% improvement in wine knowledge from people who have grown with the festival and attended year after year." This comment was prominent from most of the wine estates.

This year there was a marked difference in a number of areas, such as many of the Cape wine estates bringing in their top wine labels, which were very well received by the Sowetan public, and very popular. The additional big brand sponsors added flair, colour and vibrancy to the main hall and VIP Lounge, which was peppered with South Africa's VIP's such as Lincoln Mali, Provincial Director at Standard Bank, Willy Madisha, President of COSATU, Bertie Smith, Director Standard Bank Agri Division and Phorster Sambo from Dept of Land Affairs, to name a few.

Says Marilyn Cooper, MD of Cape Wine Academy and co-founder/organiser of the Standard Bank Soweto Wine Festival, "Logistically, this year's festival was seamless. We had small, strong teams managing every aspect of the festival personally and it made all the difference. To micro-manage every aspect of a festival of this size and nature is necessary. Every person involved from wine estates, to press, to consumers, to VIP's, to sponsors are all just as important as each other in order for us to grow each of these segments simultaneously. Doing this will allow us to realise our primary objective, which is to grow South Africa's local wine consumer market by introducing our world-class wines to the majority of South Africans who could potentially constitute between 80% to 90% of our future wine consumers."

Johan Krige from Kanonkop Wine Estate speaking to Neil Pendock says, "The Standard Bank Soweto Wine Festival is one of the best things that has ever happened to South African wine

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because it is pulling wine down from its snobbish pedestal and making it accessible to ordinary people, which is where it should be.”

Neil Pendock, Independent Wine Reporter and Sunday Times Wine Writer says, “It is the first real initiative of bringing wine back to the people.”

Willy Madisha, President of COSATU, speaking to Neil Pendock, says, “I’m in jubilation. This festival is very important as it is brought to the people of Soweto. It is important to bring these wines to the people, as it needs to be accessible to all. It is our people that are out there that are working very hard making sure that these wines can be produced for the people of Soweto.”

Mnikelo Mangciphu, owner of Soweto’s Morara Wines and co-founder of Standard Bank Soweto Wine Festival, was responsible for managing the wines sales on behalf of the wine estates at the festival. He says, “Wine sales were very impressive and all the wines estates were very pleased at the volumes they moved. Most popular were the sweeter white wines and sparkling whites and rosé’s but this is normal in a young wine drinking market. The wine estates loved the maturity of the Soweto crowd and their gracious, learning attitude towards wine and wine culture.”

Says Viv Quann, PRO for the festival says, “It was an amazing experience. Our sponsors gained and gave immense value to the festival. It is through our common beliefs, goals and values in Soweto and its people as real economy that made this 2007 Standard Bank Soweto Wine festival so successful. Local and international press coverage was outstanding. Apart from many of our own prominent journalists and editors attending, we also had French, American and UK press there. Personally, I would like to thank all the press for making the effort in attending this historical event.”

Our official media partner, Sunday Times, has 3 videos for you to watch on www.thetimes.co.za. Neil Pendock, Independent Wine Reporter was at the festival reporting for Sunday Times:

See these videos taken at the festival courtesy of www.thetimes.co.za

Winemakers in Soweto

http://multimedia.thetimes.co.za/view_video.php?viewkey=1c9c495413f934dd1a15

Comments from Neil Pendock

http://multimedia.thetimes.co.za/view_video.php?viewkey=3dc27118a0f19a198571

Neil Pendock speaks to winemakers

http://multimedia.thetimes.co.za/view_video.php?viewkey=d9a273f8bbb72be3a687

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