

Providing employment and tuition income

For international students in the Department of Agriculture

Shortly after an Adventist couple purchased a home in the Berrien County area a few years ago, they noted there was an 83-acre mature vineyard for sale nearby. After prayerfully considering a purchase, they contacted the Andrews University Department of Agriculture to see if they might be interested in managing the vineyard. Their intent was to “provide worthy, needy, international students with a place of employment and help towards the funding of their studies at Andrews, ultimately bringing back to their home country a love for Jesus lovingly cultivated through the vineyard, friendships, and student/staff relationships developed at Andrews.”

“We assured them we didn’t know much about grapes but we did understand agriculture and we’d be willing to learn what we needed to,” says Tom Chittick, department chair.

Around that time, one of the department’s new initiatives was a student exchange program with Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia. Students would shortly be arriving who would need work in agriculture and this would be a great way to provide employment and practical experience for them.

The farm was dedicated to the Lord just to that end and provides to the University all of the cash proceeds each and every year. A gift that, in concept, is perpetual. In addition to the mature vineyard itself, barns, equipment, tractors, sprayers, a mower, etc.,



Photo by Anastasia Tishina

Below: Iana Iavorskaia, a transfer student from Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia, is working on a BT in Horticulture with an emphasis in Landscape Design

have also been provided as well to further the operations. In addition, the donors continue to monitor the profitability of the vineyard with the promise of further financial assistance, if needed.

Because of this year’s early spring and subsequent frost, the yield was about one-third of the record yield obtained in the first year. The department is also investing in new plants and materials to upgrade a section at a time to improve future yield. Harvesting is contracted with a local harvester and all the grapes are sold to Welch’s for juice.

There are currently 12 exchange students from Russia and another six agriculture students who have all spent time working

in the vineyard, especially in the fall season when pruning and installation of new wire and posts occurs. The same students also receive employment during the summer months by maintaining a 10-acre vegetable garden, 3.5-acre peach orchard (1,600 trees) and 3-acre high-density apple orchard (4,000 trees). The department harvests the fruit and vegetables and sells them at a local farm stand as well as through produce subscriptions.

The donors state, “We believe this is God’s operation and rest in His loving embrace as we observe His plan unfolding in our backyard. You see, how can we know, this side of the Sea of Glass, how many lives God has planned to touch through this perpetual gift?”

Total voluntary support for 2011–2012

