

MSU to help LMC with wine program

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College officials said they wanted to make sure students got all the hands-on experience they needed for its new wine making program.

LMC already planned to dedicate part of the Mendel Center to a teaching winery, but then the college decided additional resources were needed for the new program, which

starts this fall.

With that in mind, LMC struck a deal to ensure access to the Michigan State University Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center.

The deal, announced a few weeks ago, ensures that enology and viticulture students will get hands-on experience at a state-of-the-art research facility, LMC President Bob Harrison said.

“They’ll go over and learn about viticulture – how to grow grapes, and

grapevines. ...We’d be able to harvest the grapes to make wine,” Harrison said. “It’s a good relationship. We’re very excited about Michigan State’s support of the program.”

Kelly Millenbah, MSU’s associate dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, sounded an equally upbeat note in her own formal statement.

“The work that’s done at our research centers is for the benefit of Michigan residents,” Millenbah said.

“This is one more way we can support students in programs that feature agriculture.”

Both institutions signed off on the agreement – or memorandum of understanding – last December, following discussions that took about six months, Harrison said.

“Sometimes, educational institutions just take a little longer – not because of any problems, but getting all the i’s dotted,” he said.

The agreement allows both institutions to capi-

talize on what’s been a long-standing relationship, Harrison said.

“We’ve been part of the online program in viticulture, and so, we’ve had a relationship with MSU for a number of years because we do run some programs with them in agriculture,” Harrison said. “It was a natural extension of our relationship,” he said.

The center is along Hillendale Road, about 3 miles east of the college.

“They have a vineyard

that’s focused on the research of grapes, and so, we approached them about working with them in an instructional capacity, as well as being able to use the vineyard,” Harrison said.

SWMREC fulfills many different agricultural and horticultural needs, as MSU’s news release noted.

The 350-acre site is dedicated to breeding several types of fruit, as well as conducting variety evaluations of numerous fruits and vegetables.