

An Evening of Fine Wines was fruitful, elegant

**By Felicia Whatley - Staff Writer
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Rod Stack of Hartford Distributors, Inc. serves beer imported from Belgium.

Manchester Community College's premier fundraising event, "An Evening of Fine Wines," celebrated its 20th anniversary on Friday, April 27. Tickets sold for \$75 a person, and most people paid hundreds for the auctionable items.

Since the event was first held in 1992, it has become a well known wine-tasting event, drawing hundreds of individuals from Manchester and the surrounding communities. The year's honorary chairman was William (Bill) H.W. Crawford, IV, president and CEO of Rockville Bank.



This is the college's biggest fundraiser of the year. "We just started and we have already raised \$200,000. I think it will be a record breaking year," said Susan Amagliani, executive assistant of Rockville Bank.

Through the generosity of its supporters, "An Evening of Fine Wines" has continued to make significant contributions to Manchester Community College and its ability to advance its missions of providing comprehensive, innovative and affordable learning opportunities.

"Things are going great. I am serving some dynamic beers," said Rod Stack of Hartford Distributors. "They are imported from Belgium and processed in a real monastery. All the proceeds go to the church. There are only seven like it in the world. The beer is called Chimay. It is made with spontaneous fermentation that takes three years to brew in an oak vat, then raspberries are added. It is a great beer," said Stack.

The college was transformed for the gala. Everything was elaborately decorated with red carpets connecting each building and fancy décor on all the walls and surfaces. The school's choir sang and live bands lined up. "This is a very lovely event. What a great fundraiser," said Old Lyme resident Debbie Faulkner. "The college does a fantastic job. I look forward to this each year."

The event drew in more than 90 cellars with wines from all over the world, such as pinot grigio from Trentino, Italy, sauvignon blanc from New Zealand, and reserve Uco Valley malbec and cabernet sauvignon from Mendoza, Argentina. Quasar gran reserva merlot from Curico Valley, Chile was also served.

Manchester Community College culinary students made the tasty appetizers, which included fresh seafood, sausage, and beef tenderloin. The desserts were like the event itself, hand-crafted, tasteful, and elegant, and included apple strudel, key lime pie, and blueberry pie miniatures. "Everyone helped out. I think the only thing on this tray that I didn't make is the cheesecake," said

student Daniel Foley.

Since 1992, the event has raised more than \$1.5 million and has funded the MCC Foundation scholarship program, the Cougar Club, MCC's athletic booster, the Culinary Arts, Foodservice Management and Hotel-Tourism Management programs; the music program and the Dean's Fund for student emergencies.

"I am helping with the silent wine auction," said MCC student Luis Garcia, who is studying occupational therapy. "I volunteered last year too. It is great to see everyone dressed up nice, and there is good food and wine. The event is good all the way around, which is why I volunteered again," said Garcia.

Live and silent auction items included vacations, weekend getaways, original works of art and gift certificates for trips, restaurants and IMMORTAL World Tour by Cirque du Soleil at the Hartford XL Center on May 3 and a week stay at a condo in St. Augustine, Fla.

"My husband painted the picture of Bill Crawford, the president of Rockville Bank, to be auctioned off," said Lotte Weiss.

Emcees for the evening were Erika Arias and Logan Byrnes, the Fox CT News morning anchors. For more information, call 860-512-2907 or visit <http://www.mccgiving.org/>.

The event was co-sponsored by the MCC Foundation and the Rockville Bank Foundation.

The Manchester Community College Foundation, Inc. is a private, nonprofit 501c 3 Connecticut corporation. It is governed by a volunteer board of directors composed of business and community leaders. Its board meets bi-monthly and lends its expertise to the operations of the Foundation and the College's Office of Institutional Development and Community Engagement.

"Well they aren't giving away top shelf wines, but this is one of the nicer ones. The event is in the major leagues. It is pretty classy, inside and out," said a prior UConn political science professor and Navy veteran John Pantell, from Wethersfield.

MCC is proud of its academic excellence, new facilities, flexible schedules, small classes, low tuition and faculty with both academic and its "real world" credentials. The college offers more than 60 programs, transfer options, financial aid and scholarships, as well as access to baccalaureate degrees through guaranteed admissions programs with several universities.