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## **2011 Virginia Grower of the Year Award**

**Richmond, VA** – February 21, 2011– The Virginia Vineyards Association Grape Grower of the Year award was presented to John H. “Rock” Stephens of The Vineyard at Point Breeze, located on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Beginning in 2006, the VVA has presented the Grower of the Year Award to people deemed to be innovators and leaders in the industry. The criteria for this award are: an active member of the Virginia Vineyards Association with at least seven years of experience managing or operating a commercial vineyard of at least 5 acres. The nominee must be an active participant in the Virginia viticulture community with a history of service to our industry and must be well respected by his or her peers.

Rock Stephens, along with his wife Kris, own The Vineyard at Point Breeze, a twelve-acre vinifera vineyard, located on Virginia’s Eastern Shore. A graduate of Purdue University, Rock also has a Masters in Business Administration from Michigan State University and is a graduate of The Executive Program (TEP), Darden Graduate School of Business Administration, at The University of Virginia. After serving in the United States Navy, he retired as a Captain. He has been an active member of the Virginia Vineyards Association (VVA) since 1997 and just completed his second two year term as President in December 2008. In 2005 he was appointed by Governor Warner as a member of the Wine Board and was elected as Vice Chairman in 2007. In July 2009, he was reappointed to the Wine Board by Governor Kaine. He is a member of the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Vineyards Association, and the Virginia Farm Bureau. He has been making wine for over ten years and has won numerous amateur winemaking awards in international competition.

Virginia First Lady Maureen McDonnell presented the Grower of the Year Award to Rock Stephens at the annual Winter Technical Meeting of the Virginia Vineyards Association, February 18<sup>th</sup>, in Charlottesville. Mrs. McDonnell has been a staunch supporter of the Virginia Wine industry. The First Lady has hosted many tours of vineyards and wineries, spoken on numerous occasions both domestically and abroad, and generally supported the virtues of Virginia wine.

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