



Must love dogs

Story by Gwendolyn Elliott

Unofficial production assistants and tasting room ambassadors, few pets in Walla Walla are as synonymous with wine as the ubiquitous winery dog. Meet a few exceptional canine characters you may encounter around town.

Halley of Abeja Winery

Dan Wampfler and his wife, Amy Alvarez-Wampfler, both winemakers at Abeja, have a history of naming their dogs after celestial bodies — Io, the couple's 9-year-old Labradoodle, is named for one of the four moons of Jupiter.

So, about a year and a half ago, when a silver Labrador retriever puppy came streaking into their lives, they named her Halley.

"After the silver tail of Halley's comet," Wampfler says — not, he clarifies, after the trail of chewed dog beds and table legs she leaves in

her wake.

"Yes, she's a pandemic puppy," he says.

When Halley goes with Mom and Dad to work at the winery, she tends to be on better behavior. "She loves it when she's there," Wampfler explains. "She herds us and helps during harvest, running up and down the vineyard."

"She's like a strike indicator," says Wampfler, coining a phrase used in fly fishing. "If Halley's there, we're not far behind. She keeps us in check."

Halley's high spirits, "super-affectionate and

Above: "Sadie will stay in the courtyard for hours waiting for customers," Joanne

Dunham, co-founder of Dunham Cellars, notes about her 7-year-old border collie. Courtesy photo



Above, Neto, a mixed breed at Brook & Bull Cellars, romps through the vineyards. At left, Daniel Wampfler, winemaker at Abeja with his wife, Amy Alvarez-Wampfler, poses with Halley, a silver Labrador retriever. Courtesy photos

loving” personality, and herding instincts will come in handy at Abeja — the young dog is the eastside estate winery’s official wine dog-in-training, slowly learning the ropes from Io, who is retiring to a quiet life at home.

Wampfler captures the changing of the guard with an apt astronomical metaphor: “It’s a waxing and waning of dogs,” he says.

Abeja, 2016 Mill Creek Road, 509-526-7400, abeja.net. Tastings by appointment.