Ramona vintners sign up for tours of town's tasting rooms **Maureen Robertson** - Ramona Sentinel P
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With about 16 bonded wineries and eight wine tasting rooms in Ramona, coordinating wine tours seems a natural to Cheryl Wright and Maurice Trammel, owners of the Transit Van Shuttle franchise in the region.

"We want to bring people to them (Ramona wineries)," Trammel said.

John Schwaesdall at Schwaesall Winery was the first to get on board, followed soon after by Eric Metz of Lenora Winery on April 23. Since then, Mahogany Mountain Vineyard and Winery, Eagles Nest Winery, and Salerno Winery became participants, and Wright and Trammel are in the process of talking to other Ramona vintners,

"This is a good opportunity for me and for Ramona," Metz said at his winery on 251 Steffy Lane.

"And for us," added Wright.

"This is really the beginning," said Metz, discussing the potential for the community now that county regulations for smaller wineries have survived a legal challenge.

The court ruling, issued in April, said that the county adequately responded to concerns about potential impacts of the tiered winery ordinance it had approved in August.

Instead of people from San Diego and elsewhere assuming they have to go to Temecula for wine tasting, they'll be heading to Ramona in a comfortable van: That's the vision Wright and Trammell have. They hope to start the Ramona wine tours this month.

Boutique wineries have been increasing in numbers since a group of Ramona vintners worked to have the Ramona Valley receive the coveted American Viticultural Area (AVA) designation in January 2006. With Ramona as its center, the Ramona Valley AVA is about 14.5 miles long and 9.5 miles wide.

The region's climate, elevation and soil are considered ripe for grape growing, and the wineries are using agricultural land for agriculture at the same time they are helping to develop Ramona as a destination for visitors to enjoy rather than drive through, the vintners agree.
Wright and Trammel, Ramona residents for the past two years, have the Transit Van Shuttle franchise for Region 103, which includes Ramona Julian, Poway, Escondido and Rancho

Bernardo. Wright is president and Trammel is vice president.

The shuttle also offers van transportation to places such as the airport, cruise terminals, casinos and business events. In addition, the "transportation on demand" shuttle provides courier delivery and executive and corporate services, and conducts tour groups, wine tours and non-emergency medical transfers.

For more information, email info@transitvanshuttle.com or call 866-261-3114.