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**Italian experience beckons for EIT | Te Pūkenga wine student**

Maddison Airey has loved every moment of her Bachelor of Viticulture and Wine Science at EIT | Te Pūkenga, and now she is set for an adventure as she heads off to Italy as a EIT Bragato Exchange student this month.

Maddison, 25, who showed her potential in her first year when she won the prestigious Hawke’s Bay A&P Society & Craggy Range Young Vintners Scholarship for 2021, is looking forward to learning more about her craft in Italy, where she will be hosted by the academic team at Padua University as part of the exchange.

It is a dream come true for Maddison, who is now in the third and last year of her degree. She is the first student to go on the exchange since 2019 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I'm so excited. It's going to be fantastic. I truly believe it'll be the perfect blend of my appreciation for different cultures and their traditions, as well as my boundless curiosity for exploring the world and immersing myself in these incredible new experiences.”

“But what makes it even more special is how closely it aligns with my studies and passion for wine. It's a remarkable opportunity to explore Italy, not only to embrace its cultural differences, but also to delve into the world of wine, which of course is the central focus of my academic pursuits. This experience will add to my understanding of how New Zealand has become a flourishing region for wine production.”

The EIT Bragato Exchange programme, which is sponsored by PGG Wrightson, Taradale Rotary Club, Ōtātara Trust and EIT |Te Pukenga is in recognition of the historical connection between Conegliano and New Zealand. It is named after Romeo Bragato who was influential in identifying potential wine growing regions here studied in this area of Italy.

Sue Blackmore, the Head of the School of Viticulture and Wine Science at EIT | Te Pūkenga, says the scholarship was started in 2003 and provides an opportunity for an Italian student to visit New Zealand in August and an EIT student to visit Italy mid-year in the Italian summer.

“This gives both young people beginning their careers, an opportunity to explore and learn about the wine and viticulture regions, industry practices and cultures of each country. It was instigated by Wine Industry stalwart Kevyn Moore who EIT representatives assisted to organise the scholarships and student trips each year. Sadly, Kevin died in 2021.”

“After an enforced break by Covid-19 we are hoping to revitalise the Bragato Exchange to honour Kevyn Moore’s memory and re start the collaboration with Padua University. We would like to thank our sponsors, particularly PGG Wrightson for making this possible.”

Sue, together with past Bragato Scholars, Hayden Penny of Te Awanga Estate and Desiree Jansen, Constellation Brands, have formed a committee to revitalise the Exchange. Padua University have just chosen their scholar, Giovanni Bin who will come to New Zealand in August.

Maddison, who grew up in Greenmeadows and went to Napier Girls’ High School, will spend three weeks in Italy being hosted by families connected with the scholarship and will then spend a week travelling on her own.

It is the perfect way for her to end her degree at EIT | Te Pūkenga.

“I've absolutely loved it. I think that the bachelor's degree has far exceeded my expectations. It's been an ideal balance of theory and practical education. And the intimate class sizes have just been the perfect opportunity for conversation, feedback, questioning.”

“The lecturers have been incredibly enthusiastic about their fields of study, and their deep knowledge of the wine industry has made the learning experience truly captivating. It's been a wonderful journey, and as it nears its end, it's bittersweet. On the one hand, I'm eagerly looking forward to entering the industry and putting my skills into practice. On the other hand, I've thoroughly enjoyed my time at EIT and will undoubtedly miss it.”

As for the future, Maddison plans to do one more vintage with Craggy Range, where she has worked while studying, before exploring her passion for wine overseas for a while.

“I’ll just basically go vintage hopping for the next few years. And then eventually settle back at Hawke's Bay, because we are number one now, so it's not a bad thing, is it?

**ENDS**

EIT is now part of Te Pūkenga. Te Pūkenga will bring together New Zealand’s Institutes of Technology, Polytechnics, and Industry Training Organisations to build a network of on job, on campus and online learning.

**CAPTION FOR PHOTO:** Maddison Airey, a Bachelor of Viticulture and Wine Science student at EIT | Te Pūkenga, will be heading off to Italy as a Bragato Exchange student this month.