

Tavern League Pushes Responsible Serving

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The City of La Crosse is no stranger to the problem of binge drinking and the dangers that come along with it. Monday the Tavern League of La Crosse tried to do their part in making sure people drink responsibly by hosting a responsible alcohol sales training session.

Hundreds of bartenders and alcohol retailers turned out for training. The goal of the session was to teach safe practices when serving alcohol and more importantly, teach the right time to cut someone off when they've had enough. Whether they were new bartenders or old pros, they felt it was a class everyone needed to hear.

Almost 300 bartenders and alcohol retailers showed up for the day-long training. "It makes people more responsible when they are serving alcohol and handling alcohol," said Chad Longway, Vice President of the Tavern League of La Crosse. In what they are calling a proactive approach, the Tavern League is looking to educate alcohol servers to do their part in making sure people drink responsibly. "Giving them signs on how to see behavioral cues, intoxication factors," said Longway, "knowing if somebody has had too much to drink and maybe cutting them off, or giving them a safe ride home."

"It's important to learn some of these things," said bartender Keven Walter. Walter is a 7 year veteran bartender and is at the training with the customer in mind. "We're trying to promote safety for our customers," said Walter, "and get them home safe, responsible drinking, that type of thing." "Fully support this training," said La Crosse Police Officer Drew Gavrilos. Officer Gavrilos says this training helps clarify a boundary that is sometimes hard to explain. "A lot of times they want us to give them an absolute cut and dry answer of what is intoxicated," said Gavrilos, "and when should they stop serving them and it's very hard for us to do that."

Knowing this class may not solve all of the city's binge drinking problems today, Gavrilos still thinks it's a step in the right direction. "The community involvement," said Gavrilos, "the fact that they students and universities have become actively involved, the Tavern League has become actively involved, working with the police department, that's what's going to change this culture over time."

Monday's training was the nationally known TIPS program, which stands for Training for Intervention Procedures. Members of the Tavern League have been certified as TIPS instructors so they can train servers in La Crosse year round.

Along with the Tavern League, the event was co-hosted by Hellman Distributors and Miller Brewing company.