

Alcohol enforcement gets monetary boost

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From the Northwest Montana Daily Interlake.

The Montana Board of Crime Control on Sunday awarded Flathead County's Alcohol Enforcement Team \$67,133 to combat underage drinking.

This year's funding was \$14,000 more than in each of the previous two years.

The money will be used on programs to train local merchants in compliance and increase patrols in areas where underage drinking normally occurs.

In the past two years, 250 bartenders, clerks, and servers have undergone the training, called TIPS. It has increased Flathead's compliance rating by 30 percent, according to Flathead County Sheriff's Detective Travis Bruyer, the Alcohol Enforcement Team's Coordinator. Training can be provided at the request of local community groups.

The funds will also be used to conduct compliance checks and increase patrolling around public and school events.

"Our goal is to save lives through education and enforcement," Bruyer said.

The team also hopes to attend a countrywide conference in August, where officers can attend classes and meet members of other agencies that have alcohol enforcement teams, Bruyer said.

In addition to the grant, the team is trying to sign an agreement with the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Service that would allow them to enforce underage drinking laws on state land.

Since the program was started in 2005, the multi-jurisdictional Alcohol Enforcement Team has arrested more than 2,300 youths for possession of alcohol and more than 300 adults for providing it to them.