

Tavern techniques 101: Course teaches how to deal with and prevent drunk patrons

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A bar owner in Port Jefferson wants to share tips on acceptable standards of practice for serving alcohol.

John Springer, owner of Old Port Pub on Main Street, recently became a certified alcohol awareness trainer for TIPS, a Training for Intervention Procedures program developed by the Health Education Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.

To become a TIPS trainer, Springer said he completed a two-day workshop in May and is now certified to teach training sessions designed to

prevent intoxication, underage drinking and drunk driving. Having successfully conducted his first class July 14, Springer, a Port Jefferson resident since 2002, said he will waive the \$60 training fee for all servers of alcohol in Port Jefferson village as a public service.

The trainer, a bar owner for four years, said each of his employees will also complete the five-hour class. "In Port Jefferson, we have a lot of bars and restaurants," Springer said. "We want them to be safe, and we want our staff to be safe."

While the TIPS program is not required by law, Springer said completing the alcohol awareness training has helped him "immediately recognize" the procedures in his establishment that needed to be "tightened up." The bar owner said he also informed his staff that he will support their decision to turn away patrons who appear to be intoxicated or underage.

Disputing the impression that bar and restaurant owners are "just here to make money," Springer said, "Nobody wants to serve underage people. Nobody's willing to take chances."

The trainer, who will teach his next class Sept. 15 at Smithtown Public Library, said the TIPS program provides a "more customer-oriented approach" to performing everyday functions related to serving alcohol such as creating a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for patrons, exercising a degree of control within the environment of social drinking, influencing aspects of drinking behavior to encourage responsible drinking and confidently intervening in and resolving troublesome situations.

To schedule a training session, which can also be conducted in Springer's Port Jefferson office or the interested business owner's establishment if suitable, call 403-4884.

The program, which includes video presentations, participant manuals and interactive discussions, aims to create a relaxed, informative atmosphere in which participants can learn and practice new skills.

Springer's assistant, Samantha Stone, said she recently completed the class and found it to be "very informative." Stone, a Stony Brook resident, said she is now "definitely more aware of what issues surround serving alcohol."

Adding that she is interested in becoming a certified alcohol awareness trainer, Stone said the TIPS program is helpful for her not only as an assistant to a bar owner but also as a customer at a bar or restaurant. It has trained her to more readily identify intoxicated individuals and take a "more active role in not letting them make poor choices."