

Power of Putnam now offers free beverage server training

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Power of Putnam members Rachael Wheaton and Brandon Smith are now offering TIPS training for alcoholic beverage servers. Businesses interested in the free state-mandated training for their servers should call POP at 520-7531. Amy Davis | Herald-Citizen

PUTNAM COUNTY -- Where do local youths get alcohol?

According to a recent survey of the county's 10th and 12th graders conducted by Power of Putnam, one way is through retail access -- that is, from alcohol-serving restaurants as well as off-premise sites like convenience stores.

"It was kind of surprising to find out they were getting their alcohol as much from on-premise sites as off-premise sites," said POP board member Brandon Smith, public safety coordinator for 911 and EMS.

As for a reason for the access, the survey indicated a lack of ID checking and vendor education -- which is why Power of Putnam is now offering a free responsible beverage server training class called TIPS.

"It's mandated in Tennessee that all alcoholic beverage servers go through training," said POP member Rachael Wheaton, who, along with Smith, is an instructor for the five-hour class, which offers a three-year certification card.

The TIPS training fits in with the overall mission of POP, a community substance abuse prevention coalition.

"Our main priority is to help make the community safer for our children -- and everyone," Wheaton said. "So, one of our focuses right now is alcohol prevention."

Smith added, "One of the big ways to keep the community safer all the way around is to teach servers how to serve alcohol responsibly without overserving. They can learn to recognize when somebody has reached their limit and know how to keep them from reaching their limit so fast. It just makes the whole community safer to have more people like the servers watching out for those folks and trying to keep them safe."

POP's goal is to offer the training each month, starting in August, as a free alternative to the state-required training.

"Otherwise, businesses would have to pay decent money to have this training," Smith said. "But we want to offer it free so we can build relationships throughout the community and get everyone on the same page. We're all trying to make our community safer."

He said the "when and where" of the monthly TIPS classes depends on interest. Businesses interested in the training should call POP at 520-7531 to work out the details.

"They will learn the common effects of alcohol and how it affects different people," Smith said. "They'll learn to notice when somebody is already intoxicated when they come in and how to watch that person over a period of time in the midst of all their other duties to make sure they're not consuming too much and make sure they're safe when they're ready to leave," Smith said.

Smith and Wheaton added that a big component of the server training is ID checking -- which POP hopes will eventually decrease retail access of alcohol, as well as tobacco, among local youths.

The program is funded through a Partnerships for Success grant from the Department of Mental Health Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services.

For more information about TIPS training, visit gettips.com.

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