

Program aims to encourage responsible alcohol serving

January 4, 2014

By WARREN SCOTT - Staff writer (wscott@heraldstaronline.com) , Weirton Daily Times

- See more at:

<http://www.weirtondailytimes.com/page/content.detail/id/608312/Program-aims-to-encourage-responsible-alcohol-serving.html?nav=5006#sthash.ItQQ4TUL.dpuf>

For 10 years Carole Scheerbaum has been leaving tips at area bars and restaurants, but it's not the monetary kind delivered for good service.

Scheerbaum, an agent with the Hancock County West Virginia University Extension Service, has been teaching owners and staff of businesses that serve alcohol how they can promote responsible drinking.

Her talks are part of the Training for Intervention Procedures program conducted locally by Advocates for Substance Abuse Program, a Weirton-based agency aimed at reducing drug abuse of various forms in Brooke and Hancock counties.

Carole Scheerbaum, Hancock County West Virginia University Extension agent, shares tips with local bar owners and staff about responsibly providing alcohol to customers. Scheerbaum has been a trainer for the Training for Intervention Procedures program for 10 years. -- Warren Scott

Better known as T.I.P.s, the national program educates businesses in what they should do to prevent minors from receiving alcohol and adult customers from becoming intoxicated.

The goal is to protect not only the safety of the customer and others they encounter but those who serve them, Scheerbaum advised at a talk at the new Wellsburg American Legion Post with representatives of a handful of restaurants and social clubs.

A server, manager or owner of an establishment licensed to serve alcohol may be held legally responsible for serving not only to an underage guest but also for any adult they serve after he or she has become intoxicated, she said.

Such personnel are required by the law to make a reasonable effort to intervene if a guest is visibly intoxicated, and that can be done in several ways, Scheerbaum advised.

They include offering food or a complimentary soft drink, cutting off service to the guest, enlisting help of people with the guest, arranging alternate transportation and even calling the police, if necessary, she noted.

Following the T.I.P.s guide, Scheerbaum noted common physical and behavioral signs of intoxication and factors that can affect the rate a person becomes intoxicated.

In addition to the strength of a drink and the time in which it was consumed, the rate of intoxication can be affected by the size and gender of a person. Because women usually are smaller and have a greater ratio of body fat, alcohol tends to be absorbed into their blood more quickly, she noted.

She added both legal and illegal drugs can speed up alcohol's effects while food helps to slow the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream.

Scheerbaum said servers also can help to prevent a customer from becoming intoxicated by offering refills only upon request, allowing the person to nurse an empty glass for a time and avoiding overpouring alcohol in mixed drinks.

While the practice has been glamorized in some movies, it can catch the customer off guard and actually cuts into the profits for the establishment, she noted.

"What I like about this program is it was developed through research from the alcohol industry - people who serve alcoholic beverages," Scheerbaum said.

She noted the program includes video dramatizations of situations restaurant and bar staff may encounter and role playing designed to encourage them to use their own people skills to deal with customers they believe have reached their limit.

Scheerbaum noted bartenders and wait staff are advised to politely refuse to serve such a person but avoid saying he or she is drunk or intoxicated, which can be antagonistic.

She said employees are encouraged to use their own people skills when limiting or refusing service and to call upon the manager or owner when that fails.

"The idea is they can promote a wonderful social atmosphere in a way that's safe for the community and enjoyable for patrons," Scheerbaum said.

In addition to the Wellsburg American Legion Post's staff, the program was attended by representatives of Legends Steaks and Spirits, the River Club and Wellsburg Moose Lodge.

The businesses and social clubs were approached by Paul "Bud" Billiard, a member of Advocates for Substance Prevention's board.

Billiard said usually about 20 participants are targeted to keep the presentation intimate.

Scheerbaum said she conducts two to three presentations each year but is available to do more. She said the classes are free and in some cases, entitle businesses to discounts from their insurance provider.

To set up a class or for information, call (304) 748-7850 or (304) 224-1933.

(Scott can be contacted at wscott@heraldstaronline.com)

- See more at:

<http://www.weirtondailytimes.com/page/content.detail/id/608312/Program-aims-to-encourage-responsible-alcohol-serving.html?nav=5006#sthash.ltQQ4TUL.dpuf>