



SHERIDAN — When asked why it is important for alcohol servers to check identification, all Sheridan police officer Jim Arzy must do is pull out a 3-inch tall stack of fake IDs collected by one Sheridan business in less than one year.

Some of the IDs are obviously fake, laminated over old library or retail rewards cards; some look surprisingly legitimate. Arzy said such IDs, purchased for hundreds of dollars, are one reason it's crucial for people who serve alcohol in the county to be trained how to check IDs and sell responsibly.

From a law enforcement standpoint, training servers how to mitigate intoxication levels and secure safe rides helps reduce the amount of alcohol-related arrests, leading to a safer community.

“That’s our big hope is that we could curb some of the public intoxications, some of the drunk driving by just having some astute servers,” Arzy said.

Local alcohol servers and producers say selling responsibly is also good business.

Luminous Brewhouse owner and manager Cooley Butler completed a Training for Intervention ProcedureS program offered by the Sheridan Police Department on Friday. He said TIPS training will be mandatory for all his employees so they understand the liability of serving alcohol and how to effectively communicate with customers and law enforcement to foster responsible enjoyment of their brews.

“We want a relaxed, enjoyable establishment, but sometimes it gets out of control,” Butler said. “I think this will make us work off the same platform.”

TIPS is a training program designed to prevent intoxication, drunken driving and underage drinking by educating servers how to recognize alcohol-related problems and intervene to prevent potential alcohol-related tragedies.

The basic skills covered in TIPS include how to ask for ID, how to question ID if something seems off, how to recognize intoxication, how to encourage responsible drinking by offering food and non-alcoholic beverages and how to secure safe rides home for customers.

The Sheridan Police Department has offered free TIPS trainings to the community for five years. Sheridan Police Department Lt. Travis Koltiska said a high number of drunken driving and public intoxication arrests — many with blood alcohol contents over .2 percent, more than double the legal limit — led the department to pursue preventative measures to limit problems created by overserving.

“It’s given me the ability to think situations out and be prepared for situations that come up,” Kayleen McKinzie said. “It has given me more confidence in handling people.”

McKinzie serves at the American Legion Post No. 7. She was re-certified in TIPS at the training held Friday and said it has helped her learn how to de-escalate situations.

She said TIPS is not about limiting the sale of alcohol, and thus limiting profit, but rather about helping customers make smart choices.

“Don’t allow that one person to have six drinks in an hour. Slow it down,” McKinzie said. “It makes them stay longer and makes them spend probably more money because they are staying longer.”

Cody Givens started working at T&C Liquor a month ago. His employer required TIPS training, but he said he looks forward to being a good representative of the business by selling and serving responsibly, especially at catered events where he may not know the customers.

“It shows a lot of integrity and responsibility on the establishment’s part, which I believe in the long run is a good sign of a good business and overall brings in more business,” Givens said.

While it may seem contrary to business sense to monitor the sale of what brings profit, business is not just about the bottom line. It is about having a good reputation for high quality customer service and adding value to the community.

“It helps businesses build better relationships with their own customers,” Arzy said, adding that most customers want a

pleasant atmosphere rather than one riddled with the problems caused by drinking too much.

Having servers TIPS trained also helps businesses build bridges with law enforcement. Arzy said police officers would rather do friendly walk-throughs than be called to the scene of a bar fight or drunken driving accident.

Currently, TIPS training is voluntary. Arzy said at least one server in almost every business that serves alcohol in the county is trained, but the police department would like to see every server trained to improve consistency and keep the community safe.

In the revised liquor ordinance being considered by city council, TIPS training would be mandatory for all servers and sellers of alcohol.

“Any business that follows best practices, regardless of what service industry they’re in, is going to be more successful than one that is not,” Koltiska said. “TIPS is a best practice. If you follow that your business is going to be more successful because you are providing a service for your community and your customers.”

By [Hannah Sheely](#) | May 9th, 2017