

Training can help curtail underage drinking

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Letter to the editor, Athens, GA, Tribune and Georgian.

Dear Editor, I'm writing this letter to help spread the word about some amazing opportunities for free Alcohol Seller & Server Training to Camden County. Alcohol Seller & Server Training is quickly becoming mandatory across the United States. Georgia is one of only 21 remaining states that does not regulate seller and server training for those who own or work in establishments where alcohol is sold. (I'd like to know where she got her information-gr)

Camden is fortunate to have access to two free seller/server training programs. The first opportunity for retailers to access free training for employees of off-premises establishments (i.e. liquor, convenience, and grocery stores) is the nationally recognized TIPS training. TIPS stands for training for intervention procedures, and, of the 29 states that regulate training for alcohol vendors, TIPS is approved in 20 of them. (wrong-gr) Free training for managers and employees of vendors of alcohol for off-site consumption is scheduled for Dec. 18 in Camden County. For more information on this program, call (912) 882-7295.

The second is known as RASS (Responsible Alcohol Sales & Server Training). RASS is currently being offered online through Georgia Tech. The RASS training is free of charge to anyone who owns or works for an establishment licensed to sell alcohol in Georgia. Training is available on the Internet 24/7, so owners and employees can complete the program at their own convenience. Both RASS and TIPS offer two-year certification upon successful completion of the training. (also wrong-gr)

Why would this training benefit the community? Surveys of Camden students in 2006 indicated that 66 percent of 11th graders and 48 percent of eighth graders reported that alcohol was fairly easy for them to obtain in Camden County.

In 2005, underage drinking cost the citizens of Georgia \$1.5 billion in damages including medical care, work loss and pain and suffering. Wow! That is a lot of costs due to underage drinking. Also historically, Camden County has a high failure rate for alcohol compliancy checks. Initiatives are already underway to add Georgia to the list of states that mandate this training. In a recent study for the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, seller/server training has a cost-benefit ratio of almost 1 to 4 - meaning that for every \$1 spent on seller/server training, \$3.80 in real benefits result, and this does not even take into account the more subjective quality of life dollars.

Alongside these benefits, participation in this training lets owners send an awesome message to the community about their commitment to reducing underage drinking in Camden County. Sellers can better protect themselves from alcohol liability lawsuits; they can improve customer service and satisfaction; and they can increase the professionalism of their staff.

As members of this community, let's make it much harder for our children to obtain alcohol in Camden County. Let's work to reduce the \$1.5 billion spent annually due to underage drinking in Georgia. Encourage your retailer to participate as a partner in underage drinking prevention.