

Village police make cases at fair beer tent

By JIM KINNEY

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BALLSTON SPA - A village police officer in plainclothes stationed at the beer tent at the Saratoga County Fair Wednesday night saw enough to charge two people with underage possession of alcohol and a third man with harassment for allegedly shoving a security guard.

Louis A. Howe III, 18, of 3901 Lewis Road, Lot 143, and James P. Purdy, 20, of 30 Dick Lynch Road, Stillwater, were both charged with underage possession of alcohol, a misdemeanor under state alcoholic beverage control law. A third-person, Justin P. Howe, 25, of 5 Greenfield Avenue,

Ballston Spa, was cited with second-degree harassment, a violation, for allegedly shoving a security guard at the beer tent.

Village police had already charged Ryan M. Natalie of 110 Brookline Road, Ballston Spa, with endangering the welfare of a child, a misdemeanor, after they were called to break up a fight at the beer tent shortly after midnight Tuesday night into Wednesday.

Fair General Manager Dick Rowland defended the beer tent Thursday, saying most of the fair security people are stationed there and the village police and Saratoga County Sheriff's Office have booths nearby. "The fair directors watch that area a lot, too," he said.

He said fair employees work hard to prevent the underage from getting beer. Everyone needs a wrist band to get served. "We check ID before you get a wrist band," Rowland said. "My people don't serve underage." He said he and the beer-tent staff have all gotten TIPS training. TIPS is a program that educates alcohol servers and sellers on how to avoid serving people under 21 and how not to over serve alcohol.

Some fairs, like the Washington County Fair in Greenwich, are officially dry and don't serve beer. But Rowland said others, like fairs in Fonda and Cobleskill have beer gardens like Saratoga County's. He said it would be hard to keep alcohol out, at least with a beer tent, the drinking is in a set place.

"We patrol the parking lot, but you go out there in the morning and you find a pile of beer cans," Rowland said.