

## Cracking down on alcohol sales to minors in Nebraska

Written by Jessica Salinas

Omaha, Neb. (KPTM) — Non-profit Project extra mile teamed up with law enforcement and some youth in our community to crack down on businesses selling alcohol to minors.

Overall, 20 (10%) out of 192 businesses checked in Cass, Douglas, and Sarpy counties over the last two months were cited for selling alcohol to minors.

One of the most important steps to keeping alcohol out of youth's hands is checking the ID. A vast majority (94%) of the 172 businesses that refused the sale did so after checking the minor's vertical ID, which indicates that they are not the legal age to purchase alcohol. Every state in the USA features vertical drivers licenses for youth under 21.

"All of the five businesses in Cass County that were cited did not bother to check the ID," said Project Extra Mile Executive Director Chris Wagner. "On the other hand, 77% of businesses that were cited in Douglas County checked the ID and still sold, so clearly checking it isn't enough. Businesses need to train their employees to verify the age as well. Minor IDs in Nebraska feature bold red letters that tell the clerk that the youth is under the legal age of 21."

Two of the businesses cited are facing enhanced penalties due to prior sales to minors within the last four years -- the time frame used by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC) to assess penalties. The Mega Saver on Lawndale Drive was cited for its second sale to minor in the last two years and Aldi 42 was cited for its second violation within the last four years. Both businesses face mandatory days of closure (no alcohol sales allowed) and days of suspension, the latter which can be paid off as a fine at \$100 per day according to the LCC's penalty guidelines. Those businesses include:

- Aldi 42, 13215 W Center Rd, Omaha (3/19) -- facing up to 2 days of mandatory closure and 20 days of suspension;
- Mega Saver, 7205 Lawndale Dr, Omaha (4/21) -- facing up to 2 days of mandatory closure and 40 days of suspension.

"It's disappointing any sale really is" said Executive Director of Project Extra Mile, Chris Wagner.

The other 18 businesses are facing their first sale to a minor violation within the last four years. If found guilty by the LCC, these businesses could be facing 15-25 days of suspension that they could choose to pay off as a fine at \$50 per day in lieu of suspension. The five businesses listed below had previous sales to minor violations, but they fell outside of the four-year window that the LCC uses for determining progressive penalties:

- 75 Mart, 114 Rock Bluff Rd, Plattsmouth (6/06);
- 801 Chop House, 1403 Farnam St, Ste 102, Omaha (9/12);
- Guaca Maya, 5002 S 33rd St, Omaha (1/07; 9/07; 1/09);
- Kum & Go 367, 18908 Q St, Omaha (6/07; 4/17);
- Milt's Golf Center, 6402 Q St, Omaha (4/14).

30 officers from the Bellevue, La Vista, Omaha, and Plattsmouth Police Departments; the Douglas County Sheriff's Office; and the Nebraska State Patrol participated in the enhanced underage drinking enforcement effort.

To report underage drinking or adults providing alcohol to minors, call the statewide tip line at 1-866-Must-B-21 (687-8221). It's anonymous, and it's the right call. Individuals are urged to call 911 to report an underage drinking party in progress.

Heightened enforcements are supported by the Nebraska Department of Transportation - Highway Safety Office as well as the Strategic Prevention Framework - Partnerships for Success and the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block grants from SAMHSA through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare. NDOT-HSO also funds the tip line. Project Extra Mile helped to coordinate the enforcement efforts.