

LYNN WALDING'S REMARKS

As a student at the University of Iowa for eight years, I fondly recall that the start of a new school year always meant new faces and fresh opportunities. The excitement of yet another school year will soon fill the streets of Iowa City. In just a few days, a new set of incoming students, fresh out of high school, will arrive on campus filled with high hopes, unlimited opportunity and boundless energy.

Unfortunately, in recent years the return of students has also meant the return of alcohol problems that have plagued the campus and the community. Last school year, for instance, over 2,271 students were arrested and charged with underage possession of alcohol in Iowa City alone. Many of those students were also convicted of the related offenses of public intoxication and drunk driving.

In fact, it was recently reported that 17% of the undergraduates slated to walk across the stage at the UI's spring graduation ceremony – one of every six bachelor degree candidates – left Iowa City, not only with a diploma but with a criminal record as well. Alcohol-related offenses were the leading contributing factor of those student blemishes.

I am pleased to announce today an important step in redressing some of the not-so-pleasant aspects of the start of another school year. The Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division, in partnership with local community leaders and bar owners alike, will begin training bar employees on responsible retailing practices. The TIPS training is made possible by a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration grant, courtesy of the Iowa Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau, and is free to all local bars and taverns.

The response of retailers, to date, has been phenomenal. Starting this morning, and running for the next two weeks, over 527 servers from more than 40 different Iowa City and Johnson County establishments will be TIPS trained.

By signing up, retailers are taking an important first step in recognizing their role and responsibility for controlling who consumes and how much is consumed on their licensed premises. And, equally important, retailer participation is an acknowledgement that the best thing to mix with alcohol is education.

The responsible retailer training will teach servers how to spot fake IDs and prevent underage sales, how to recognize the signs of intoxication and avoid serving customers to excess, how to intervene quickly and effectively to avoid potential problems, along with the skills needed to confidently refuse a sale, without incident, to an underage or intoxicated patron. The message of every TIPS training session will focus on customer service and responsible behavior – the real keys to running any successful business.

The TIPS Pilot Project is strictly voluntary, relying on the “carrot rather than the stick” approach to responsible retailer training. As an incentive, any retailer that participates by sending their employees to the training will be eligible for an Affirmative Defense for a future sales-to-minor infraction. Should a trained employee, despite the training, illegally sell or provide alcohol to an underage person, the licensee (not the employee) will receive a get-out-of-jail-free pass – meaning the licensee will not be held responsible for the employee’s violation. The incentive is only offered if the employee was TIPS trained and certified, and is available only once during the two-year trial period. Of course, the hope and expectation is that any server TIPS trained will be better equipped to comply with the law.

The TIPS training will be taught through a collaborative effort. The sessions will be led by the Iowa City Police Department and assisted by a member of the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division or a TIPS Certified Trainer from the Iowa City Sheraton Hotel. Officers Al Mebus and Chris Akers, along with the Sheraton's Mathew Wirt and my staff – Nicole Gehl, Ron Turner, Bill Missman and Steve Brown – will be the trainers and are the individuals that truly deserve the recognition.

Iowa City and Johnson County were selected for this Pilot Project for a number of reasons. First, the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Commission, in a local public forum held in formulating the *White Paper on High-Risk Drinking on College Campuses*, recognized that the Iowa City community was serious about addressing local alcohol-related problems.

Second, the enforcement effort of the Iowa City Police Department set the tone that licensees are expected to comply with Iowa's liquor laws and will be held accountable when they fail to do so. Simply put, enforcement is the inspiration for education.

The third and final factor for selecting this community was to seek and offer a solution to local bars in their struggle with underage alcohol sales. Rumors to the contrary, liquor directors really don't enjoy closing down local watering holes. For these reasons, Iowa City and Johnson County were selected for the TIPS Pilot Project.

The TIPS Pilot Project, including the Affirmative Defense incentive, could ultimately be expanded into a statewide program. For that reason, what happens here, if successful, could impact all licenses and all communities throughout Iowa someday.

The measure of that success will be evaluated by Dr. Brad Krevor of the Heller School of Public Policy and Management at Brandeis

University in Boston, Massachusetts. Funded by a grant from Diageo, Dr. Krevor will review retailer participation, the motives behind that participation, as well as the needs of servers to better comply with their responsibilities.

Dr. Krevor is no stranger to this community. In a separate research project in 2001, Dr. Krevor chose the University of Iowa and Iowa City as his major research site to evaluate the effectiveness of Electronic Age Verification (EAV) Devices in combating underage alcohol sales.

In closing, I want to thank everyone – the Iowa City and Johnson County community leaders, university officials and students, as well as local bar owners and servers – who have made the responsible retailer training a possibility. I have asked several of those individual to join me here today.

Together, let’s fulfill the promise of a new school year and provide a safe community in which local businesses can prosper and students can learn.

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS:

Mayor Ernie Lehman
Iowa City, Iowa

Charles Goldberg
Iowa City Sheraton Hotel

Chief R.J. Winkelhake
Iowa City Police Department

Anthony Abbinant
Diageo

Carolyn Cavitt
Stepping-Up Project

Dr. Brad Krevor
Brandeis University

Donnie Stalkfleet
Owner, Sports Column Bar