

28 businesses in Douglas, Sarpy Counties accused of selling alcohol to minors

Written by Kelsey Stewart

A series of underage drinking compliance checks resulted in 28 businesses being cited on suspicion of selling alcohol to minors. Seven of those businesses are ones that officials describe as repeat offenders.

Compliance checks at 176 businesses were conducted Friday and Saturday. Project Extra Mile helped pay for and coordinate the effort, said executive director Chris Wagner.

The percentage of businesses cited nearly doubled from the last checks in August and was the highest failure rate since 2015.

Officers from police departments in Bellevue, Omaha and Papillion as well as the Douglas County Sheriff's Office and Nebraska State Patrol conducted the checks. Nineteen minors, with an average age of 18, participated in the enforcement effort.

Of the 28 noncompliant businesses, 57% didn't ask for identification.

Seven of the businesses cited are facing enhanced penalties because they had made prior sales to minors within the last four years. That's the time frame used by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission to assess penalties. If found guilty, the businesses will face mandatory days of closure and days of suspension, the latter of which can be paid off as a fine at \$100 per day.

Those businesses described as repeat offenders and the previous times they were ticketed:

- Casey's General Store, 210 W. Reichmuth Road (April 2021)
- Dinah Mart, 1007 Galvin Road South (July 2020, April 2021)
- Kwik Shop, 502 W. Mission Ave. (April 2021)
- Mega Saver, 5444 Center St. (April 2021)
- Petromart, 6508 John J. Pershing Drive (April 2021)
- Twisted Vine, 123 N. Washington St. (August 2018)
- Verdict Bar & Grill, 1901 Harney St. (May 2018)

If found guilty, the other 21 businesses could face 15 to 25 days of suspension that could be paid off as a fine at \$50 per day in lieu of suspension.

Compliance checks are typically easy to pass, Wagner said. Youths involved are typically well below the drinking age, and their IDs are printed vertically instead of horizontally.

Considering the number of alcohol-related tragedies involving youths, Wagner said, there shouldn't be any noncompliant businesses, especially around the holidays.

"This is a time, particularly with the holiday break that both high schools and colleges are on, when kids have extra time on their hands," Wagner said. "They're going to look to get their hands on alcohol. Businesses should be more vigilant right now because of that reason."