

*****MEDIA ADVISORY FROM OREGON PARTNERSHIP*****

Contact: Pete Schulberg
503-502-5369

DECOY OPERATION NABS RETAILERS SELLING ALCOHOL TO MINORS

COMPLIANCE CHECKS IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY SHOW ILLEGAL SALES RATE AT 25%

(Portland, Oregon) About a quarter of the randomly selected Multnomah County stores, bars and restaurants involved in last Friday's decoy operation sold alcoholic beverages to minors.

That illegal sales rate is the same as was recorded in last December's compliance checks carried out by Oregon Partnership, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, and Multnomah County law enforcement agencies. But it still shows an illegal sales increase over the past year.

Of the 72 establishments visited on Friday, 18 sold alcohol to minors, which equates to 25%. That compares to an illegal sales rate of 19.7% recorded in the decoy operation in June, 2007 and 18% in March, 2007.

"Hopefully, our increased efforts of conducting these missions frequently throughout the metro area will start decreasing the illegal sales," said Carl Lewis of the OLCC.

Compliance checks are a proven method to reduce sales of alcohol to underage drinkers. The randomly selected establishments were located in N.E. Portland, Gresham, Fairview and Troutdale.

"We plan on conducting these compliance checks about every two months," said Pam Erickson of Oregon Partnership, a non-profit alcohol and drug prevention organization that spearheaded the missions under a grant from the Oregon Department of Human Services.

"We've found the more often we carry out the decoy missions, the better the results we get with fewer illegal sales."

Those who sell alcohol to minors are charged with a misdemeanor and face the possibility of jail time and/or fines. In addition, bartenders and business owners face additional penalties levied against their permits and licenses by the OLCC.

For example, someone with a liquor license could face a fine of \$1,650 or a ten-day suspension for a first offense.

This month's decoy operation involved police officers from Portland, The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, Gresham, and Fairview as well as OLCC inspectors and volunteer decoys.

Each team included two unmarked vehicles, police officers, OLCC inspectors and decoys. The underage decoys attempted to purchase alcoholic beverages as part of the operation.

Alcohol use is associated with the leading causes of death of young people. According to the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, underage drinking costs Oregonians \$697 million a year in medical costs, pain and suffering and work loss costs.

Youth who start drinking before the age of fifteen are four times as likely to become addicted as adults compared to those who wait until the age of twenty one.

Oregon Partnership is urging licensed businesses to become members of the Responsible Vendor Program, which trains and educates employees about the law and techniques for avoiding alcohol sales to minors. The free program has found that those who participate are less likely to sell alcohol to minors.