

Shouldn't the guy at the till do something?

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

Selling booze in a college town may not be a license to print money, but it's close.

Yet, the people actually profiting from the merchandising of liquor, beer and wine to college students seem to have little to say about the series of alcohol-related mishaps that have killed or maimed Washington State University and University of Idaho students.

How can that be?

The list of casualties includes Joseph Wiederrick, a UI freshman who died of exposure in January after wandering through Moscow following a fraternity party; WSU freshman Kenneth Hummel, who died of alcohol poisoning in his dorm room in October 2012; UI freshmen Wyatt Smith and Benson Sternberg, who died in November 2011, in an alcohol-fueled one-vehicle rollover, and UI student Benjamin Harris, who died of alcohol poisoning in July 2010.

Since the fall of 2009, the two schools have recorded nine cases of inebriated students getting injured in falls, including two this year.

Some blame the students. These are, after all, people old enough to get married, to sign contracts, take out loans, join the military and face combat and be prosecuted as adults - even though they can not legally buy alcohol until they become 21.

Likewise, society expects the universities to act. The institutions have an informal but professional obligation to follow the creed of *in loco parentis* ("in the place of a parent"), especially in an era when binge drinking is soaring.

"Imagine the public outrage and corresponding response from the university if five students had died of cocaine overdoses in the same time frame," argues the Idaho Press Tribune of Nampa. "The fact that alcohol is legal shouldn't preclude an equally profound response."

So, at WSU there is talk of pulling freshmen out of the fraternities. The UI is in the process of imposing the student code of conduct upon the two-thirds of students who live off campus.

Both schools have ramped up awareness campaigns. WSU has a mandatory program for incoming students called "Booze, Sex and Reality Checks." Newly arriving UI students have until early November to complete the three-hour interactive safety course "Think about it." The institution has also lost patience with under-performing students, sending those who fail to get a 1 point GPA home after the first semester before they can get into trouble and drag others along with them.

But what about the restaurant/bar that offers two-for-one drinks?

Or the establishment that scores points on a customer's ability to consume copious amounts of drinks on an escalating ladder?

What do you tell the tavern that sells drinks in large tubs?

Or the restaurant that offers to make Mondays tolerable by discounting its drinks?

To say nothing of myriad retailers who promote beer and wine for sporting events.

Or the bartender who fails to keep track while a customer marks his 21st birthday with 21 shots of liquor.

Since Idaho remains a control state - Washington privatized liquor sales two years ago - you have one frame of reference. According to the Idaho State Liquor Dispensary, its Latah County stores sell the equivalent of \$156 worth of product for every man, woman and child in the county.

Moscow's liquor sales work out to \$204.50 per capita.

That's two and three times the state average, respectively.

Sure, retailers, restaurants, bars and liquor stores are engaged in selling a legal product to people who are for all intents and purposes adults. The sad fact is public awareness and campus crackdowns go only so far when the people marketing alcohol are expected to do no more than wave goodbye and remind their youthful customers to "drink responsibly" as soon as they hand over the cash. - M.T.

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