

or grant to tackle MIP problem



Jon Ebert IR Staff Photographer

In her duties as prevention specialist with **Boyd Andrew Community Services**, and coordinator of Boyd Andrew's MIP program, Tracy Moseman knows the value of early intervention when it comes to alcohol use by underage girls and boys. Here she shows a guidebook, 'Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free.'

MIP cases filed		
City Court	Year	Cases Filed
	2003	833
	2004	732
Justice Court	Year	Cases Filed
	2003	290
	2004	340

What parents want to know about their kids

Here are some anonymous comments provided to counselors at Boyd Andrew by parents who completed the mandatory parental portion of the MIP sessions:

Question: What did you find most beneficial about this class:

- Stopping to put yourself in the kids' position.
- Solidifying my own beliefs and tools that I can watch for because I really didn't know even though I thought we had a very open relationship.
- Telling what behaviors to look for and what paraphernalia to look for to alert to drug use.

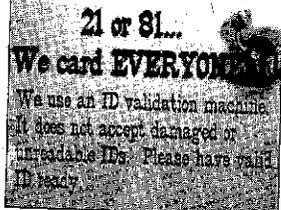
Question: What if any of the information provided in class today will you talk about with your child?

- Reinforce how dangerous the chemicals are for the brain, repercussions of drug and alcohol use.
- Insurance, legal system and long-term effect, consequences.
- Date rape drugs, associations with friends.
- How fast you can become addicted to meth and ecstasy.

Question: Comments for improving this class?

- I just wish all kids had to sit through classes like this — should be offered before kids get into trouble. Wish all parents had a chance to go through the class — not just when your child gets into trouble.
- Might be to make it longer. I'm glad it's mandatory. I think it should be kept so.
- I would go into more depth on what signs to look for when a child is abusing drugs and alcohol.

and equipment, including six new portable breath testing instruments. "Overall, this grant would allow us to be effective in enforcement and to dedicate resources to it," Liedle said.



Jon Ebert IR Staff Photographer

A sign posted at **Friendly's** warns those buying alcohol about their ID validation machine.

Friendly's

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alcohol — a situation that local business owners and law enforcement officers agree is a serious problem in this community.

In addition, it protects the employees and business from legal consequences that might accompany the inadvertent sale of alcohol to underage customers, said Escovedo.

While the majority of clerks at the store have attended responsible beverage-server training, Escovedo said a business can never be too cautious.

As an added layer of protection, the business borrowed an identification verification machine to ensure that the IDs presented by customers are legitimate.

"We get a lot of fake IDs," Escovedo said, explaining that the majority of those can be weeded out with the new technology.

Escovedo said while Friendly's appreciates business from young people in the community, the store can do without minors trying to buy alcohol.

Also, he hopes the store's patrons of legal age will respect the efforts the business is taking to make a dent in the number of youths cited for minor in possession of alcohol.

Lt. Dave Jeseritz of the Helena Police Department applauds Friendly's effort.

"With the awareness we have of this problem going on right now, these efforts are well in line with helping us out with that," Jeseritz said.

have had to juggle it with other duties," she said.

In order to keep deputies and police officers abreast of the most recent information relating to underage drinking, the grant application requests \$4,700 to send representatives of both departments along with the part-time coordinator to the Underage Drinking Laws national conference and the Montana Board of Crime Control Grant Management Workshop.

Also, the grant application includes about \$6,100 to pay for operating expenses

Boyd Andrew typically serves about 120 first offenders each year through its MIP program, along with roughly 24 repeat offenders. During the school year, the school district administrator's similar program, shouldering a significant portion of the load.

Since the MIP law was adjusted to allow judges to order parents to attend MIP classes with their children, about 100 parents have passed through the doors at Boyd Andrew for that

lular phones to keep track of their children's whereabouts — a teenager on a cell phone can claim to be one place and really be another. "Land lines" are a better means to keep the lines of communication honest.

Moseman also encourages parents to let their children use them as a scapegoat when peer pressure becomes too difficult to bear. She explains that it's sometimes easier for a teenager to decline an invitation to a keg-

on the children's completion of the course work in the court's eyes, but it's a sad situation nonetheless.

"If the parents don't come, it sends a message to the kids," Moseman said.

Moseman said she would like to see more parents take this type of interest in their children's mistakes and their efforts to make amends — that's what parenthood is all about.

"It would be nice if the enforcement piece (for the

escalates.

Officials with county's juvenile probation office can take civil action to ensure that parents take an active role in their children's upbringing, but generally that doesn't happen until the juveniles find themselves entrenched in the court system.

Moseman is guarded in her opinion of whether the revision to the MIP law relating to parental involvement

Jon Ebell IR Staff Photographer
Friendly's Sinclair store manager Rob Escovedo uses a verification machine to ensure the authenticity of all alcohol buyers' IDs.

Mixed reviews

One year later, officials say MIP law confusing

By **CARDLYNN BRIGHT**
IR Staff Writer

One year since a law allowing judges to order the parents of children convicted of alcohol possession to attend alcohol abuse counseling with their offspring took affect, officials are giving the legislation mixed reviews.

No one argues with the premise that parents should be aware of their children's behavior and get involved with the solution to Lewis and Clark County's underage drinking problem.

"I think it's tremendously important that parents are involved in their children's lives," said Dick Meeker, chief juvenile probation officer for the county.

However, critics of the law wonder if a court order is really the proper method of achieving that goal.

"I can't make an order I can't enforce," said City Court Judge Myron Pitch recently, explaining that he doesn't think he has any legal jurisdiction over the actions of the parents of children who violate the state's drinking laws.

The truth of the matter is that Lewis and Clark County appears to be keeping pace with other large Montana counties for the number of minor in possession (MIP) cases that its courts are processing.

Because the Montana Board of Crime Control began compiling that data only recently, and then only in communities receiving grant money through the BOCC, no hard and fast statistics exist to back up that claim.

However, to illustrate what the BOCC knows, between July 2003 and June 2004, the Kalispell Police Department wrote 537 MIP tickets and

Friendly's to card everyone

By **CARDLYNN BRIGHT**
IR Staff Writer

Officials from Friendly's Sinclair on 11th Avenue say the locally owned business prides itself on living up to its name.

However, employees there are taking new measures to show that the business is extremely unfriendly to underage drinkers.

According to manager Rob Escovedo, store owners are attempting to lower the boom on minors who attempt to buy alcohol at their business by carding everybody, regardless of age.

"It's a pretty drastic step, but we think it's pretty necessary," he said.

Escovedo said the motivation behind the all-encompassing policy is twofold.

First, it throws up roadblocks for minors who want to illegally purchase

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More MIP, page 10A

MIP

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Police Department wrote 537 MIP tickets and the Billings Police Department wrote 560, according to BOCC records.

In comparison, clerks at Helena City Court processed a total of 732 MIP cases in 2004, up from the 593 such cases that were filed the previous year.

Staff members at Lewis and Clark County Justice Court witnessed a similar increase. In 2004, they processed 342 MIP cases as compared with 290 the previous year.

Both courts clearly get a lot of business from juveniles who choose to consume alcohol, but the judges in those courts deal with them in different manners.

Pitch said he never opposed the overall intent of the legislation passed in 2003 — to stiffen the legal consequences for minors caught consuming alcohol.

However, he stated up front that he wouldn't be ordering the parents of children convicted of MIPs to attend counseling because he didn't believe in the constitutionality of that aspect of the MIP law.

In fact, Pitch said he hoped that someone would appeal the law to the Montana Supreme Court so that judges could get some direction from the higher judicial body. To Pitch's knowledge, that challenge has yet to be issued.

Jewell, on the other hand, believes it's his duty to carry out the laws created by the legislature. If the law comes under fire, he said he'll change

his methods as needed.

The judge doesn't know how many times he has ordered parents to attend the MIP classes with their children.

In addition, Jewell has no idea how many parents have completed the sessions as ordered — he says it doesn't matter because the law provides no method for enforcing it if they don't.

In her duties as prevention specialist with Boyd Andrew Community Services, and coordinator of Boyd Andrew's MIP program, Tracy Moseman knows the value of early intervention when it comes to alcohol use by underage girls and boys.

She says she strives to ensure that children ordered to attend the six-hour MIP program as punishment for their first violation of the state's MIP law, don't wind up coming back for more intense counseling resulting from subsequent violations.

The class geared to first offenders is largely informational, Moseman said, with relatively little counseling. Classes for repeat offenders involve chemical dependency evaluations and associated treatment.

First offenders learn about the legal ramifications of violating the state's drinking laws, and explore the spiral of addiction that can be set into motion by alcohol abuse.

"We also talk about choices," Moseman said. "It's very rare we get a kid who hasn't been involved in some other kind of risky behavior associated with alcohol use."

Unprotected sex, drinking and driving and more potentially devastating behaviors go hand-in-hand with alcohol abuse, she explains.

Boyd Andrew typically serves about 120 first offenders each year through its MIP program, along with roughly 24 repeat offenders. During the school year, the school district administers a similar program, shouldering a significant portion of the load.

Since the MIP law was adjusted to allow judges to order parents to attend MIP classes with their children, about 100 parents have passed through the doors at Boyd Andrew for that reason, Moseman said. Of those parents who are ordered to participate in the program, roughly 70 percent comply, she said.

"Most of the parents are pretty resistant," she said. "The parents don't want to be here, but by the time they leave, they're saying, 'Boy, I wish we'd had this four years ago.'"

The parent component of the MIP program at Boyd Andrew is limited to two hours during which Moseman attempts to provide the adults with an assortment of tools to use in their effort to head off alcohol abuse in their children before it escalates.

For example, she suggests that parents avoid using cel-

lular phones to keep track of their children's whereabouts — a teenager on a cell phone can claim to be one place and really be another. "Land lines" are a better means to keep the lines of communication honest.

Moseman also encourages parents to let their children use them as a scapegoat when peer pressure becomes too difficult to bear. She explains that it's sometimes easier for a teenager to decline an invitation to a kegger by saying that he or she is grounded, than to admit to their friends that the situation makes them uncomfortable.

While parents and children do not attend the MIP classes together, input collected from both age groups by program coordinators is shared in an anonymous manner to create a better understanding of the concerns of everyone involved.

Moseman said the saddest scenarios to which she has been witness are cases in which young first offenders successfully complete the program, but their parents don't attend the portion geared to them.

Such behavior by the parents doesn't have an effect

on the children's completion of the course work in the court's eyes, but it's a sad situation nonetheless.

"If the parents don't come, it sends a message to the kids," Moseman said.

Moseman said she would like to see more parents take this type of interest in their children's mistakes and their efforts to make amends — that's what parenthood is all about.

"It would be nice if the enforcement piece (for the parents in the mip law) didn't have to be there," she said.

Moseman doesn't have any opinion about whether an enforcement component needs to be written into the mip law, but she points out that parents' liability for the children's choices do come into play as risky behavior

escalates.

Officials with county juvenile probation office take civil action to ensure that parents take an active role in their children's upbringing, but general that doesn't happen until juveniles find themselves entrenched in the court system.

Moseman is guarded her opinion of whether revision to the MIP law to parental involvement has been a success.

However, she said she encouraged by what she believes is a change in community's perception relating to the seriousness of the implications of undrinking in Lewis and Clark County.

Lottery Numbers

Montana Cash 16 - 22 - 27 - 32 - 36
 Hot Lotto 11 - 16 - 23 - 28 - 36 - Hot Ball: 19
 Power Ball 18 - 21 - 28 - 49 - 50 - Powerball: 16 - Power Play: 5
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