

## MAKE A CALL, MAKE A DIFFERENCE !

It's a fact. Texas leads the nation in then number of alcohol-related youth fatalities. In a continuing effort to target the problem of underage drinking in the State of Texas, the TABC has joined with the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office, the Texas Department of Transportation, Texans Standing Tall, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and law enforcement agencies across the state to unveil the Texas Underage Drinking Hotline. Citizens can call toll-free 1-888-THE-TABC 24- hours a day, seven days a week, to report underage drinking violations. "We want concerned citizens to use this line to report

incidents involving underage drinking at parties, adults illegally providing alcoholic beverages to minors and young people drinking and driving," says TABC Chief of Enforcement Greg Hamilton. To kick off the campaign, press conferences were held in South Texas, Houston, Laredo and El Paso. More than 200 billboards provided by the Eller Media Company, Reagan National

Advertising and Lamar Outdoor Advertising have been placed in various communities across the state. In addition, specially designed posters and business cards highlighting the toll-free number have been produced and distributed to high schools, colleges, universities and other law enforcement agencies throughout the state. "The goal is to get young Texans to take an active role in

combating illegal underage drinking and take the responsibility of reporting violations. In doing so, they may very well help save someone's life," notes Hamilton. The campaign represents a concerted effort by several community organizations, state agencies, law enforcement agencies and private entities to aggressively target the problems associated with underage drinking in Texas.



Representatives from the Eller Media Company, Texans Standing Tall, the City of Houston, the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office, MADD's Youth In Action and TABC pose for the unveiling of the first billboard announcing the Texas Underage Drinking Hotline in Houston. **(1-888-THE-TABC)**

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## It's A "Win-Win" Situation

**D**iscussion is currently underway with agency staff, seller/server schools and interested retailers concerning ways to improve the seller/server training system. Under consideration are ways to:

create a body of owners, operators and managers who are knowledgeable about and committed to the principles of responsible hospitality;

create a body of alcoholic beverage servers who are similarly knowledgeable, competent and committed, and;

promote an industry of trainers who not only provide appropriate information but do so through the use of

effective techniques presented by knowledgeable staff.

Everyone should recognize that appropriate and effective seller training benefits not only the immediate retailer or seller, but also the general public, law enforcement, alcoholic beverage regulators, liability insurers, public health officials, health care providers, citizen groups and members of the public who choose to drink.

Responsible alcoholic beverage service is a "win-win" situation for all involved, as public health is promoted by not serving alcoholic beverages to minors and intoxicated persons and preventing impaired driving. Additionally, business practices are improved in licensed establishments and liability exposure is reduced for licensees and

employees. The end result is that responsible service of alcoholic beverages improves the public's perception of the industry.

If you, as a retailer of alcoholic beverages, are not currently requiring your employees to be seller trained, please contact us and discuss the benefits of the program. Our web site (under Licensing and Compliance News), contains valuable information as well as a list of approved seller/server training schools.

We invite public input on the three areas of the seller/server program identified above and we need your help in developing and strengthening the seller/server training efforts. Comments may be sent to the Seller Training Section, TABC, P.O. Box 13127, Austin, Texas 78711.

## Administrator's Corner



**F**reddie Atkinson. Deborah Guinn. Sharon Wells. Sergeant Charlie Cloud. Most of you have never heard of these people. Yet, combined they bring a total of more than 70 years of professional experience with the TABC and years of service to the State of Texas. At our Commissioner's meeting last month, these employees were recognized by Chairman Allan Shivers, Jr. as our "Employees of the Year."

Freddie is a taxpayer compliance officer in our Ports of Entry program in Brownsville. For more than 20 years he has dutifully greeted and helped citizens who returned to Texas from Mexico with cigarettes or alcohol. Deborah is a clerk in our accounting area here at headquarters.

For more than 25 years she has offered her skills and commitment in handling all sorts of tasks. Last year alone, she data entered more than 53,000 cash receipts. Sharon is an administrative technician in our Fort Worth office. For more than 14 years she has interacted with our customers and employees and has garnered the respect of those around her. Charlie is a sergeant in Fort Worth. For more than 10 years he has exhibited unquestionable integrity and professionalism in enforcing the law.

These people were nominated by their fellow workers. Their careers span over untold experiences, challenges and accomplishments. Their commitment to public service and dedication to their profession warranted this recognition and we are proud to recognize these public servants and congratulate them on this occasion.

Increasingly, we are being asked to take stock of our initiatives in the area of customer service. Soon you will be asked to help us better define our efforts in this area and work with us in constructing a "Customer Service Compact." Very shortly we will begin the challenging task of preparing our strategic plan that will also give us an opportunity to assess our efforts in the area of customer service as well as serve as a good inventory of who we are as an agency and what we do.

People like Freddie, Deborah, Sharon and Charlie help us define the customer service standards that we want to develop and maintain. They have dedicated a good portion of their lives to helping the TABC be an effective state agency. We look forward to hearing from you and getting your input in shaping the future of our agency.

*Doyne Bailey*

# TASK FORCE EXPLORES "E-GOVERNMENT"

The 76<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature directed the Department of Information Resources (DIR) to form a task force to assess the current and future feasibility of conducting government transactions via the Internet. Known as the Texas E-Government Task Force, the group consists of representatives from various state agencies, local governments, businesses regulated by the State of Texas and three public members. It is required to conduct a demonstration project for online government transactions, along with a survey of state agencies and universities to determine opportunities and challenges for electronic government in Texas. A report of the group's findings will be published by November.

The demonstration project calls for the development of a framework for an electronic government business

portal and payment system through which the following types of transactions could be conducted:

- (1) the ability for state and local governments to send documents to members of the public and persons who are regulated by a state or local agency;
- (2) the ability for state and local governments to receive applications for licenses and permits and receive documents for filing from members of the public and persons who are regulated by a state agency or local government that, when a signature is necessary, can be electronically signed by the member of the public or regulated person; and
- (3) the ability for state and local government to receive required payments from members of the public and individuals who are regulated by a state agency or local

government.

A long term goal of this project is to provide a common business portal that will offer navigational services, mailing lists, bulletin services and other web-enabled information services. A portal is nothing more than a system of integrated programs to make it easier for a user to find information. It is simply a web site that offers a doorway into a world of information about a specific thing, such as Texas government information. The purpose is to create a sense of community for the user to make the user more comfortable about using the portal.

As the Task Force conducts its work and explores topics that may impact the TABC and the alcoholic beverage industry, future reports will be compiled to reflect these developments.

## THEY'RE DALLAS BOUND!

The City of Dallas will be the site of the Year 2000 gathering of the National Conference of State Liquor Administrators (NCSLA). Slated for June 4-8, this year's meeting is expected to draw more than 300 representatives from throughout the country. According to TABC Assistant Administrator Randy Yarbrough, the meeting will feature numerous professional development sessions, regional meetings, and general assemblies. "We'll be looking at various timely and important issues facing the alcoholic beverage industry, including the self-regulation of advertising in the alcohol industry, ethics considerations in the wine, beer and spirits industry and franchise protection or monopoly agreements,"



notes Yarbrough who serves as immediate past president of the NCSLA. Founded in 1934, one of the purposes of the association is to promote the enactment of the most effective and equitable types of state alcoholic beverage control laws.

Pictured above, (l.-r.) is Yarbrough with Pete Coors of Coor's Brewing who received an award from NCSLA last year in recognition of his company's efforts to promote responsible hospitality practices.

# IF YOU'RE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD...

**D**rop on by for a visit. We're talking about the world wide web neighborhood and, increasingly, it is no longer enough for state agencies to just have a presence on the super information highway via a site on the world wide web. Citizens are looking for more than just names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers. Agency web sites are being viewed as repositories for all sorts of valuable information that can be accessed literally 24x7x365.

Recently, our web site went through a major renovation. It now features all sorts of new items and fresh color schemes. New sections have been added with all sorts of information on the agency's programs, services and activities. The new look should be more "user-

friendly" and easier to navigate.

"We're currently averaging about 10,600 user sessions or about 203,000 page "hits" every month. By far, one of our most popular areas is our

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*Agency web sites are being viewed as repositories for all sorts of valuable information that can be accessed literally 24x7x365.*

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Career Opportunities section that gets quite a bit of activity," says Webmaster Gary Henderson.

So the next time you're looking for some excise tax rates, a list of TABC-

approved Seller/Server Training Schools, a wet/dry county map, a list of expired, canceled or suspended licenses and permits by county or an update on some of our educational initiatives, just drop by for a visit. You can easily find us at:

<http://www.tabc.state.tx.us>. Got some questions or comments for our webmaster? Well, you can reach him at: [webmaster@tabc.state.tx.us](mailto:webmaster@tabc.state.tx.us).

"In a way, many of the visits to our web site are basic telephone calls or letters our staff do not have to answer so our active presence on the world wide web is really a cost effective effort. We look forward to working with our customers in enhancing and expanding our service delivery via this avenue," notes Administrator Dooyne Bailey.

## All About Importation Limits

**D**uring the last legislative session the Legislature amended the Texas Tax Code in two ways that affected the taxation and importation of cigarettes. First, the legislature mandated that tax must be collected on all cigarettes brought into the state. This repealed our previous policy of allowing up to 200 cigarettes per person to be imported without taxation. Second, the tax code was amended to forbid the importation of any cigarettes that did not bear the warning labels required by federal law, or that bore labels indicating that the cigarettes were intended for export and not for sale inside the U.S.

In October of last year a lawsuit was filed in federal district court in Laredo, challenging enforcement of these provisions. The plaintiff in that

action contended that the new law conflicted with relevant federal law. In November, the district judge entered an injunction forbidding enforcement of these tax code provisions during the pendency of the lawsuit. Under the terms of the injunction it was again possible to import up to 200 cigarettes per person without taxation.

On February 1, 2000 Judge

Kazen dismissed the lawsuit and thereby vacated the injunction. This means that tax must be paid on all cigarettes brought into the state. However, no package of cigarettes may be brought into the state if it does not bear the surgeon general's warnings required by federal law, or if the package labeling indicates that it was not intended for import into, or sale in, the U.S.

### CAN WE COUNT ON YOU?

**I**n keeping with an unprecedented promotional and public awareness campaign targeting the upcoming 2000 Census, Secretary of State Elton Bomer is heading a state agency outreach campaign to help achieve a complete census count of all people in Texas. Census 2000 data will affect a number of government functions and programs ranging from apportionment and redistricting to funding. The TABC will join in the campaign by having field offices and headquarters serve as dissemination points for census materials and promoting participation by employees and agency customers.



**I**t started out as a reckless driver. Perhaps it could be a possible DWI. The end results were considerably more dramatic. While working in Del Rio, Agents Robert Reyes and Robert Saenz observed a brown pickup truck occupied by two males being driven in an extremely reckless manner down a rural road. After trying to execute a traffic stop, the agents realized that the occupants of the vehicle they were pursuing had no intentions of stopping. After a brief chase, the occupants of the truck suddenly stopped their vehicle and decided to flee on foot. After yet another brief chase, the suspects were apprehended and taken into custody. Then came the big surprise. While inspecting the suspects' vehicle, the agents found what turned out to be more than 300 pounds of marijuana packaged into 22 tightly wrapped bales. The street value of the confiscated marijuana was nearly \$250,000! Agents Reyes and Saenz worked with DEA and US Customs officials on the case. The two suspects were indicted by a Federal grand jury and now face up to 25 years in prison in addition to hefty fines.



## TOWARDS INCREASED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

*What are we doing well that we should keep on doing? What are we not doing well that we should stop doing? What should we start doing that we aren't doing now?*

**C**ustomer service. A lot of people talk about it. A lot of people write about it. Increasingly, a lot of people are hearing about it. The 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature adopted legislation directing state agencies to develop customer service standards and implement customer satisfaction assessment plans. Under this initiative, each state agency is required to appoint a customer relations representative who is responsible for coordinating the agency's customer service standards and establishing the agency's "Compact With Texans."

The overall process starts with the identification of an agency's customers. Based on a prioritized inventory of agency customers, agencies are directed to begin evaluating agency service quality and assessing customer satisfaction via the use of surveys or focus groups. Customers will be asked to assess

such areas as staff courtesy, handling of complaints, accessibility to a toll-free telephone number, service timeliness, use of agency Internet site, use of printed information and agency facilities.

A key element of this legislation centers on the development of a "Compact with Texans" which defines customer service standards and objectives for complaint handling, wait times and other agency functions. Agencies with web sites are required to publish their "Compact" on their site. The TABC's "Compact" will also offer information on licensing and compliance procedures, description of services offered through each division and general information on the agency's programs, services and activities.

"We are working hard to create exceptional customer service standards," notes Administrator

Doyme Bailey. Claire Myers, a member of the Executive staff, has been appointed as the agency's customer relations representative and will be responsible for coordinating the agency's activities in this area. While the TABC has extensively used customer surveys in the past, both in the Enforcement and Licensing and Compliance Divisions, this new initiative will provide an added opportunity for the agency to more fully assess its customer service efforts and better define its customer base. In future issues of the newsletter, we will report on the progress being made in this area and solicit reader input. If you have any questions or suggestions, contact Claire Myers at 512/206-3347 or [c.myers@tabc.state.tx.us](mailto:c.myers@tabc.state.tx.us). We thank you for your input. And by the way, we would like to hear from you regarding the three questions noted above.

## You Asked . . . questions about alcoholic beverage regulations

**Where can I get an alcohol permit in order to sell beer and wine? What type of license do we need to include alcoholic beverages in a gift basket business we are planning to start? What steps are necessary to apply for a full liquor license for a bar in the State of Texas?**

Questions of this nature come in daily via telephone, e-mail, regular mail and from citizens who walk into our offices. Well, relief may be on the way. We're in the process of printing up a revised version of the booklet entitled "*Instructions For Applicants of an Alcoholic Beverage License or Permit.*" This instructional publication offers invaluable information on the general process of applying for a license or permit. Along with a new, simplified application form, we have also eliminated the need for large amounts of attachments as well as procedures not

required by statute. We encourage people to contact our local field offices or our Licensing Department in headquarters for additional information or to answer any questions they might have. The booklet will also be available via our web site.

**Can you tell me at what age someone can work in a liquor store?**

To work in a package store, a person must be 21 years of age. To work as a clerk at a place with an off-premise beer or off-premise beer/wine permit there is no age limit. At a wine only location you must be 16. At a mixed beverage or wine/beer on-premise or beer on-premise location, you must be 18.

**Allan Shivers, Jr., Chairman  
Martha Dickie, Commissioner  
John T. Steen, Jr., Commissioner  
Doyne Bailey, Administrator**

The *TABC Today* is an external publication of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission. We welcome comments, suggestions and/or questions from our readers. To report a possible violation of the Alcoholic Beverage Code, call toll-free 1-888-THE-TABC (Voice/TDD).

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