

New legislature enacts harsher MIP punishments

Jessie Gasch

Assistant News Editor

Incoming freshmen and all college students across the state have just one week to prepare for new, more stringent underage drinking laws.

Missouri Senate Bill 402, which becomes a law Aug. 28, modifies six areas of current substance abuse laws. These changes provide harsher punishments for house party hosts, minors who possess alcohol and distributors of fake identification.

Joan Masters, coordinator for Partners in Prevention, the Missouri university partnership that is distributing information on the new law, said the minor in possession by consumption possibility mostly could affect minors who publicize their drunken state.

"If they do something to draw attention to themselves or talk to a police officer in a disrespectful way, not only are they going to receive consequences, they're going to get an MIP," she said. "The police aren't going to say, 'Oh, you all look young, get into a row and let's breathe you.'"

According to a bill summary published by the Missouri Senate, the new law "provides that any person under the age of 21, who purchases or attempts to purchase, or has in his or her possession, any intoxicating liquor is guilty of a misdemeanor. This act provides that a minor is also guilty of a misdemeanor for a 'minor in possession' if he or she is 'visibly intoxicated' or has a detectable blood alcohol content of .02."

"We're simply trying to reduce underage drinking in Missouri," said Missouri Senate president pro-tem Michael Gibbons (R-St. Louis County), the sole sponsor of Bill 402. "It's a problem that's caused a lot of injury and death, auto accidents, [and] assaults. We want to take a more comprehensive stance."

He said an important aspect of the bill was increased liability for adults who host house parties.

"By penalizing adults who host underage drinking parties, even if you hold the event and don't take an active role, we close a loophole," Gibbons said.

He said he foresaw no issues in the interpretation of the law, including the phrase "visibly intoxicated."

"Law officers seem to get the job done on DWIs," Gibbons said. "They have a well-established series of field sobriety tests that measure an ability to maneuver around."

Kirksville police chief Jim Hughes said the law has the potential to have a significant impact on the Truman community.

"I really am concerned that some students this year won't know about these new laws," Hughes said. "They can incur some pretty significant legal consequences."

He said break-ups of house parties and other alcohol-related incidents made up a considerable part of KPD's workload.

"I think there's a misunderstanding on the part of the students that it's something the police like doing, but there's only so many times you enjoy getting yelled at or getting thrown up on your shoes," Hughes said.

It would take a while before the KPD had a good feel for the new laws, Hughes said.

"When the legislature passes laws, there's a shaking-out process," he said. "Very rarely can you think of everything when you enact a law, so that's something that will be happening over the next few months."

However, the best deterrent against underage drinking is not strict legal consequences, Hughes said.

"From my experience, it is a university who is willing to sanction the student for behavioral violations," he said. "A university who is willing to hold the student responsible for their off-campus behavior."

The explanatory Partners in Prevention pamphlet is available at <http://www.mssu.edu/security/alcohol.html>.



Nicole Meltabarger/Index

Kirksville Police Chief Jim Hughes works in his office after appearing in a court trial Thursday afternoon.

Police forces work together

Amanda Boyle
Staff Reporter

Whether on- or off-campus, students can feel good knowing two police departments are working for their safety.

Working in a college town was an important factor when Kirksville Police Chief Jim Hughes agreed to take on the position for the Kirksville Police Department a little more than two years ago. Hughes spent his first 25 years as a police officer working in Boulder, Colo., where he retired as Deputy Chief of Police.

"College communities have a certain vitality, a certain energy that other towns just don't have," he said. "I enjoy working around people with those types of qualities."

Hughes said as Truman students move back in town, the population of Kirksville increases by almost a third, and therefore, the department's call load increases. He said one of the primary enforcement matters the department deals with involve what he calls "quality of life issues." These include loud parties, underage alcohol use and drug use, he said.

While Hughes said he enjoys being involved with Truman students, the only negative side of being an officer in a college town is the apparent misunderstanding between the students and the police.

"Some students think we enjoy going to the large parties and writing tickets while really nothing could be farther from the truth," Hughes said. "My point is that when we come knocking on the door at 2 a.m. to discuss whatever 'quality of life' issue brought us there, we'd much rather be somewhere else. However, when we get a call of criminal activity, there is the community expectation that we go and handle it."

Another problem is theft. He said students are often the victims of theft. Usually belongings are stolen from unlocked cars, apartments or are unsecured items like unlocked bikes or lost items, Hughes said.

Tom Johnson, director of the campus Department of Public Safety, said most of the crimes are "crimes of opportunity."

Johnson worked for the police department at the University of Iowa for 18 years before coming to Truman two years ago and said many times first-year college students are not used to being away from home where their things are always safe. Many times, he said, they forget to lock their dorms or they leave things unattended. He said students who aren't used to living away from home can face other problems as well if they are not careful and are not aware of their surroundings.

Junior Jill Moeller said when she first arrived she felt a little uneasy because she was in a new place, but she soon felt just as safe as at home.

"I have never felt threatened here at all," Moeller said. "It always seems like there are people around and even if there aren't, our campus is small, so you never have to walk very far."

In addition, DPS provides various security services to make sure students feel safe on campus, Johnson said. One example is the emergency phones that are placed throughout campus and lit by blue lights. When a call is made on the emergency phone, it goes directly to the dispatcher, who sends a DPS officer to help. Johnson said it generally will take an officer two to three minutes to arrive. He said DPS also provides an escort service to anyone who does not feel comfortable walking across campus alone.

Over the summer, DPS received a report of a rape on campus, Johnson said. He said the victim was a student, and within 24 hours DPS had arrested the suspect, a local man.

Johnson said that to stay safe, students need to constantly be aware of their surroundings.

"If something feels unsafe to you, it probably is unsafe. You need to trust your instincts," Johnson said.

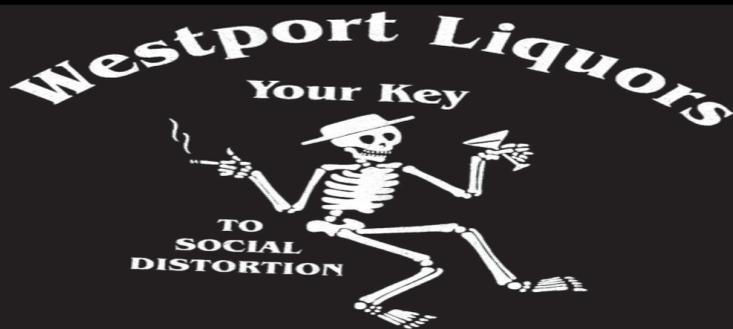
The Kirksville Police Department is very involved with DPS at Truman, Johnson said. Even though each are their own state-commissioned police departments and each have their own jurisdictions, Johnson said he talks to Hughes on a daily basis.

"It is just by the nature of law enforcement [that we talk]," Johnson said. "Things go on in the city that affect Truman and vice versa."

"If something feels unsafe to you, it probably is unsafe. You need to trust your instincts."

Tom Johnson
Director of the Department of Public Safety

Locally owned.
Locally operated.



501 S. Osteopathy
660-665-1455

"We have it all...from milk, to condoms!"

WELCOME BACK STUDENTS!

New low prices on all beer and smokes.
Don't forget to check out our close-out selection!

Check out our back-to-school specials!

24 Pk. Natty Light **\$9.69**

Milwaukee Best **\$9.69**

**Booze. Hooch. Suds-N-Spirits. Chips.
Dip. Cameras. Condoms.
You want it? We got it.**

When you make a purchase from Westport with a credit card, it will appear on your statement as "Westport Package and School Supplies."

Best selection in town!

SALE!

Captain Morgan Specials

750 mL **\$11.19**

375 mL **\$5.99**

1.75 Liter **\$20.98**

New! Captain Morgan Tattoo

750 mL **\$12.99**

All Boones flavors \$2.19

All Smirnoff flavors 750 mL \$10.99

Mix-a-Six: Mix and match a six pack of special import and domestic beers.
Only \$6.99!

New! Tarantula 4 pk. \$4.70