

Agencies team up in DUI sweep

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By Guen Tucker-Smith
Staff Writer

On Friday, Sept. 14, uniformed Oklahoma Highway Patrol (OHP) troopers entered Wranglers, a bar west of Antlers on Hwy 3. While walking through, the troopers said talked with several patrons who had an odor of alcohol on their breath and appeared to be under the age of 21.

Less noticeable, were the plain-clothed troopers who had been inside the bar investigating reports of underage drinking in the establishment.

The special emphasis operation was a cooperation between the Pushmataha County Sheriff's Department, District 17 Drug Task Force (DTF) and the OHP.

"One of my goals is to curb underage drinking," said Push County Sheriff Jim Duncan who is a strong supporter of the Pushmataha County Turning Point Coalition and Project Under 21.

The operation covered the entire county and resulted in numerous arrests for charges such as DUI, public intoxication, drug possession, person under 21 consuming beer and transporting an open container.

Duncan said the operation was directed at all traffic violations and intoxication offenses. "We want people to follow the rules," he said, and then added that one of his biggest concerns is the effect of alcohol on kids.

"I'm doing everything I can to curb drinking under 21," the sheriff stated. He said that citing those who sell alcohol to minors is one way to achieve that end-result. Duncan said he appreciates other agencies such as OHP and DTF who are willing to come in to Push County in a joint effort to enforce these laws.

Undercover troopers reported that on Friday night they were monitoring the employee at the front door, who failed to properly check identification on people entering.

During an April interview, Paul Kozel, owner of Wranglers, told The Antlers American that half of his customers are under the age of 21. He stated that his 16-year-old son works the door collecting the cover charge and checking I.D. Kozel said that he monitors under-21s with a personalized stamp system to ensure those patrons do not consume alcohol.

Among other Wranglers patrons, two customers, ages 18 and 20 years old, and several 17-year-old customers were arrested by troopers on alcohol-related charges.

Assistant District Attorney Larry Grant said he is reviewing the full investigative files and will consider what, if any, charges will be brought against Kozel.