Bars asked to curb ‘irresponsible drinking’

By MIKE DUNNE
Advocate staff writer

LSU campus area bars and lounges will be asked this week to discontinue events that encourage student drinker to drink excessively.

Representatives of bars will meet on Tuesday with alcohol education counselors and the city-parish Alcoholic Beverage Control Board in hopes of getting an area agreement against sponsorship of events that invite mass consumption of alcohol.

“I want to stop them from doing the ‘til-you-drop thing,” said Marcus Wright, ABC Board director. He said the meeting will be attended by 12 campus area bar managers, including LSU alcohol education counselors Nancy Schulte and others in an effort to work out some agreements.

Tops on the list to be eliminated are drinking contests, Wright said. “They have fraternity against fraternity and sorority against sorority to see who can drink the most. It promotes overdrinking,” Wright said.

The bar owners have an interest in discontinuing such events, Wright said.

“It’s not economically advantageous. I think they will quit doing it as a practice,” he said.

However, the key will be to get all of the campus area bars to sign the same line. “We’ve got to get all of them to do it because if it is the same business that is being competitive,” Wright said.

If their bar doesn’t cooperate, others may feel pressure to not go along also, he said.

“I’ve gotten a lot of cooperation out of them. They are concerned themselves with keeping kids out of the trouble. We’re going to talk about ways they can do that,” Wright said.

Another target is “eliminating beat-the-clock specials where you have so much cover charge and drink all the draft beer you can for a couple hours,” he said.

“Almost there are some students out there who wouldn’t drink like that unless the economic opportunity is afforded to them,” Wright said.

From a few of the owners that I have talked to, all of them agree. They are willing to eliminate these kinds of specials,” he said.

Most managers agree the specials promote irresponsible drinking.

“She (Schulte) asked me to assist her in this and I know most of the campus area lounge owners, professionally and personally, and they have told me they would try to cooperate with us in any way they can.

“They’re tired of it. They feel they have gotten unjustly hit by the alcohol industry and they want to get rid of the negative image they have in the community,” Wright said.

Wright said he hopes the meeting will open the way for bars to find an alcohol use through campus lounges.

“I can enforce all day, but education will go a lot further,” he said.

“A lot of students don’t know from a health standpoint that they are really putting their health and safety in danger by drinking irresponsibly like this,” Wright said.

National statistics show almost 50% of the traffic-related fatalities that occur from alcohol are in the 18-25 age group. Promotions of responsible drinking in the campus area can really help, Wright said.

He said he and J.B. Dilley of the DTF Information Program hope to eventually bring an education program to campus area bars.

“There are 30,086 students here and a few bars in the area. If B.J. and I could get that program here, we have a potential of educating close to 30,000 students in the age group that have the problem of drinking with alcohol. If we can show them alternatives, the lounge owners and the bartenders, I think they would participate in the program and help us,” he said.

“You can come up with all the laws in the world, but the key is education,” he said.