

THE
MUNICIPAL
LIQUOR STORE

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A Letter to Minnesota Retailers
From Southern Wine & Spirits
Chairman & CEO Harvey R. Chaplin

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ON THE COVER

On pages 7 & 8 is a letter from Southern Wine and Spirits Chairman and CEO Harvey R. Chaplin concerning their Minnesota operation, including their support of MMBA's position against Wine in Grocery and Sunday Sales legislation.

The letter also indicates a "substantial contribution to MMBA."

To clarify, they have become a Silver Plus member.

It is also important to remember MMBA's endorsement policy:

MMBA often receives requests from vendors to formally endorse products and services. In return, MMBA members would be offered financial discounts, added / special services etc.

MMBA welcomes and encourages vendor participation in association activities for the purpose of developing "win-win" relationships. Vendor participation includes MMBA Commercial Membership, magazine advertising etc.

However, vendor involvement and any resulting actions are offered with the mutual understanding that MMBA does not formally endorse any product, service or company.

From time to time, MMBA representatives may suggest or encourage members to consider a product, service or company - but it is done without formal endorsement, sanction, ratification, recommendation or seal of approval.

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MMBA President's Message



Tom Agnes
President

Sunday sales has been a very hot topic the past couple of weeks.

One of the arguments against the proposal is the added cost of staying open, without the resulting additional sales.

Below is from Edina city manager Scott Neal on how this proposal would specifically and negatively impact his municipal liquor operation:

There's an annual discussion going on right now at the State Legislature around the question of whether the good citizens of Minnesota should be allowed to purchase beer, liquor and wine on Sundays. The State Legislature sets the rules for such important life choices as this, so it's only natural that they study the issue carefully, hear from all sides on the matter and then make a rational decision that's good for all concerned, right? Right..

When I first moved here I thought it was odd that cities with municipal liquor stores would partner with private liquor stores to fight efforts to allow Sunday sales. Why? Why wouldn't we want our stores to be able to sell on Sundays? Sure, employees aren't going to like it, but isn't one of our key objectives in the liquor business to make money, and wouldn't we make more money if we could be open on Sundays and sell more product?

This is the third municipal liquor city that I've managed in Minnesota. I'm not a brilliant business mind, but I know a thing or two about the liquor business, so let's take a look at the numbers in Edina to see if the Sunday sales idea makes any sense for us.

City staff project our 2011 total sales at

our three municipal retail stores to be \$13,367,072. We project our total 2011 operating expenses at \$12,338,481. That means our projected operating income for 2011 will be just over one million dollars at \$1,028,591.

In 2011, our stores will be open 307 days. We will be closed on 58 days. 52 of those 58 days are Sundays. 6 of those 58 days are holidays. In examining the hypothetical impact of the proposed legislation, I will assume that we would be open 359 days and closed 6 days in 2011.

Our 2011 projected sales per day is \$43,540. Our 2011 projected operating costs per day are \$40,190. If you do the math, the difference between these two numbers multiplied by the number of days we will be open in 2011 (307) will equal our projected net operating income for 2011: \$1,028,591.

If the Legislature changes the law on Sunday sales, it will be difficult for us not to be open on Sundays, so I will assume in this hypothetical that our stores would be open for 52 additional days in 2011. If we further assume that our projected 2011 daily operating costs of \$40,190 would not be materially different on Sundays, we would add 52 more days of operating costs at \$40,190/day to our annual operating cost totals. This would increase our projected annual operating costs in 2011 by \$2,089,729 from \$12,338,481 to \$14,428,210; an increase of 16.9%.

On the revenue side, if we were open on Sundays and wanted to keep our projected net operating income the same (\$1,028,591), we would need total gross sales of at least \$15,456,801, which is an amount equal to the sum of our projected Sunday sales scenario operating expenses of \$14,428,210 + \$1,028,591. This gross sales goal would require an increase in our sales of \$2,089,729; and increase of 15.6%.

So, if we want to stay exactly where we are right now, fiscally, in the Sunday sales scenario we would need to hold

down the increase in our projected operating expenses to 16.9% or less and increase our projected gross sales by at least 15.6%. Is that possible? Maybe, but the challenge is steep.

In 2010 our total customer count for our three store operation was 506,410. Our total sales were \$12,862,719. Average sales per customer then were \$25.39. For the sake of this example, if we hold our average sales per customer steady at \$25.39, it would take an annual increase of 102,365 in our 2011 customer count, an increase of 20%, in order to create the \$15,456,801 we need to generate our projected \$1,028,591 net annual operating income. If we work the equation the other way, keeping the customer count steady at 506,410, we would need a 20% increase in our average sales/customer, from \$25.39/customer to \$30.52/customer) in order to gross \$15,456,801 in order to net \$1,028,591.

Getting back to my previous question: Is it possible to maintain our current level of net operating income in Sunday sales scenario? Short answer: I doubt it. The likelihood that we will experience an increase in our annual operating costs under this scenario of something in the neighborhood of 16.9% is high. The likelihood that we will experience an increase in our annual gross sales under this scenario of something in the neighborhood of 15.6% is, in my view, low. I do not doubt that we will experience an increase in gross sales, but I do not see any really evidence that would support an increase of close to 15.6%.

Those are the numbers I'm looking at. If I owned a liquor store in Stillwater, Winona or Moorhead, I am sure that I'd see this situation differently. But I don't. My interpretation of the numbers is that the Sunday sales scenario is not good for the bottom line of the City's municipal liquor operation. I could be missing something here, but in the end, here's how I boil it down: good for consumers, but bad for business.



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March 8, 2011

HARVEY R. CHAPLIN
CHAIRMAN & CEO

Dear Valued Minnesota Retail Customer,

From the very first days that my son and Southern's President, Wayne Chaplin, and I discussed the opportunity of establishing a world-class distribution company in the State of Minnesota, we were excited. We knew that by bringing Southern's 43 years of experience as an independently-owned and family-managed company as well as our leading in-market capabilities to bear in Minnesota, we would do great things with both our supplier and retail customer partners.

Almost immediately after Southern's announcement of its partnership with a long-standing, 26 year Minnesota distributorship, J.J. Taylor, we began to receive a traditional, Minnesota warm welcome from members of the local alcoholic beverage community comprising of retailers, suppliers and consumers alike. The central themes we heard included what I call the "Three C's" of Choice, Competition and Customer Focus.

It is Southern's embrace of these principles—not its size—that has allowed us to grow from a small Florida wholesaler in 1968 to one now servicing over 185,000 customers from Maine to Miami to Maui and now to Minnesota. We at Southern are excited that our company is now fully operational in Minnesota with a 100% Minnesota-based staff – led by a fellow Minnesotan, our General Manager, Mr. Daniel Daul.

Recently, having been approached directly by a number of industry members with regards to our intentions as to Sales to Off-Premise Chains as well as having received disappointingly uninformed correspondence, espousing views attributable to us not grounded in fact, and challenging our ability to service the retail trade - we now welcome this opportunity to share again our comments on these important issues, this to ensure that the Minnesota retail trade is clear as our intentions.

In fact, over the past few months, our local management team has met directly with numerous On-Premise and Off-Premise accounts as well as the MLBA and MMBA leadership to answer their questions. In so doing we reaffirmed our positions on all relevant issues including Sunday Sales and Wine in the Grocery Channel. Our statements and behavior relative to these issues have been clear and consistent. In fact, Southern Wine and Spirits-Minnesota contribute more to the MLBA than any other Minnesota beverage alcohol wholesaler and have also made a substantial contribution in support of the MMBA as well.

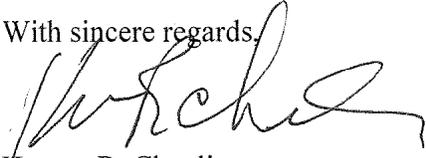
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With that said, I would like to make it completely clear that Southern Wine & Spirits of Minnesota not only supports the efforts of your leading trade associations, but more importantly, specifically stands by the vast majority of the retail trade's positions on such topics as prohibiting Sunday sales and the prohibition of wine sales in grocery chains.

Irrespective of the geographic market place served, Southern's goal as wholesalers is a relatively simple one: Bringing success to all of its trading partners—retail customers and suppliers alike. We strive to accomplish this by delivering first class sales, marketing and customer service with a dedicated staff of professionals whom we expect to work harder and smarter than the competition.

In Conclusion, we believe that our company's words and record speak for itself, and it is in that light that we look forward answering any questions that you may have on all relevant industry topics. Until then and on behalf of our entire Minnesota-based staff of professionals, I look forward to working with and growing our businesses successfully together. I can be reached at the above mailing or e-mail addresses—and of course any of our local leaders also stand ready to answer your questions.

With sincere regards,

Harvey R. Chaplin
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer

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Getting Repeat Customers in Your Bar

By BarBusinessOwners.com

Attracting new customers is often the major focus of advertising and marketing for most bars. Because the flow of new customers is vital to the long term health of the business, it tends to get the bulk of resources and attention. As a result, many bar owners and managers don't place a major priority, complete with action plans and execution, to getting their existing customer base to return again and again.

We think this is because they don't understand the huge financial benefits repeat customers represent.

Why Focus on Repeat Customers?

A research study focused on repeat customers concluded that an increase of customer visits by only 5% results in an increase in profitability of at least 25%. Take a moment and digest these numbers.

Without significant effort or cost just about every bar can take the necessary steps to increase repeat patronage by 5%. Especially when they see the amount they can take to the bottom line by doing so.

Another research study on the restaurant business revealed the following:

- 77% of owners/managers surveyed said customer loyalty programs helped drive business
- 90% of those surveyed said loyalty programs give them a competitive advantage

In addition, getting existing customers who know and like your bar to return again is far easier than finding and attracting new customers. It's also far less expensive.

Repeat customers who know and like

your bar also typically spend more per visit and are more likely to refer their friends and family.

Not to be overlooked is how regulars make your bar more interesting. Regular customers give your bar personality, an identity, and make it a more comfortable place to hang out as well as a more enjoyable place to work. Regulars tend to interact in a more friendly way with your staff, helping to keep attitudes positive and morale higher.

Focusing on getting more repeat customers just makes sense in a number of ways. Let's dig a little deeper.

Know Your Outcomes

Once you make the commitment to getting more repeat business, you then need to know what exact results you should focus on.

Your possible outcomes include:

- more visits by your existing customers
- increased average ticket from existing customers
- a stronger positive identity to your bar from your existing customers
- a more profitable bar
- lower advertising and marketing costs per customer visit

Think thorough if you have another outcome you would like from getting more repeat customers. Whatever outcomes you choose, keep in mind that you can accomplish more than one at the same time. The more your outcomes you accomplish, the faster you'll increase your sales and profits.

Now that you are more aware of the importance of getting existing customers to return more often, and you know what specific results you want to achieve, the next step is to focus on how exactly you can reach these goals.

Specific Strategies That Work

Depending on the type of bar you operate, you may want to focus primarily on one strategy or roll out all of them. You know your bar better than anyone else and have a better idea on which ones are the most appropriate.

Bouncebacks

An excellent low cost way to promote repeat business is by using bounce back offers. A bounce back offer is a discount offer that is given to your customers at the conclusion of their visit that they can redeem on their next visit. Their future return visit is referred to as the "bounce back", hence the name.

Bounce back offers can be set up to only be redeemed during your slower times, giving you an opportunity to establish more customers when you need traffic the most, or they can be set up for any future visit without time limitations.

Most importantly, bounce back offers are very effective at getting your customers to patronize you more often, and can be rolled out very inexpensively, with almost no upfront marketing costs.

Customer Loyalty Program

A customer loyalty program is a program designed to reward your frequent customers. The rewards and how to get them can differ depending on the type of program, but the underlying theme is rewarding customers for returning to your bar and giving them incentive to come back again and again.

You can be sure that if you don't take every opportunity to bring customers back into your bar, you will lose some of the people that could have become

(Continued on page 12)



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regulars to the competition. Having an effective customer loyalty program turns the tables and gives you one more advantage over your competitors. People will come back to your bar because they see the benefits of their patronage with you.

Referral Customer Program

One of the best ways to encourage repeat business as well as attract new customers is right in your bar - your existing regular customers. If you ask and provide an incentive for them to do so, they will refer their friends to your bar.

In short, your regular customer base, who enjoy your bar and like going there, become part of your marketing department and approaches their friends to become customers of your bar. They pass on to some of their friends a gift certificate in an amount you choose, say for \$10 to \$20.

As a reward, your bar provides a future gift certificate to your best existing regular customers in a similar amount as a thank you for their business. This not only gets your existing customer to return in the future, it also employs the powerful law of reciprocity whereby your existing regular customers feel obligated to return your generosity by passing out your referral gift certificates to their friends.

Enhanced Customer Recognition

Often the best way to encourage customers to frequent your bar more often is by taking the extra effort to acknowledge, thank, and reward them when they return. We all want to feel special and appreciated and respond very favorably when someone, or a business, makes us feel wanted and liked.

Here are some ways you can raise the bar and provide enhanced customer recognition to your repeat customers.

Give Customers Extra Attention

Treat your repeat customers as VIPs whenever possible. This includes having your best staff members serve them,
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making sure to acknowledge and thank them for coming in, using their names, and having your manager stop by and thank them for coming in. Anything you can do to make them feel special will make your customers more loyal to your bar.

Make sure your staff interactions are sincere and not scripted. The “thank you” and “Thanks for coming in. We hope to see you real soon” greetings and farewells need to be genuine and meant.

Dazzle Them During and After Visit

Have a new beer on tap? Send a glass to your regulars in addition to the beer they ordered for them to try. Or bring out a portion of an appetizer with their regular appetizer order. Or create a special item that you can automatically send out to your regulars on occasion as a way of saying thank you.

For customers who have held a birthday, bachelor or bachelorette party, or company event at your bar, send out a thank you card, and anniversary card, or anything else you can think of a few weeks after the event. Just this little bit of acknowledgement will go along way in getting the customer to return again.

Invite your regulars to any special events or promotions before they are

advertised or made known to everyone. Many customers like to be part of a special “in” group and will love the special recognition you are giving them.

Collect Customer Information to Make Recognition Easier

As part of your repeat customer strategy, you need to have a way to collect contact information. This could be a fishbowl where customers register for a free birthday drawing to asking for birthday and anniversary dates when they fill out your customer loyalty card to placing a guest signup form when their check is presented asking for birthdates and anniversary dates.

Having this data will make it easier for your staff to recognize special dates and anniversaries for your repeat customers.

Train Your Staff to Focus on Repeat Customers

A key element of your repeat customer strategies is getting your staff trained and motivated so that they understand what to do, how to do it, the reason for doing it. Having your staff “buy in” to treating repeat customers extra special will greatly increase the effectiveness and consistency of your repeat customer emphasis.

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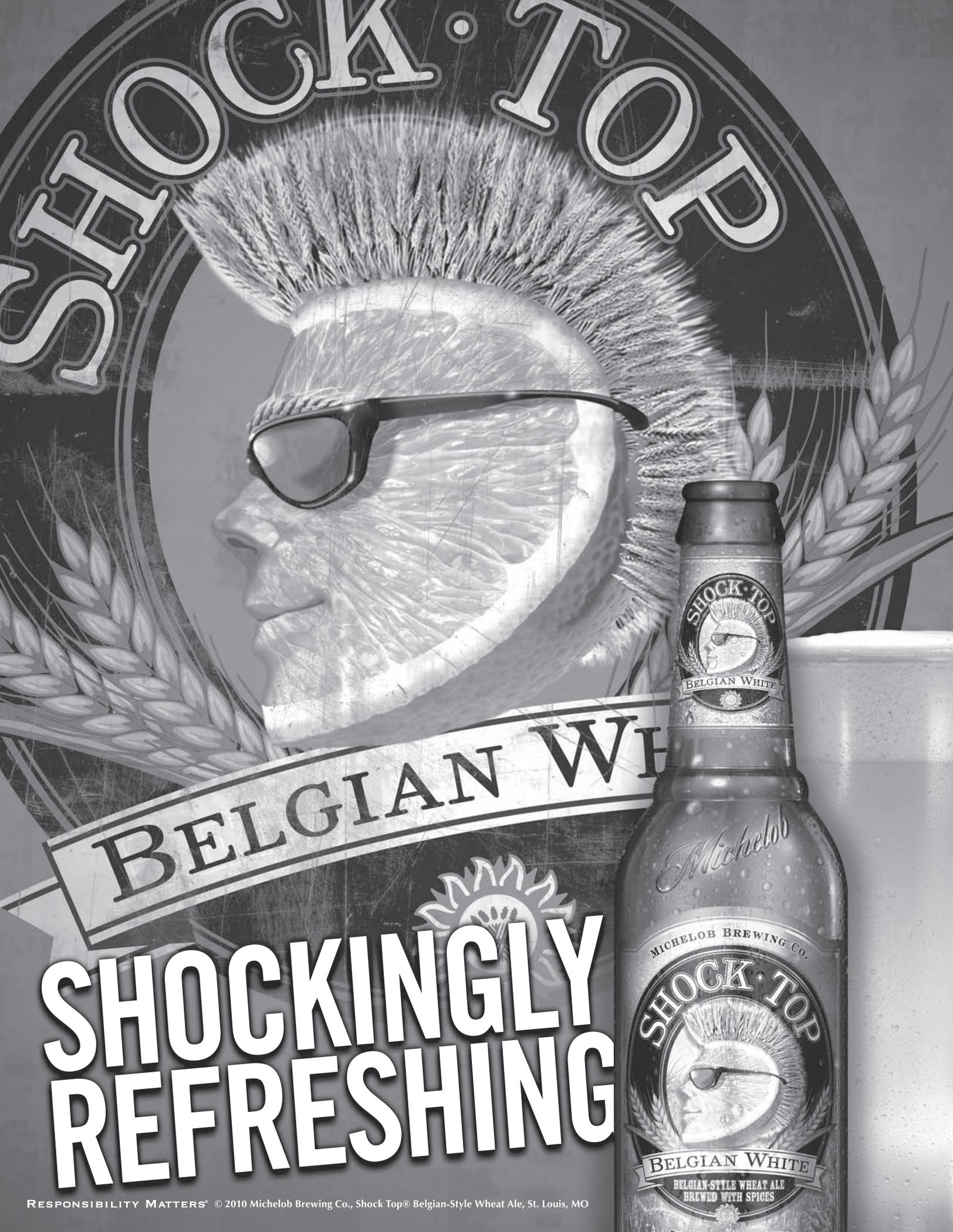


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Sunday Sales Wouldn't Mean More Money in Monticello

By Teri Willenbring,
Monticello Times

State lawmakers may soon vote to allow the sale of liquor on Sundays, a ban that some have claimed costs the state an estimated \$10 million in unrealized tax revenues.

Would it be a case of what's good for the state being good for Monticello? One would think so, especially since the town's sole liquor store, Hi-Way Liquors, is owned by the city. But local officials surprisingly aren't all that excited about the possibility of staying open on Sundays, and they don't feel it would produce any significant increase in tax revenue for the city.

"From a business perspective, I do not believe profits would increase," said Hi-Way Liquors Manager Randall Johnsen. "You hear the phrase 'stretching six days of sales over seven,' which means that you aren't

going to get another Saturday's worth of sales on Sunday."

Instead, Johnsen said, customers that would normally come in on Saturday to get supplies could choose to come in Sunday, essentially making it a wash.

In fact, city Finance Director Tom Kelly said the store could actually lose money if the state approves Sunday sales due to the additional labor and utility costs that come with being open an extra day.

Some city residents have long bemoaned the fact that there is no private competition in town for Hi-Way Liquors, but Kelly says residents cannot deny the positive impact the municipal store has on the city's funds - and its bottom line continues to grow.

Last year, the store reported a profit of \$365,161.34 after contributing (transferring) \$266,000 to other city funds.

"The liquor store is currently the biggest moneymaker for the city in term of dollars," Kelly said. "It is the only city operation that contributes funds to other activities." Currently, the city transfers \$250,000 into the street reconstruction fund to pay for the city's share of such projects instead of levying property taxes. The liquor store also sponsors the fireworks display at Riverfest each year.

The liquor fund also has helped finance the Monticello Community Center, the expansion of both the liquor store and the public works buildings, and the light post banners. In all, Kelly said, the store has contributed over \$9.2 million to city projects.

City Administrator Jeff O'Neill adds that liquor store funds benefited residents by allowing the city to move forward with projects it might otherwise not be able to afford.

"After TDS turned down the citizen request to provide fiber-based telecommunications for businesses and residents, I am fairly certain that liquor store funds were invested as seed money for funding the cost to study the feasibility of providing telephone, Internet and television services as a city operation," he said.

Those studies, O'Neill said, ultimately led to the conclusion that the phone, "future-proof Internet" and television could be provided to citizens at a cost below the rates provided by incumbent providers.

"This investment of funds resulted in a telecommunication savings to all citizens, with the actual drop ranging from 25 percent to 35 percent, which amounts to a savings in the hundreds of dollars per year for a household," he said.

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W.C.W

\$1000 Turns to \$2000 in Fergus Falls

Because Fergus Liquors was a top winner in the recent MMBA/ Coors Light Food Drive, a \$1000 check was recently presented to the Fergus Falls Food Shelf.

However, the contribution was doubled as the result of a matching grant program.

Congratulations to all!!



Pictured above are (l to r): Mark Baranczyk from MillerCoors, MMBA president Tom Agnes, Scott Morrissey and Rick Guggisberg from Coors distributor H. Boyd Nelson, Fergus Liquor manager Brian Olson and Gary Nelson from the Fergus Falls Food Shelf.

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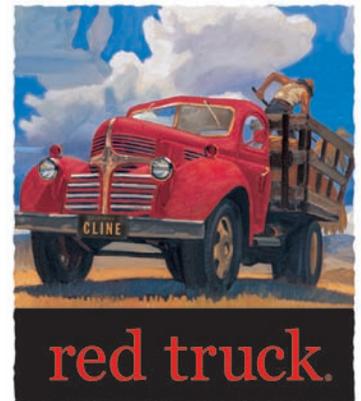
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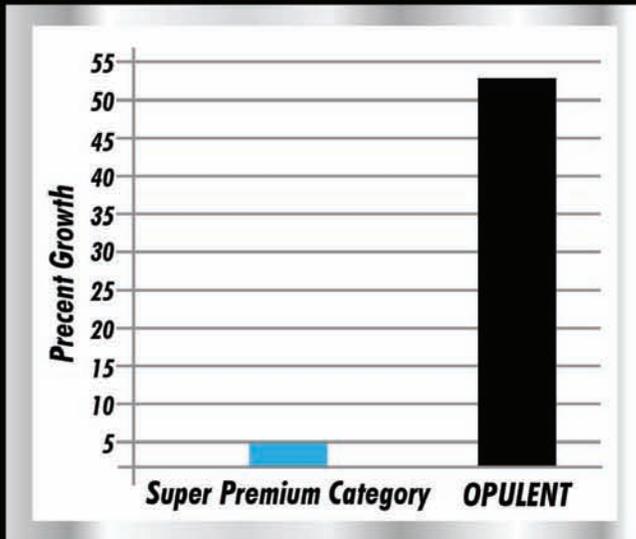
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