

Official Publication of the
Minnesota Municipal Beverage Association
Helping Members Succeed



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Benschoter



Sienna
Farrell



Camenae
Gustafson



Aiden
White

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MUNICIPAL LIQUOR STORE

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On the Cover

Congratulations 2024 MMBA Scholarship Winners!

Makenzie Benschoter will be attending the University of Minnesota Duluth as a Criminology major. Her mother Amber works at Blue Earth Wine & Spirits.

Sienna Farrell will be attending Central Lakes College majoring in Nursing or English. Her father Brian works at the Spirits of Nisswa.

Camena Gustafson will be attending North Dakota State University majoring in Food Science. Her mother Brenda works at Westbound Liquor in Elk River.

Aiden White will be attending Pine Technical College pursuing a Cyber Security career. His mother April works at Home Town Liquor in Braham.



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MMBA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**By Chris Arnold,
Bagley**

The election season has passed and most MMBA member cities will have new council members or mayor. For some, there will be the same council as before. In Bagley, I am getting a new mayor and one new council member. If I've learned one thing in 2024, council members and liquor committee members getting updated info from liquor management is a key factor in allowing the business to run more smoothly.

If they are not getting it from management, you can bet someone else is filling them in on their version and it probably isn't going to help the operation in the future. We as managers need to be the ones educating our elected officials, not leaving it up to other members of the city. I know for some this is hard. But all I can say is I was in your shoes and found the more meetings I attended the easier it got.

That said, I too have gotten relaxed and was told by my mayor I didn't need to attend all the meetings this year. Well that was a big mistake I don't ever plan on making again!!!

The politics of a municipal liquor operation is vastly difference than running a privately owned operation. A municipal operation has multiple bosses.

For some of us it's our liquor committee, for others we have to answer to the council as a whole. Oh yeah, let's not forget City Hall. But remember, they also often have to answer to the council as a whole.

This year is more critical than any other year for me to do an orientation with my new mayor and council member. I will educate them on what I do and how I do it. I will show them my daily, monthly and yearly numbers. I have a detailed spreadsheet for daily sales and my P&L's, which will come in very handy for these meetings.

I will also explain to them how my staff and I are ambassadors for the city to customers who are not residents. I will also show them my back room and order process. Of course I will also answer any questions or misconceptions they may have.

Please reach out to Paul or me if you need assistance in putting together an orientation plan for your operation.

I hope this article finds everyone well and you have a safe and happy holiday season.

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AWW A DAY IN THE LIFE OF HIRING EMPLOYEES



By Sam Keil
Aitkin Liquor

Here's what's out there folks!

Like a lot of you out there, finding staff hasn't been the easiest, especially the last few years (at least for me anyway.) Here's an interview I had recently ...

Tell me about your qualifications:

"I stocked shelves at the local grocery store, and I know booze."

Why do you want to work at Aitkin Liquor?

"No one else will hire me and I don't know why."
(You all will soon understand why!)

What interests you about this role?

"I need money to buy a new truck."
(OK, I guess there's some ambition then, right?)

What are your weaknesses?

As this person leans back and crosses their arms they respond, "My woman!"

I then asked them another question to clarify what I meant by weaknesses, and they respond:

"Yeah, my woman, whatever she wants, I'll do."

How do you respond to stress or change?

With the question I explained to them you cannot sell to intoxicated people and sometimes the intoxicated person can get quite defensive or feisty.

"Well, I took boxing, I'm not afraid to fight people."

Customer complaints?

Problem solved right?!?
(Palm forehead)

How do you work under pressure?

"I get done as fast as I can and then I'll go smoke."
(Effective and efficient. LOL)

The Real Kicker:

I recently started doing a test on the POS system during interviews to make sure the interviewee can figure out the simple task of functioning it and they can do SIMPLE math.

I accidentally rung up products that equaled to exactly \$117, to which I jokingly said, "Now if the customer gave you \$120 what would you give them for change?"

THEY DIDN'T KNOW!

They eventually got to an answer of \$13 dollars back to the customer.

Needless to say folks, he starts next week! ☺

Enjoy your week and good luck to you all out there!

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LUVERNE MUNICIPAL LIQUOR STORE COMPLETES REMODEL, IMPROVES FINANCES



By Lori Sorenson
Rock County Herald

The city of Luverne recently completed \$110,000 worth of remodeling and operating procedures that are improving the municipal liquor store's bottom line.

"With the implementation of changes by new management, we are on track to break the \$200,000 net profit threshold without significantly increasing our revenues," City Administrator Jill Wolf said.

She said the new point of sale system allows tracking gross margins to ensure products are marked up to industry standards.

"This allows us to guarantee we make a profit on every sale while also staying competitive in pricing compared to neighboring liquor stores," Wolf said.

"These changes will allow us to implement a loyalty rewards program and begin offering sales in the coming months."

Meanwhile, the new store layout is improving previous inefficiencies. The wine wall, for example, now displays all the bottles front-facing, rather than the previous method of one displayed and the rest lying down. That meant workers were constantly having to replace the display bottles when they were sold.

Also, workers couldn't see the entire store from the checkout counter, creating opportunity for theft.

The new layout offers an additional 48 linear feet of shelving that allows for more product in the storefront, leaving valuable backroom space for bulk purchases to lower costs.

Dan Serie was hired a year ago as liquor store manager, and Justin Timmer is assistant manager to help with product ordering and covering hours.

City finance director Tyler Reisch worked with Serie to develop a new staffing plan.

"Having a manager on site for more hours during the day has allowed us to cut down on part-time employees," Reisch said.

"This also let the managers focus on becoming more efficient and cutting our costs in all areas of the store."

Wolf commended Serie for his role in the process. "He is doing a wonderful job, and his success should be noted," she said.

Serie moved into the liquor store position after several years in the city's Public Works Department. "I miss the guys in public works," he said. "But I enjoy visiting with the customers and learning what they like."

He said he appreciates the 10 years of experience Timmer brings to the operation. "He's fantastic," Serie said.

"He's been doing this for years. Like now we're moving from summer to winter, and he knows we'll sell less seltzer and more bourbon."

Serie and Timmer are full time, and there are several part-time employees who fill in on weekends and evenings. They include Darryl Boltjes, Sara Helling, Ashley Mulder, Deb Remme, Pat Saum, Rylee Olson and Judy Benz.

"Our part-timers stepped up really well during the remodel," Serie said. "We were able to stay open during that week."

Building improvements include the following:

- A new rear roll-up door (\$4,023) replaces the previous swing open door that was falling off hinges and wasn't sealing out the elements.
- A new office door (\$2,925) secures the alarm systems stationed in the office.
- Interior and exterior painting (\$10,400) addresses peeling and chipping paint on the exterior of the building. The interior was painted when shelving was replaced.
- New gutters (\$2,648) replaced old, broken gutters.
- New checkout countertop (\$2,625) improves cashier efficiencies. Public works employees built the cabinets.
- New shelving (\$21,425) replaced outdated units that wouldn't work with the new store layout.
- New security cameras and alarm system (\$16,455) replaced a previous system that wasn't working, "This was a needed upgrade to ensure the security of the facility," Wolf said.
- New refrigeration (\$49,665) replaced coolers that were long past their useful lives and needing frequent repair work.

"We have already spent \$16,628 in 2024 alone maintaining the coolers," Wolf said.

"The new systems will be much more energy efficient which will lead to lower utility bills well into the future. These are currently on order."

Equipment and furnishings were purchased with an eye toward being able to move them, in the event the city liquor would ever move to a new location.

The current location was first built in 1960 as a café.

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BARTENDING IS AS MUCH ABOUT PERFORMANCE AS IT IS THE COCKTAIL



By Arthi Subramaniam
Minnesota Star Tribune

Many jobs can be performative at times, but bartending is all about the show.

“Think of bartending as a performance,” says Amanda Layer. “An emotionally draining, eight-hour act.”

As manager and bartender at Town Hall Tap in south Minneapolis, Layer has duties that include scheduling the front of the house, developing recipes, stocking the bar with syrups and juices, keeping the menu up to date and pouring drinks.

Yet much of her energy is spent in the art of small talk and keeping it pleasant.

The 38-year-old St. Paul native had her sights on art history during her undergraduate years at the University of St. Thomas but landed in bartending. She has not looked back since getting into it at age 22. “Bartending is a job I fell into, and I’ve made the best out of it,” she says.

The self-taught bartender was the one who developed the Tap’s cocktail program — from scratch — when the restaurant first got its full bar during the pandemic.

She talks about the emotional weight and creative freedom of the job, draining the social battery and why it doesn’t pay to be an introvert.

The interview is edited for length and clarity.

Q: What’s a little-known aspect of a bartender’s job?

A: People overlook how emotionally draining the job can be. We have to be nice and polite for eight or nine hours a day, and when we are busy there’s a lot of interactions to go through. Your social battery gets really worn out — not necessarily in the way you want it to.

Q: Is that because of the different personalities you encounter?

A: Yes, that, and because it’s a nonstop performance. Someone is always watching you — whether they are really watching you or passively doing it. So, you need to be in control of what you put out there.

Q: How do you keep it all straight during the busy times?

A: I equate it to playing chess. I take a pause and look at the whole picture of what needs to be done. Then I plan the next eight things that need to be done to be most efficient. Unless it’s a very large group, 90% of the time I don’t take down orders. I just remember what people want.

Q: Can an introvert be a good bartender?

A: It’s definitely a social job. You cannot be so shy that you are unable to talk to people or so timid that you cannot take control of a situation and throw people out. You’ll be even more emotionally drained if you are an introvert. [Laughs] Introverts just need to learn to fake it a bit.

Q: Are there other innate skills one should have?

A: A bartender needs to be able to read a situation and prioritize what needs to be done. It’s hard to teach that. I can show someone how to follow a written recipe but it’s harder to teach someone the basic steps of service, like approaching someone and saying hello.

Q: Is there something you made recently that wowed even you?

A: It was a slushy called Lavender Haze made with frozen rosé, strawberries and a liqueur made with lavender grown in our back garden. It really elevated what people expected from a slushy machine.

Q: What’s your favorite part of bartending?

A: I really like the creativity that comes with it. I joke that I’m home-schooled as far as bartending goes. Although I do still get nervous sometimes when I create a new drink, I find it exciting to take risks. And I do enjoy the friendships I form with the customers.

Also, I can control my schedule. I work on Saturdays and Sundays, but I don’t mind that because I can shuffle things around if I need the day off.

Q: And the least favorite?

A: The job can be messy because it involves liquids and sticky syrups. Also, because the job is emotionally draining, you don’t have much patience or bandwidth left for those who are most important in your life because you have used it all up with strangers.

Q: Does your pay compensate for that?

A: I make \$38,000 a year. It’s the tips that make up the majority part of my income, and that’s generally around \$200 a night. But I get creative freedom and I appreciate that a lot.

Q: How do you keep yourself relevant?

A: TikTok is really a great place to see what other bartenders are doing even if it’s just for visual inspiration. Cool techniques get broken down.

Last winter, I did a fat-washed rum with milk and lime juice and I got that from TikTok, beginning to end. I would have never figured that out on my own.

Q: Do you intend to bartend for the rest of your life?

A: Yes, the job can be tiring but for [the] most part a bartender can have great time.

HOW GEN Z EMPLOYEES PREFER TO BE MANAGED



By Marq Burnett
The Business Journals

Members of Generation Z have garnered a less-than-savory reputation during their unique entrance to the workforce.

But a new survey suggests a disconnect over management styles could be fueling some of the frustrations felt by young professionals and managers alike.

The survey of 600 recent college graduates from Intelligent.com found what young employees need is direction based on their individual needs as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach.

The report found 1 in 5 recent college graduates said they want to be micromanaged, with a manager who is hands-on and involved in their day-to-day work life.

The survey found 25% preferred a hands-off, distant management style and 57% would opt for a balance between the two.

The lesson for employers?

There's not necessarily a one-size-fits-all approach to managing Gen Z — or any other generation — but there are some best practices to help managers connect with the critical generation.

Huy Nguyen, chief education and career development advisor at Intelligent, said the surprisingly significant percentage of recent grads who prefer to be micromanaged could be a result of several factors.

"It's likely many had limited real-world work experience while they were attending school, so they do not have the familiarity or confidence to transition to a more autonomous environment," Nguyen said.

"In school, they received clear instructions, frequent feedback and knew their complete path to graduate successfully."

As they enter the workplace, Nguyen said the path to success for young workers is often less clear, which can lead to anxiety.

"Their reliance on managerial supervision and validation can be seen as a way to cope with early career challenges before developing more confidence, which comes with experience," Nguyen said.

Within the group who said they wanted a hands-on management approach, 83% said that style creates a sense of feeling more supported at work, 73% said it helps them stay on task and 63% said it helps them feel less anxious.

As we've noted before, experts say employers can address many of those concerns through career development programs, mentorship initiatives and proactive management.

Communication, feedback are clear priorities for Gen Z.

Along with how they prefer to be managed, the report found a lot of recent grads want constant communication.

Nearly 4 in 10 recent grads said they check in with their manager four or more times per day.

Additionally, 43% of respondents said they check in with their manager during non-work hours at least once per day.

On average, one in four respondents estimate they ask their manager four or more questions per day, while one in five say they have one-on-one meetings with their manager multiple times per week.

Given how much of their college and early working years were spent navigating the pandemic, the vast majority of respondents (88%) said they would prefer to work in-person at least one day per week, and 28% even say they'd prefer to work in person full-time.

Among those who prefer in-person work, 74% said they feel it makes them more productive.

Additionally, 45% said it's to help make friends with coworkers and 43% said it's to have more contact with their manager.

"Many Gen Z workers are just starting their careers, so they are eager to experience the dynamics of the workplace and learn through observing and collaborating with their coworkers," Nguyen said.

"There may also be a perception that being in the office with their managers, or others higher up in the organization, makes them more visible and proves they are working hard."

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TWO YEARS IN, MINNESOTA'S THC MARKET HASN'T LOST ITS BUZZ



**By Brooks Johnson
and Ryan Faircloth**
Minnesota Star Tribune

At some liquor stores, THC outsells vodka. At some breweries, it outsells beer. Minnesota has become the country's weed-drink capital, with cannabis-curious consumers spending at least \$140 million on legal THC over the past year.

Other states have taken notice; Iowa recently followed Minnesota in regulating hemp-derived THC products. "Minnesota is, in some ways, the Silicon Valley of the hemp-derived economy," said Brian Vicente, founder of one of the nation's top cannabis law firms, Vicente LLP.

"The brands of the future, I think, are being born in Minneapolis today." Two years after the state legalized low-dose cannabis drinks and edibles, though, the market is pretty well saturated.

Monthly sales have leveled off. Thousands of businesses are registered to produce or sell the stuff, and soon enough, hundreds of full-scale cannabis dispensaries will be popping up, offering more variety and much higher doses.

"Initially anyone could come out with a THC product and do well, but that quickly tapered off," said Dan Doran, brand manager at Lupulin Brewing Co. "Now, quality is at the forefront."

The brewery in Big Lake, Minn., now makes 30% of its revenue from its Smazey THC beverages distributed around the state, and sales keep growing. The THC market is hardly losing its buzz, from Doran's perspective. "The more people try it, the more they tend to stick with it," he said.

As THC moved rapidly from a nice-to-have novelty to a standard offering at liquor stores and breweries, the widespread adoption has de-stigmatized cannabis use and spawned a new social scene for the growing number of people drinking less alcohol.

"I continue to be pretty overwhelmed by how many people are saying either they or a friend of theirs doesn't imbibe alcohol but now they actually have something they can go out and socially imbibe with their friends," said Bob Galligan, director of government and industry relations for the Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild.

But when dispensaries start opening next year offering a full suite of cannabis products, will Minnesota's trailblazing hemp market lose its appeal?

"Guys who smoke weed aren't coming in buying 5-milligram gummies," said Tom Schoenberger, owner of Westside Wine & Spirits in St. Louis Park.

Instead, the wide availability of low-dose THC has unearthed and fostered a new kind of cannabis consumer not typically served by dispensaries, where products trend toward high potency.

"Low-dose created its own niche, and there's this paradigm shift: People who want to stop drinking now have a legitimate alternative," Schoenberger said. "That market isn't going anywhere."

Winners and losers

Two years ago, customers spilled onto a St. Paul sidewalk outside Nothing but Hemp to buy the first fully legal THC edibles. Owner Steven Brown said demand has leveled off now that some 4,000 businesses have registered to sell hemp-derived products in Minnesota, so he's shifted away from direct retail to wholesaling.

But, Brown said, the hemp-derived market in Minnesota is due for a correction. With so many brands putting out similar products, many will inevitably fail. And it won't be due to competition from dispensaries selling buds, vapes and high-potency edibles.

Brown once worried whether the hemp-derived and recreational marijuana markets would be able to co-exist when dispensaries open in Minnesota. Over the past two years, he said he's noticed the hemp-derived market attracts a more casual consumer. They're more likely to sip on a low-dose THC seltzer at a bar or brewery than to go to a dispensary, he said.

"There's this huge audience that wants low-dose," Brown said. "I think the marijuana dispensaries are going to be specifically for the people who want high-dose smoke or dab."

National hemp-derived THC brand Cann, which operates in states with and without recreational marijuana dispensaries, sees a similarly spread-out Venn diagram of cannabis users.



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TWO YEARS IN, MINNESOTA'S THC MARKET HASN'T LOST ITS BUZZ, CONT'D.

"We believe consumers in dispensaries and those in traditional retail have distinct needs, leading to minimal overlap," the company said. "The dispensary consumer is typically someone who is going in with a baseline education of cannabis and may be going in to buy hundreds of milligrams of THC."

Rachael Dillon, co-founder of Twin Cities-based brand Mary & Jane, said many of her customers aren't even looking for a cannabis product at all when they buy the company's Sunny 1-milligram "microdose melts."

"When people find our brand, their point of view isn't, 'I want to find a low-dose edible.' They see it as, 'This is a product that can do this thing for me,'" she said. "It can replace my glass of wine."

A boon to craft breweries

Craft breweries have benefited from the THC-infused seltzer boom at a time when beer sales are declining. For some breweries, THC drinks now make up 15% to 25% of their portfolio, said Galligan with the Brewers Guild, who's also a member of the Hemp Beverage Alliance. "I think it's been a pretty crazy but amazing two years," he said.

Indeed Brewing, one of Minnesota's largest breweries, quickly established itself as a top THC beverage-maker. The Minneapolis brewery offers four year-round THC beverages that now account for about 15% of Indeed's revenue, said Ryan Bandy, the brewery's chief business officer.

THC drinks have revolutionized Minnesota's craft beer industry, Bandy said, to the point that breweries who don't sell them are at a competitive disadvantage. "If a leadership team is not thinking about it seriously, I would say it's at least irresponsible," Bandy said. "It's worth thinking a lot about."

Since the state allowed liquor stores to sell THC starting last year, it's been a windfall for liquor stores and breweries, said Tony Chesak, executive director of the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association. "Whether or not it sustains, we're kind of in wait-and-see mode," Chesak said.

THC beverages have become as much a part of the alcohol industry as the cannabis market, since they're widely available in breweries and liquor stores throughout Minnesota and often distributed by liquor wholesalers.

"I've spoken to some of the largest alcohol conglomerates in the world about getting into the hemp-derived space," Vicente said. "The level of interest is extremely high." That doesn't mean there won't be room in the market for smaller THC seltzer makers.

Already, many Minnesota-based THC brands are expanding to other states — a necessary move to keep growing as the state has only so many potential cannabis users. "I think alcohol showed us there's space for your local brew pub, and there's also folks that want to drink Budweiser," Vicente said. "I think that will probably be the way it plays out in cannabis, too."

The overlap

By the time state-licensed dispensaries open, many Minnesotans will have had a chance to dabble with small doses of THC, providing a bridge to the recreational market like no state has had before.

At the Sweetleaves cannabis retailer in North Loop, customers often come in pairs, one an experienced user and the other a friend who doesn't partake and is a bit skittish about the whole thing. Co-founder Adam Hoffman wants to make sure they both come back. "One of our main missions is educating customers and never overdosing someone," he said. "I'd say a majority probably dose up eventually but our whole thing is under-dose first."

Dillon, at Mary & Jane, said low-dose brands and retailers should be educating consumers and making cannabis "approachable" for those who do cross over into the stronger stuff. "Maybe you want to get a little more high," she said, "and eventually maybe our customer does go to a dispensary because she feels more comfortable and knowledgeable about THC."

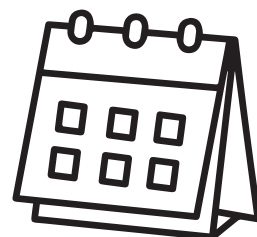
SAVE THE DATES!

2025 Legislative Day

February 10, 2025

2025 MMBA Annual Conference

April 26 – 29, 2025



MN BEER DAY

Many off sale and on sale MMBA members participated in the recent Minnesota Beer Day, utilizing custom glasses (Pictured at right).

Here is how it went:

Nisswa

Amazing! Only have a few glasses left. Promoted Minnesota beer on tap, keep the glass.

Roseau

We did great! We sold them for \$5 and are donating it all to the food shelf as part of our fundraiser. We were sold out by 5pm. ☺

Marshall

We saw great results with giving the MN Beer glasses with a suggested purchase of MN beer. Went through all the MN glasses and extra Surly glasses we had.

Sauk Rapids

We used the glass to help generate money for our local food shelf. We had them all gone by midafternoon. Customers really liked them and the design on them.

Isanti

We sold lots of MN beer! We got four vendors to sample their products in the afternoon, had staff pour samples for a few other vendors, and put all MN beer on sale 10% off for the day. We had one case of glasses we distributed to the vendors to give away at their sampling tables. Lots of positive feedback from customers and vendors alike. We're looking forward to doing it again next year!

Kasson

In Kasson we had fun at MN Beer Day!



They received this note ...

Thank you for inviting South by Southeast Brewing to do a tasting at your store last Friday. It was AMAZING!!! All of the special promotions you did really generated an avalanche of customers. I have never seen people line up for a tasting event while I was still setting up. Everybody really liked the special Minnesota Beer Day glasses you ordered – they were very classy. And offering a dollar off of the beer really seemed to close a lot of sales. If my counts are correct, 91 people stopped by, and we sold 43 crows. That is an all-time record!! I've never sold that many crows anywhere!

Thank you for everything you do to support our brewery! You rock!!!



SMSU ANNOUNCES RELEASE OF MUSTANG GOLDEN ALE

Southwest Minnesota State University is proud to announce the official release of Mustang Golden Ale, a new exclusive beer brewed by Brau Brothers Brewing Co. of Marshall.

The University worked in partnership with 1999 alumnus Dustin Brau of Brau Brewing to develop the beer with a portion of proceeds coming back to SMSU. Mustang Golden Ale is brewed by Mustangs, to be enjoyed by Mustangs.

In the early part of 2024, an idea was born to develop a collaborative project between Brau Brewing, SMSU, and Tall Grass Liquor.

Eric Luther from Tall Grass Liquor, the City of Marshall's municipal liquor store, along with Dustin Brau and Jen Flowers of

Mustang Athletics, decided to develop a set of four distinct beers to celebrate the best of Marshall.

Three flavors would represent the Marshall community and the fourth would represent SMSU. "Mustang Golden Ale is the outcome of a unique and special partnership that highlights what makes SMSU special: the people!

Our department is thrilled to have had the opportunity to see this idea come to life and we're so excited for Mustang fans to enjoy this awesome beer.

Dustin and his team at Brau, along with Eric and his team at Tall Grass, have worked diligently to get us to this point," said Jen Flowers, Athletic Director, "I especially want to thank our SMSU team behind the scenes for the incredible work they have done as we've prepared for this launch. The beer is delicious, and we know Mustang Nation is going to love it!"

The Brau Brothers Brewing team worked with SMSU to develop a custom brew.

They took suggestions and feedback on the flavor profile from the SMSU Athletics, Alumni, and Marketing team that included Flowers, Devin Gorter, Angela Lee, Nathan Polfliet, Maddy Groff, Stacie Mulso, and Marcy Olson.

"We are thrilled to announce the release of Mustang Golden Ale, crafted in collaboration with one of our esteemed alumni, Dustin Brau.

This partnership not only celebrates the creativity and innovation our university fosters but also reinforces the strong bonds within our community," said Nathan Polfliet, Associate Vice President for Advancement.

"Just as our university continues to thrive and evolve, we believe this beer will stand the test of time, embodying the legacy of excellence we strive for!"

Brau Brewing had not previously included a golden ale in their line-up, so it was the perfect opportunity to brew and launch the official beer of Mustang Athletics.



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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NON-ALCOHOL & ALCOHOL FREE BEER EXPLAINED



By Olivia White
VinePair

Non-alcoholic (NA) beer has been on a non-stop tear. (A fact confirmed during the recent MMBA Regional Meetings.)

Last year, the NA beer and cider category experienced 30 percent volume growth, a number well above that of non-alcoholic wine and spirits, according to data analytics company IWSR.

And that growth hasn't slowed: This year, NA beer has been outpacing the total beer category, with on-premise beer sales by value down 2.9 percent year-over-year from May 2023 to May 2024.

By contrast, non-alc beer was up a whopping 33.7 percent, as pointed out by CGA by NIQ. With such undeniable consumer appeal, it's important for said

consumers to understand what exactly they're drinking.

The first lesson to learn about NA beer is that the products in the category aren't technically beer. According to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB), beer is a beverage containing "one-half of one percent or more of alcohol by volume, brewed or produced from malt, wholly or in part, or from any substitute for malt."

NA brews fall beneath this threshold, so producers are not legally able to label their products as "beer." Instead, brands must opt for language like "near beer," "brew," "malt beverage," or "cereal beer." Moreover, the "non-alcoholic" and "alcohol-free" labels are not interchangeable.

So, what's the difference?

Non-alcoholic brews must have less than 0.5 percent ABV. To be TTB-compliant, the statement "contains less than 0.5 percent

(or .5%) alcohol by volume" must be printed directly next to "non-alcoholic" on these cans or bottles in a legible font against a contrasting background.

The alcohol-free label carries even stricter requirements. The beer must contain 0.0 percent alcohol, and to verify a brand's claim, each producer must send a liquid sample to the TTB for proper testing to ensure the beverage is truly zero proof.

The distinction is likely why many brands like Guinness and Heineken have specifically leaned into the 0.0 messaging with their alcohol-free products.

It's important to note that to feel the influence of the small amount of alcohol present in non-alcoholic brews, a person would need to drink over 40 cans.

That said, if you want to ensure you're avoiding all alcohol at all costs, it's best to play it safe by opting for a can expressly labeled as "alcohol-free."

KEEP THE MAYOR OUT OF TROUBLE



By Ross Olson
Sauk Rapids
City Administrator

I have had the pleasure to work with and for six different Mayors in the twenty-four years I've been with the City of Sauk Rapids. On January 1, 2025 there will be a seventh.

Our current Mayor, Kurt Hunstiger has been with me on my professional journey with the city from the start. When I started in 2000, Kurt was on the Planning Commission (PC).

Following the PC appointment, he went on to serve on the City's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), appointed then elected to the City Council and is now in his second term as our mayor.

His interest in local government started when he attended a City Council meeting in 1994. He was concerned about how a new development would

impact his home and neighborhood. I'm not sure he could have imagined he would go on to serve the community for as long as he has when he was originally asked to serve on the PC.

Mayor Kurt was instrumental in the construction of the Sauk Rapids bridge over the Mississippi River. He helped to secure the necessary funding at State and Federal levels, development of design options and final location of the bridge location. He was a leader in the redesign and redevelopment of our downtown, the establishment of a new Public Works facility, the relocation and construction of a new Government Center, new water treatment plant and is a firm supporter of Municipal Liquor Operations.

Kurt was also a large supporter of the creation of our amazing Mississippi River park (The Clearing) that brings over 2,000 music lovers to Sauk Rapids every Thursday, all summer. He wanted to create a public asset that would attract people from all over central Minnesota, but also a place for children to play who live close to the park.

We all get a little nervous when election time rolls around. Change in the City Council or a new Mayor can bring different ideas and priorities that may not align exactly with the priorities of past City Councils or current Administration.

Sometimes new ideas, new energy and new passion can create an environment of success and positivity that can last for years. This December 31st Mayor Kurt will end his role as our mayor to spend some much-deserved time with his wife, children and grandchildren.

I am fortunate to have served the citizens of Sauk Rapids working with Mayor Kurt for as long as I have. He has been and will continue to be my coach, critic and friend. I just hope that I satisfied what he believed was my most important responsibility as his City Administrator, "Keep the Mayor out of Trouble".

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I'm happy to assist!



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