

Over 21 ... Forget it!

Legal purchasers of alcohol experience annoyance at hands of state statute

ANDREA CECIL
Reporter

Your 21st birthday has finally arrived. But if you plan on celebrating at Shakespeare's with a pizza and a beer, think again.

That's because a Missouri statute discourages the sale of alcohol to anyone without a driver's license or official Missouri identification card, unless they have a driver's license from one of five neighboring states.

You might not be celebrating if you do not have a Missouri driver's license or picture I.D. that proves you are of the legal drinking age.

Take what happened to Mary Kate MacIsaac, for example. Last year, the 27-year old photojournalism graduate student tried to buy an alcoholic beverage at Shakespeare's Pizza.

But MacIsaac's business was refused because she did not have one of the identification materials the restaurant requests for purchases of alcohol.

MacIsaac, who said she presented almost all of her I.D.s to the restaurant as verification of her age, found the incident unsettling.

MacIsaac said it was strange that her I.D. was "good enough for the State Troopers, and good enough for the justice system [in Missouri]," but not good

enough for a local pizza eatery.

Shakespeare's, however, is not the only Columbia establishment that stringently enforces these alcohol policies which are set by the State of Missouri.

According to a Missouri statute on the issue, the seller of alcohol is acting in good faith if they sell alcohol to some-

one after verifying their age with an official Missouri I.D. or Missouri driver's license.

Buyers also can use a driver's license from Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas or Nebraska to

prove they are of legal drinking age.

"If the seller gets a picture I.D. from one of those states and follows the [standard verification] procedure and it turns out that there was some fraud involved, no penalty shall be imposed," said John Whiteside, an attorney for Student Legal Services.

A seller of alcohol "acts in good faith," even if he or she has sold alcohol to a minor, if they go through the entire verification pro-

cess.

Likewise, if the seller of alcohol "accepts a driver's license from the state of North Dakota, they're on their own," Whiteside said. "There's no presumption of [the seller] acting 'in good faith.'"

But the statute is an annoyance to many legitimate buyers of alcoholic products.

"It's just unfortunate for Canadians like me," MacIsaac said, who said Shakespeare's lost a customer over the policy.

However, the statewide statute also

creates difficulty for Columbia businesses that sell alcohol.

Kurt Mirtsching, manager of Shakespeare's Pizza, said he is cautious now because he was imprisoned several years ago for unintentionally allowing the intoxication of a minor.

"We're not trying to be hard asses," Mirtsching said. "The city is imposing [these policies] on us. We're just trying to keep our doors open."

**"We're not trying
to be hard asses.
We're just trying
to keep our doors
open."**

*—Kurt Mirtsching,
Shakespeare's Pizza
Manager*
