

Bartender training puts cap on holiday cheer

From the Hampton Roads, VA, Virginia Pilot.

NORFOLK - It's not easy for Colley Cantina's Erin Osborne to confront a customer who has had a little too much liquid holiday cheer. "It's scary when you have to tell someone that they can't have a drink," she said Friday.

"And awkward," said Kim Tamburino, who teaches restaurant workers and others how to defuse such situations and sell alcohol responsibly.

A consumer affairs coordinator for Hoffman Beverage Co., Tamburino has educated more Virginians in the Training for Intervention Procedures, or TIPS, certification program, than anyone else in the state - 3,762 and counting.

During a three-hour session, Tamburino and a state Department of Alcohol Beverage Control agent show bartenders and wait staff how to prevent intoxication, underage drinking and drunken driving. The program is sponsored by Anheuser-Busch.

Some restaurant owners, such as Cantina's Joe Ziemian, are pleased with TIPS because it's hands-on, requires attendees to take a certification test, and helps lower his liquor liability insurance.

"If you let someone drive drunk, you can kill somebody," Ziemian said. "It has to be taken seriously. "We have to do what we can to make sure someone doesn't get killed or hurt," he said.

Tamburino knows that critics question training offered by a company that sells alcoholic beverages. She reminds them that they all live in the same community.

"I'm just as vulnerable as anyone else on the roads," she said. "We are not immune to drunk drivers."

And 'tis the season.