

# It's hard to use a fake card

**Swipe device helps  
Cape bar keep its  
clientele honest**

**By Matt Whitehead**

THE NEWS PRESS

**Cape Coral, FL** – Bill Earles no longer worries about his employees inadvertently selling alcohol to minors at his bar.

“We did have some instances when we first opened with teen-agers trying to buy beer and alcohol, and I knew something had to be done,” said Earles, owner of Tailgaters Sports Bar and Grille on Hancock Bridge Parkway. “You try to keep minors out, but you will always have problems with kids trying to sneak in with fake I.D.’s trying to buy alcohol. So we have to stay one step ahead.”

In June, Earles installed a Legal Age scanner, a machine that uses the information embedded in the magnetic strip of a driver’s license. It provides the person’s birth date.

The scanner costs about \$500, although more advance models can run as high as \$1200. Earles got the idea to buy the machine for his pub when he saw it used at a convenience store.

The device works similar to a credit card machine. While teens can doctor the birth year on their license, the information on the magnetic strip cannot be altered.

Merchants swipe the licenses through the device, which reads the information on the strip.

Earles said the device is working wonderfully, with workers at Tailgaters confiscating a number of fake I.D.’s since employees started carrying the machine.

Since June, bartender Regina Johnson estimated they’ve caught about 14 youths with doctored driver’s licenses.

“We’ll take their driver’s license from them, and if their first time, we’ll go easy on them an just throw them out.” Johnson said. “But if this is something that we’ve caught them at before, then we’ll call the police.”

Johnson said word has already spread that the bar uses the device, with employees seeing fewer teen-agers trying to sneak in.

“This has really worked wonders,” she said. “It’s one of the best investments we could have made.”

Although relatively new to the area, the device has been on the market for more than two years, said Elaine Kirby spokeswoman for Legal Age Security Software, the California-based company that manufactures the little machines.

Kirby said the devices were well received. “We’ve only been around for about two years and already it’s been an impressive response,” she said.

Kirby said there are about six companies throughout the country that market similar age-verifying devices. Bars are not the only places using the machines.

The scanner is also promoted at convenience stores to help deter those who are underage from attempting to buy alcohol and tobacco products.

Earlier this year, Circle K stores installed the machines in all of its convenience stores throughout the state.

“One of the biggest problems we have is kids purchasing alcohol, getting in a car and getting killed in a wreck,” Kirby said. “If a merchant installs one of these devices, then they can cut down on the chances that their establishment is where the kids obtained the alcohol. In the end, I think that this can help to save lives.”

*The News-Press, Wednesday, August 23, 2000*  
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