

Booze still OK in county parks

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Efforts to ban booze in Oakland County parks have fallen flat... almost like stale beer.

A measure to prohibit alcoholic beverages at picnics or campsites died a quiet death Monday when commissioners failed to report it out of the general government committee.

The resolution would not have changed the policy of allowing alcohol at weddings and private parties at the county's popular reception halls.

Among those who let the measure die was the commissioner who sponsored it in September, Dennis M. Aaron, D-Oak Park. "I am disappointed it failed," said Aaron. "I didn't vote for it (the ban) because other commissioners obviously didn't want it." Aaron and other commissioners let the measure die after Ralph Richard, manager of the county's nine parks, reported that drunkenness or rowdy behavior associated with it has not been a problem over the more than three decades alcohol has been permitted in the parks. Commissioner Thomas A. Law, R-West Bloomfield, said the Oakland

County Sheriff's Department, which frequently patrols parks, verifies that moderate use of alcohol is not a problem.

"THERE'S NO REASON for us to prohibit adults from drinking a beer or mixed drink in moderation," said Law, who is also a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Richard said county policy continues to prohibit alcohol around swimming pools or at facilities catering to youngsters. "But otherwise our policy is to allow park patrons to use alcohol as long as they do not get rowdy or cause disturbances," he said.

When facilities — like reception halls at Addison Oaks or Waterford Oaks — are leased for weddings or parties, the county requires the sponsors to hire bartenders provided by the county's catering contractor, Richard said. Those bartenders are licensed and trained, he said. "They have little trouble spotting somebody whose

had too much to drink and they don't have the pressure of having to cut off a family member.

"Our policies work very well and we see little need to change," Richard said. "Part of the appeal of our parks is the freedom for responsible adults to use alcohol within the limits imposed by law."

AARON SAID he wanted the county to consider banning alcohol because of the myriad of problems associated with its abuse. He introduced his resolution about the same time commissioners were reviewing a proposal to remove cigarette machines from county property because there was no way of preventing underage smokers from purchasing tobacco.

Aaron, himself a chain-smoker, said he proposed banning alcohol as a matter of consistency. "Furthermore, I think it's bad public policy to tolerate something as harmful as alcohol at public facilities," he said.

MADD holds annual 'Candlelight Vigil'

The Oakland County chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving will hold its annual "Candlelight Vigil" at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 10 at the Nardin Park Methodist Church in Farmington Hills.

The purpose of the Vigil is to provide a setting in which family and friends may remember their loved ones who have been killed by drunk drivers, according to Greg Bien, Oakland County MADD president.

The public is invited to attend to say "I care" to the families of those who have died in a drunk driving accident, Bien said. The church is on 11 Mile Road, one block west of Middlebelt.

The "Candlelight Vigil" begins a period of "hope for a less violent future" as MADD sponsors other programs and projects during December to prevent holiday drunk driving crashes, Bien said.

Among them is the Red Ribbon Campaign in which citizens are encouraged to tie a red ribbon to their car door mirror or antenna as a sign to Oakland County that they hope for a safe holiday season and a stop to drunk driving.

"We hope that every citizen of Oakland County will join us in our holiday programs," Bien said. For additional information or if you wish to have a name read at the Vigil, please call 693-0270.

OCC campus hosts arts fest

The Royal Oak campus of Oakland Community College will again host the Festival of Arts weekend starting Friday.

Events include exhibits by the Arts and Humanities Club and Photographers' Association, an antique and craft show, Children's Theater and bell choir.

Some events are free, while others — like the Detroit Dance collective or the Taste of Royal Oak culinary event — require an admission fee. The following is a schedule of events:

• Friday: Arts & Humanities Club exhibit and sale and Photographer's Association exhibit and sale, 6-10 p.m. and throughout the festival.

• Saturday: Antique and craft show, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Royal Oak Hand Bell Choir, 11 a.m. to noon; Santa Claus, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; Children's Theater, "Mr. Grump and the Clown," noon and 2 p.m.; Detroit Dance Collective, family dance concert, 8 p.m.

• Sunday: Children's Theater, "Mr. Grump and the Clown," noon; Taste of Royal Oak, 1-4 p.m.; Madison Corale, 1-1:45 p.m.; the NewTradition Concert Series featuring NewAcoustic String Music, bluegrass and country music, 2-3 p.m.; the "Balalika Orchestra of Detroit," 3-4 p.m.; and Detroit Dance Collective family concert, 3 p.m. Additional information is available at 544-5559.

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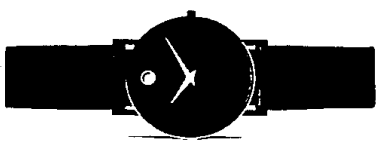
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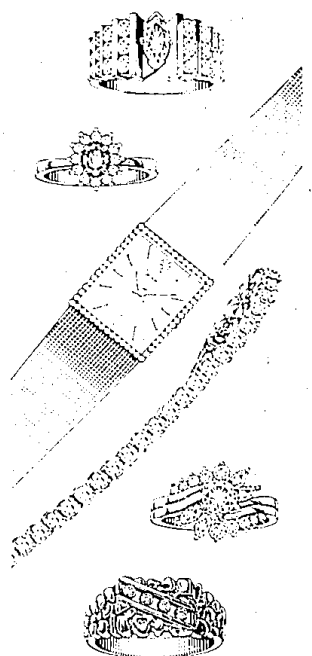
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