

## Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004  
TRENTON, NJ 08625

### NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Pete McDonough  
609-777-2600

RELEASE: July 7, 1999

#### **State Nets 152 Underage Drinking Arrests During Early Summer Months**

Governor Christie Whitman today announced that undercover law enforcement efforts designed to help curtail illegal underage drinking throughout shore resort areas in New Jersey have demonstrated encouraging early results.

Preliminary statistics from the Department of Law and Public Safety's Divisions of Alcoholic Beverage Control and State Police show 152 underage drinking arrests made from Memorial Day through the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

"Through our Cops In Shops and Operation Summer enforcement initiatives, representatives from the Divisions of State Police and Alcoholic Beverage Control, working with local law enforcement officers and alcoholic beverage retailers, are showing early success in our efforts to stem underage drinking in New Jersey," Gov. Whitman said.

"We have been able to send strong messages to both young people and to those establishments that flout the underage drinking laws, that violators will pay a heavy price," she said.

Under the Cops in Shops program, local police officers, as well as state troopers from the Division of State Police, work undercover in participating retail locations. Law enforcement officers either pose as store employees or are positioned outside an establishment to apprehend adults who attempt to purchase alcohol for underage drinkers.

According to the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 23 seashore communities are participating in the Cops in Shops program for the summer months. A total of approximately \$75,000 in federal money administered through the Divisions of Highway Traffic Safety and Alcoholic Beverage Control has been dedicated for the program.

According to Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control, since the program's inception, more than 800 underage persons and persons of legal age who have purchased for underage persons have been arrested.

Underage drinkers face a minimum fine of \$500 and a mandatory loss of their drivers' licenses for six months. Adults who purchase alcohol for underage drinkers can go to jail for six months and face a \$1,000 fine.

Under Operation Summer, representatives from the Divisions of State Police and Alcoholic Beverage Control, work undercover at targeted bars and night clubs. Investigators focus on recreation areas that are chronic trouble spots, looking for underage drinkers and the establishments that sell or serve them.

According to the Division of State Police, more than 860 arrests of underage persons and persons of legal age who purchased alcohol for the underage resulted since the program's inception in 1995.

Establishments selling or serving to minors face suspension of their liquor license and/or a monetary fine. Underage drinkers face the same penalties as under the Cops in Shops program, a minimum \$500 fine and loss of driver's license for six months.

Governor Whitman reminded the alcoholic beverage retailers about the State's new 10-year digitized driver's license that she recently signed into law. The new license will be implemented on a renewal basis over a four-year period beginning next year. Whitman noted that the new license will protect against counterfeit licenses and will make it much more difficult for people to use fraudulent identities.

