

# Sheriff's office cracking down on underage drinking

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## Local law enforcement officers raid after hours party at Island City restaurant

The Union County Sheriff's Office stepped up enforcement efforts on underage drinking the first two days of December, raiding big parties in Island City and Union and citing several minors on charges of consumption and possession of alcohol.

Capt. Craig Ward of the Union County Sheriff's Office said the Island City raid took place at New York Richie's, a restaurant in Island City that was closed at the time of the party. Ward said some teens were intoxicated to the point that medical units were dispatched to assess their health. La Grande Police and Oregon State Police assisted with the incident.

Ward said juveniles were cited and turned over to their parents or guardians, and their cases referred to the county juvenile department. Adult minors over the age of 18 were cited into justice court.

Emanuel Escamilla, a manager at New York Richie's and son of owner Jesus Escamilla, said Tuesday he is accepting responsibility for the party at the restaurant.

"Whatever took place illegally there was under the son of the owner. New York Richie's staff and owner had nothing to do with it," Emanuel Escamilla said.

Ward said the Oregon Liquor Control Commission was notified and is investigating.

A party at a residence in Union Dec. 2 also resulted in several citations, Ward said. Again, juveniles were cited to the juvenile department. Adult minors involved were cited to appear in Union Municipal Court.

Ward said the sheriff's office had previously received complaints from neighbors about activities at the house.

Ward said the sheriff's office has seen an increase in alcohol use by minors and has formed a grant-funded partnership with the Center for Human Development to deal with the problem.

He said Union County reserve deputies are called out to augment full-time law enforcement officers that cannot process the parties while handling other calls for service.

"We have recently responded to assist La Grande police officers on other underage party complaints in the City of La Grande," Ward said.