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Lower bar attendance contributes to record liquor sales

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By Kareem Elgazzar and Rick McCrabb, Staff Writers

8:23 PM Thursday, January 20, 2011

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MIDDLETOWN — Despite a down economy and with people tightening their budgets, people still found money to purchase alcohol.

Spirituous liquor sales reached a record \$742.7 million in 2010, or a 1.75 percent increase over the previous year, according to a report release by the Ohio Division of Liquor Control. The division's total net profit has steadily increased, reaching a record \$228.8 million — a \$4.6 million increase from the previous year.

The report cites efficient inventory control, product selections and location of sales outlets for the increase in sales.

Randy Combs, who owns Liquor Quick on Edgewood Drive in Trenton, said liquor sales at his store were up 4 percent — or \$40,000 — from 2009 to '10. Liquor sales last year exceeded \$1 million, he said.

But at the same time, he said sales of wine and beer were down over the previous year. He said consumers are choosing to purchase liquor and drinking it at home, instead of in bars or restaurants. Combs blamed that on higher beer prices, the soft economy and the state smoking ban.

A clerk at Franklin Party Supply said when people are out of work, and they're watching their budgets, they still find the money to purchase alcohol.

Record sales have resulted in more contributions to state agencies from the Division of Liquor Control. The division contributed more than \$300 million in earmarked funds to help state services and the retirement of state bonds.

Approximately half of the \$300 million went to the state's General Revenue Fund, while \$35.9 million went to economic development bonds and \$14.9 million to Clean Ohio revitalization bonds.

The top 10 selling brands of spirituous liquor (by gallons sold) for 2010 were:

- Kamchatka Vodka - 408,277 gallons.
- Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey - 342,840 gallons.
- Bacardi Superior Light Rum - 295,820 gallons.
- Smirnoff Vodka - 283,332 gallons.
- Captain Morgan Spiced Rum - 280,229 gallons.
- Absolut Vodka - 271,495 gallons.
- Crown Royal Canadian Whisky - 267,140 gallons.
- Jagermeister - 261,959 gallons.
- Korski Vodka - 236,976 gallons.
- Black Velvet Canadian Whisky - 232,623 gallons.

SOURCE: Ohio Division of Liquor Control

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