

THURSDAY

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THE WEST



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Post Register

Up
Eastern Idaho's employee-owned news leader

Belly up to the (only) bar



Randy Hayes / Post Register

Miller's Hideaway Tavern owner Sherri Miller has run the only bar in Madison County now for more than seven years.

Miller's is the sole tavern in Madison County

By PETER BARNES
Post Register

REXBURG — The ash trays in the bathroom are spotless. The floors out front are swept, and tables shine as if they have never seen the wet rings of an errant beer glass. Rexburg is a tidy, little town, and just beyond the city limits sits an equally tidy little bar.

Miller's Hideaway is the only bar in Madison County, and one of only three places a thirsty resident or parched sun birds can drink a beer in public. By comparison, Bortoneville County has 40 bars with some form of liquor license, even though the population is only three times larger. "It's just like the coffee shop, after work people stop to B.S. with their buddies," said Sherri Miller who owns the tavern with her husband, Jim.

She visited the Rexburg area for years and fell in love with its central location for fishing and camping. After managing several bars in Salt Lake City, she wanted her own place, and seven years ago the Millers bought the Rexburg watering hole.

Since then, the bar has added two more rooms and karaoke Friday nights, and even hosted a couple of wedding ceremonies.

There is no turn lane to the small

Gayland Gilson turned their auto shop into the Hideaway Tavern so their friends would have a place to drink after work. In fact, there isn't even a cut in the yellow line at the gravel parking lot across the railroad tracks on Old Highway 191 where a motley assemblage of cars and pickup trucks show license plates from three counties and the occasional out-of-state plate.

"We've got a big diversity of all kinds," Miller said of her clientele, which includes cowboys, bikers, construction workers, farmers, retirees and the occasional business leader. Around 20 people came through Tuesday night, mostly from Rexburg and Archa, though there was one retired man from Arkansas in town for the summer. The owner of Jalisco's Mexican restaurant, one of the other two establishments in the county that serves beer and wine, was shooting pool in the back with his friends. Meanwhile, some workers from out of town nursed a few beers and told Miller when they would be heading to their next project.

"There's big money and little

door," she said.

Most of the patrons are regulars though, and Miller knows them all by name.

"We have to make it a point to be here on Fridays to meet the new ones," she said.

The market for booze in Madison County area is pretty small. According to data from a national survey of

religious practices in 2000, about 80 percent of the county's residents are Mormons and follow the religion's beliefs that forbid the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Despite the fact that bars is one of the few places to buy wine or beer by

the glass, Miller attributes most of her business to the company and the atmosphere. (It does not serve hard liquor by the drink like many Idaho Falls bars do.)

"You might even have three beer drinkers in here and five soda drinkers," she said, adding that there is always someone around to be the designated driver.

In fact, she almost sells as much soda as bottled beer.

"We try to keep our noses clean,"

"This is it, a little hometown bar."

SHERRI MILLER
co-owner,
Miller's Hideaway Tavern