

News for Immediate Release

June 23, 2010

Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board Launches Wine Kiosk Pilot Program

Harrisburg – The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB) today launched a pilot program involving two self-service wine kiosks located at grocery stores in Dauphin and Cumberland counties.

The kiosks, located in the Giant® Food Store on Linglestown Road, Harrisburg, and Wegmans Food Market on the Carlisle Pike, Mechanicsburg, are part of the PLCB's mission to provide greater customer service and convenience to consumers. Both will operate from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday. They will be closed on Sundays and certain holidays.

"The self-service kiosks are an exciting new opportunity for consumers to pick up their groceries and a bottle of their favorite wine to compliment their dinner all in one stop," Board Chairman Patrick J. "PJ" Stapleton said. "While our PLCB stores continue to provide excellent customer service and a wider variety of products, the kiosks are a way to give our customers an added level of convenience in today's busy society."

Using state-of-the-art technologies developed by Simple Brands LLC of Conshohocken, the kiosks will stock a variety of Pennsylvanians' favorite wines at optimal temperatures and provide detailed information for interested consumers.

The kiosks feature technology to assure full compliance with the Liquor Control Board's strict measures to prevent sales to underage or intoxicated persons. The buyer's driver's license is inserted into the kiosk, where age information on the bar code is processed. The photograph on the driver's license is matched with a video image of the buyer at the kiosk. A Liquor Control Board employee will monitor each transaction from a remote location and confirm that the video of the purchaser matches the purchaser's ID.

The kiosks have a built-in breathalyzer that requires no contact with the device and provides an instantaneous reading to ensure the buyer is not under the influence. If a breath alcohol level of .02 or higher is detected, the consumer will be unable to make a purchase. The entire process will take less than 20 seconds.

"While the technology is promising and we're eager to introduce the kiosks across the state, we first need to complete stringent tests during this pilot phase in a controlled environment to make sure it's safe and secure. It will also give us the opportunity to hear consumer feedback in an effort to make the kiosks the most positive experience possible," Stapleton said.

If the pilot proves successful, the program will be expanded in up to 100 supermarket locations across Pennsylvania, as part of the PLCB's multi-faceted effort to enhance customer convenience.

The Liquor Control Board conducted an open bidding process for the kiosks and Simple Brands was the only company to respond to the March 2008 request for proposal.

The Liquor Control Board has embarked on a systematic business plan to make the 75-year-old agency more customer-focused. The plan includes initiatives to improve the customer store experience; enhance training for Board employees; boost returns to the state General Fund; assure and promote responsible use of alcohol through regulation and education; and take advantage of new technology.

The following is a list of frequently-asked questions about kiosks.

Why use kiosks?

PLCB's goal is to provide an improved level of customer service. Consumers have often expressed a desire to be able to purchase wine and groceries in one place. The kiosks will allow consumers to pick up their favorite wines and their weekly groceries, all in one convenient location. While the PLCB's regular stores continue to offer great service and more products, the kiosks are another means for the agency to extend convenience to its customers.

Who built the kiosks?

Simple Brands LLC, a Pennsylvania-based company, created the kiosks to bring modern self-service technology to the sale of wine. The company conceptualized and developed the first self-service wine kiosks for the safe and secure distribution of alcoholic beverages in Pennsylvania. However, the PLCB conducted an extensive request for proposal process to be sure all interested parties had a chance to bid on this opportunity.

How many kiosks will be located around the state, and where?

If the pilot test proves successful, the PLCB plans to expand to 100 kiosks located in supermarkets in urban, suburban and rural communities across Pennsylvania.

The list of stores is not yet final.

When will kiosks begin to appear in other locations?

If the pilot test goes well, additional kiosks will be introduced in the western part of the state toward the end of August, with hopes of being fully operational by the end of October.

Where does the revenue from the kiosks go?

Proceeds go back to the state store fund and a portion of this goes into the General Fund. Kiosks have the potential to increase the financial return for the PLCB's stakeholders, the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Where are the pilot kiosks located, and what are the hours of operation?

Simple Brands, the manufacturer of the wine Kiosks, is testing one kiosk at Wegmans Food Market on the Carlisle Pike in Mechanicsburg and another at GIANT® Food Store on Linglestown Road in Harrisburg.

The hours of operation are 9 a.m. – 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The kiosks will be closed on Sundays and certain holidays.

How do the kiosks work?

Purchasers will insert their driver's license (or other state-issued ID card) into a scanning device that will read the information from the magnetic strip. A customer service representative for the PLCB, who will be monitoring the transaction via video link from a remote location, will check the ID information to ensure the purchaser is of legal drinking age, and visually verify the person standing at the kiosk is the same individual pictured on the ID.

Before the transaction is completed, consumers will have to test their breath alcohol concentration by using a breathalyzer. The sensor can determine whether a consumer is over a set breath alcohol level, or BrAC, simply by having the consumer blow into an opening located on the kiosk. The customer service representative will be presented with a pass/fail indication based on the sensor results.

The customer service representative will have the ability to approve or deny the transaction. If a consumer presents themselves to be of legal drinking age, matches the photo on the ID card, passes the breathalyzer, and is not visibly intoxicated, then the customer service representative will approve the sale.

What happens if the machine picks up some level of alcohol on my breath?

The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to buying wine from the kiosks. If a consumer's breath alcohol level reads at or above the BrAC approved level of .02, the transaction will not be finalized. It is possible the machine may detect alcohol when a consumer hasn't been drinking, but the PLCB will err on the side of caution.

What is the Breath Alcohol Level sensor setting, and why?

The sensor is set at .02 because that level is still considered zero tolerance under state and federal zero tolerance standards but allows for variation in alcohol testing instruments.

A 160-lb. person could consume one drink and their approximate level would be .02. (One drink equals

one 12 oz. beer, 5 oz. of wine or 1 ½ oz. of 80-proof liquor).

Is the breathalyzer sanitary and safe to use?

Best-in-class breath alcohol testing technology is integrated into the kiosk in a way that makes it safe and easy to use. The breath test is expected to take a few seconds to complete, and can be completed accurately with a breath sample provided at a distance of up to 12 inches from the measurement panel. At no time must the consumer come into contact with the breath test device itself.

Will consumers pay more for the convenience of using a kiosk?

Not during the testing period. Eventually, a small convenience fee may be charged.

Which wines will be sold in the kiosks, and at whose discretion?

The kiosk will offer 53 different wines. (A product list is included in the press kit or may be obtained from the PLCB press office). The PLCB marketing department will determine which wines go into the kiosks, based on sales and variety. PLCB wants to make sure there is something for everyone and that best-selling products are available.

What happens if I have problems with my bank card or ID?

Consumers will be able to request help from available customer service representatives by pressing the "Help" button on the kiosk. Should a consumer experience difficulties with a credit or debit card, they will be given the option to scan another card. However, if a consumer's driver's license or ID card will not scan, the transaction will be denied because the customer service center will be unable to verify the consumer's identification.

Is my personal information protected?

Yes, all personal information is protected. A consumer's personal information is held on the kiosks' server which communicates with the bank as part of the transaction by the PLCB. The information is saved on the server for 30 days. The information is kept secure by the PLCB and will never be used or sold in any way.

What happens if I can't remove my purchase quickly enough?

Consumers will be able to request help from the customer service representative by pressing the “Help” button on the kiosk.

Can you return your wine purchase?

Yes. All returns will be accepted at PLCB stores. Consumers will only need the bottle they purchased and the receipt from the kiosk transaction.

Why not just put wine in grocery stores?

There are numerous reasons. Under the current Liquor Code, only the PLCB can sell wine and spirits, so supermarkets can't just add wine and spirits to their store and sell it. However, Pennsylvania currently has 19 one-stop shops, which are state stores attached to supermarkets. One-stop shops require a lot of space and have to be attached to the store. While PLCB may look to expand one-stop shops, the kiosks offer a great opportunity to provide consumers with enhanced convenience now.

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