

IDENTITY CRISIS

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High school students in the Kansas City area find various reasons to purchase fabricated identification cards. From buying alcohol to sneaking into age-restricted concerts, the use of a fake ID comes with the risk of being in trouble with the law. But in this case it doesn't matter because...

the decision has been made.

It was Oct. 8, five days before the Teresian dance. An STA student parked a reasonable distance from the front entrance to ensure herself time to gather her thoughts before entering. Her eyes focused on the traditional window signs. "We ID." "Must be 21 or older." Her eyes latched on to the neon signs advertising Bud Light, Bacardi and Skyy. With every step, she became more paranoid about getting caught. Her clammy hands gripped the

metal handle. The

door opened and the chime sounded. All customer and employee eyes were on her. She panicked

but knew she had to get what she came for. Her hands trembled as she grabbed two handles of McCormick vodka and tucked them under

her arm. A bead of sweat surfaced on her back as she reached for one case: 30 cans of Coors Light. One cooler over, she grabbed another case of Bud Light. She made her way to the front of the store. Her pulse quickened. She placed the alcohol on the counter.

"How are you today, ma'am? Did you find everything alright?"

"What? Good. I'm fine. Yeah, I did. Thanks."

"Can I see your ID?"

"Mhm, yeah."

Her fingers felt unnaturally cold as she pulled out her purple Vera Bradley wallet. She took the fake ID out of the side of the wallet dedicated only to it. Her real ID and school ID sat in a different pocket. She checked to make sure she grabbed the right one. She handed it over. When the clerk took it in his hands, her heart began to flutter in her chest, her hands felt numb and her face went hot. The cashier took a look at the ID, then back at her, a quizzical look on his face.

"How old are you?"

"23."

Her mind flickered with thoughts.

He has to know. How doesn't he know? He knows.

She dropped the money on the counter.

"Okay, have a nice day."

She opened the door, expecting to be pulled back

in by the collar and questioned. But the yanking never came. She made it to her car and got in. She let the air trapped in her lungs escape. Her chest deflated. Her heart slowed.

Her fake ID worked.

The guilt was instant but fleeting.

Four days later, it was Oct. 12, the day before Teresian. She saw the same warning signs on the windows of a different liquor store. She felt the same clammy hands touch a different door handle. She quickly grabbed what she needed: one case of Busch beer, another handle of McCormick vodka and an 18 pack of Keystone beer.

"ID?"

She handed it over.

She dropped the same combination of dollar bills on the counter.

"Alright, need help carrying this out?"

"No, thanks."

It was over. The same expected jerking of her collar never came. She did it. Again. It worked.

This STA senior, who asked to remain anonymous for legal reasons and will be referred to as Maggie Freeman, bought three cases, or 90 cans, of beer and an 18 pack of beer as well as two handles of vodka using a fake ID. Her ID promises she is 23, of legal age. She is 17.

A recent survey on Moodle revealed 67 of 270 STA students know five or more people with a

fake ID - 25 percent.

Though there are various reasons for obtaining the IDs, as well as a wide range of opinions surrounding the issue, it all revolves around one key fact: a local lawyer and vice squad police officer say the number of fake IDs in Kansas City is on the rise.

It seems the reward is far greater than the risk.

MADNESS IN THE METHOD

The scribble of information on a form, the flash of a camera and a one month wait are the only steps separating someone who is underage from a fake ID.

Most fake ID sales are made online. An order form is filled out and sent by the buyer. After creating the false ID the manufacturer will send the ID to the specified address of the buyer.

According to another STA senior, 18, who wished to remain anonymous for legal reasons and therefore will be referred to as Jackie Owens, the ordering process was simple, but questionable.

"It's really, really sketchy getting it," Owens said. "There's really no other word to use."

A Rockhurst High School junior, 16, who also requested anonymity and will be referred to as Michael Walsh agreed with Owens' statement on the ease of the entire process.

"All I had to do was fill out my information and take a picture," Walsh said.

The only changes between a person's true ID and false ID is a fake street address in a state other than the one the person resides and an earlier birth date. The information concerning physical appearance, such as eye color, height and weight remain the same in order for the ID picture and description to match.

Most fake ID suppliers require a group of ten or more people to order cards. With a group of this amount, each buyer receives two identical fake ID cards for \$75-100 for the pair.

"It only got sketchy when we went to pay," Owens said. "We all had to go to a grocery store and wire our money [to China]."

CHINESE FAKE-OUT

Before it was shut down in August 2012, a popular supplier for fake IDs was ID Chief, an internet business run out of China which provided a simple ordering process with scannable false identification cards.

According to an article on WUSA9.com, Washington D.C.'s major news source, the IDs from this business are so reliable "they can pass through scanners designed to detect fraudulent cards."

It is estimated the business was making \$20 to 40 million a year solely on producing these IDs.

Owens, Walsh and Freeman all obtained their IDs from this source before it was shut down. Each ordered with a group of ten or more.

Unlike Walsh and Freeman, Owens received the packet of IDs directly to her house. When opening the package, Owens was surprised to find the IDs not to be visible at first glance.

"It was sent in this Chinese box and in it was a wallet," Owens said. "I was thinking 'Oh, well it will just be in the wallet.' So I was opening it and it wasn't in there and I was like, 'This is ridiculous. It's not in here.' But then I was looking at the box that it came in and the top seemed kind of thick. It was sewn into the top of the box so I had to unstitch it all, and there was just the package of the IDs."

FAKE FIRST

Freeman got her ID only weeks before ID Chief shut down. She admits she was not nervous the first time she used her ID because the liquor store clerk was on the phone and "wasn't really paying any attention to me."

Contrary to Freeman's first experience, the first

time Walsh used his fake ID, he was nervous.

"[The first time I used it] I thought I was going to [expletive] my pants," Walsh said. "I looked at it, then back at my [real] driver's licence just asking, 'Do they have the same kinds of things?' 'Is it missing the weird markings?' Just stuff like that. But then it worked and I was like, 'Sweet.'"

Looking back on that first experience, Walsh believes being nervous is its own risk.

"The more nervous you are, the more likely someone is going to think 'Wow, he looks really freaked out,'" Walsh said. "Then [the clerks] will wonder why."

Out of the three, Owens has had her fake ID the longest but has had one of the copies confiscated.

"They asked me for my [fake] address and I didn't know it," Owens said. "So it was really just my own fault."

The cashier confiscated Owens' ID, but ended up returning it minutes later.

"I begged for it back," Owens said. "Eventually they did [give it back]."

RISKY BUSINESS

Vice Section Sergeant Brad Dumit of the Kansas City Police Department says law enforcement sees many cases involving fake IDs. In Missouri, if a minor is caught using a fabricated identification card, the charge is a misdemeanor with up to a \$500 fine or six months in jail depending on a person's current record.

Not only is the user of the fake ID at risk for being penalized, but the establishment where it was used is also blamed if a minor is caught, regardless if the clerk or bartender knew the ID was fake.

According to Ray Dunlea, who has owned the Gaf, a bar and grill in Waldo, for eight years, he and his employees have caught fake IDs too many times to count. They confiscate the IDs and ask the minors to leave.

The punishment for a business on a first offense is a fine. For the second offense, the consequences are a fine and/or possibility for the establishment to be closed temporarily. But for a third offense, there is a substantial fine and the business is closed for three days, which means loss of revenue for those days.

The Gaf was closed for two business days due to the use of fake IDs by local college students. Realizing the risk for himself and others, the Rockhurst junior, Walsh, admits he prefers not to use his fake ID if it is unnecessary.

"I don't really like to use it because it is a risk," Walsh said. "Nothing about it can be thrown on someone else. You're in trouble with your parents and you're in trouble with the law."

Walsh and Freeman agree their parents would confiscate the ID if they were caught.

"If my parents found it they'd take it away," Freeman said.

"But if I found it, I'd take it back."

Unlike Freeman and Walsh, Owens says her parents are aware of the fact she drinks.

"My parents know," Owens said. "We just have a really open and honest relationship about it."

According to Walsh, Owens and Freeman, teenagers are searching for risk will find it in not only using a fake ID, but underage drinking as a whole.

"It's exciting because it's high risk," Walsh said. "People like risk. It's the same as rollercoasters. Like, why do people like rollercoasters? Well, because it feels like you're going to die."

Agreeing with Walsh, Owens believes a sole reason for teen drinking is the need for rebellion.

"People only do it because it's something fun to do and we're breaking the rules," Owens said.

THE PRECONCEIVED IDEA

Owens believes drinking, a vital part of the high school and college experience, should not be restricted due to age. Though the primary use for a fake ID is to get alcohol, Owens also argues some use their fake ID strictly to get into age restricted events.

"We can't go to half the concerts if we're not 21," Owens said. "[Having a fake ID] just opens up so many doors because there's so many age restrictions. Age, at this point, is just a number. It shouldn't hold you back from having the best experiences you can have."

Along with Owens, Walsh believes there is a stigma attached to those who own fake IDs.

"I think people see kids with fake IDs as [expletive] ups, alcoholics, stoners, and kids who don't give a [expletive]," Walsh said. "Me, and a lot of my friends who have [fake IDs], are honor students or earn straight As."

It was Nov. 10.

The same STA student walked into the same store, confident.

She saw the same stickers pleading those under 21 to stay away.

The same metal door handle greeted her hand along with the same chime.

She tucked the same brand of vodka under her arm. She grabbed the same two cases of beer out of the frigid cooler.

She took the same steps to the counter.

A voice ordered her to place the alcohol on the counter and leave.

She walked out those same doors in a different way, defeated.

She walked the same distance to her car, empty handed.

But it wasn't over.

It's still not over. There's plenty other pairs of eyes for her fake ID to fool. ★

MAKE IT OR FAKE IT

The *Dart* interviewed 270 students about the prevalence and use of fake IDs.

1 Do you know at least one person who has a fake ID card?

65% SAID YES



MISSOURI
ID#: 502-23-6894

AVILA, TERESA
678 FAKE ADDRESS, KCMO

DOB: 05-23-92
SEX: F
HGT: 5-04

WGT: 120
EYES: BLU
HAIR: BRN

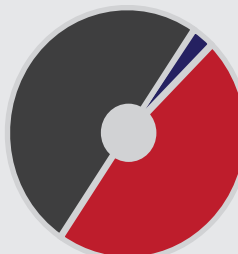
Name

2 Would you consider getting a fake ID card?

47% YES

50% NO

3% I HAVE ONE ALREADY



3 If you did acquire a fake ID, how would you most likely use it?

to buy alcohol & get into age-restricted concerts

37%

to get into age-restricted concerts only

36%

to buy alcohol only

21%

i'd just like to have it

6%

