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Scores appear in court for underage possession cases from X Games

CHAD ABRAHAM | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2015

Caught during big event, some travel hundreds of miles to plead guilty

They came from Montana, New Mexico, California and the Front Range, some driving for hours while others bought airline tickets — all to plead guilty Tuesday to petty offenses involving the underage possession of alcohol or marijuana.

The 32 young adults, many with their parents beside them, made up the first batch of defendants in an unprecedented operation by the Colorado Department of Revenue's liquor and tobacco enforcement division.

From Jan. 21-25, state agents wrote over 100 tickets for underage possession or consumption of liquor and cannabis. Between the state and local enforcement efforts, 126 tickets were issued, more than double the 49 citations handed out during the 2014 X Games.

Scores of people received the tickets at the Brush Creek intercept lot, where imbibers were caught as they tried to board buses to the Buttermilk venue. Others were issued citations at the X Games after private security guards hired by ESPN frisked attendees and checked backpacks.

Of the 126 tickets, about 20 came from the Pitkin County Sheriff's Office, said Bruce Benjamin, juvenile crime investigator. Those were split evenly between cannabis- and alcohol-related offenses, he said, adding he believed the revenue department's tickets were mostly for alcohol.

Processing the tickets required two prosecutors and the diversion coordinator for the 9th Judicial District.

In Pitkin County Court on Tuesday, Assistant District Attorney Scott Turner told the crowd about their rights and asked whether anyone wanted to consult an attorney. None did. After telling the youths that having a petty offense conviction on their record could affect college admission and student aid, Turner asked if any of the defendants wanted to plead not guilty. Again no hands went up. ■

Rest of article here: <http://goo.gl/abHXfi>

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