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ONE DOLLAR



Jars of marijuana sit in a display case at Sweet Relief on Oct. 1.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

As the smoke clears...

Local pot sales hold steady

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

Recreational marijuana sales in Clatsop County have settled at a high plateau after the initial surge that occurred once state law began allowing medical dispensaries to sell the product early last month.

"The wave's over; we're just getting a steady flow of people now," Nick Clark, owner of Nature's Choice Alternative Medicine in Astoria, said.

Oregon authorized medical marijuana dispensaries to temporarily sell up to a quarter-ounce of dried marijuana to adults 21 and older who don't carry medical marijuana cards. The law's passage came days after Measure 91 — which legalized the possession and use of recreational marijuana — went into effect in July.

Nature's Choice, The Pharmacy and Sweet Relief Natural Medicine in Astoria, and both Highway 420 and Cannabis Nation in Seaside, were slammed with customers from day one. It took one to two weeks for the smoke to clear and customer bases to stabilize.

"There was a ton of people that just wanted to do it for the novelty and check things out and were probably not going to be repeat customers, so that obviously went by the wayside," Steve Geiger, owner of Highway 420 in Seaside, said.

Since then, store "regulars" have declared themselves, with many incorporating the shops into their routine, especially on weekends, game nights and payday. Customers range from construction workers with body aches to service workers who want to sleep better, grandmas and grandpas who haven't lit up in decades to patients weaning themselves off of opiates.

"Even though it's 'recreational,' quote end quote — just because you don't have a piece of paper in plastic, a laminated medical card — it doesn't mean you're not going to get help (from



Shavaun Devlin, an employee at Hi, restocks the rack Tuesday. Hi prepackages their marijuana for sale.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

smoking pot)," Oscar Nelson, owner of Sweet Relief, said.

And, of course, customers include perfectly healthy people who just want to get blazed and eat nachos.

"I think our store is probably doing wonders for the nacho industry at large," said Raja Afrika, a bartender at Hi Astoria, the latest dispensary to open in the city.

Clientele

By the owners' rough estimates, Nature's Choice now sees about 60 to 70 people buying recreational marijuana per day; Highway 420, between 50 and 75; Cannabis Nation and Sweet Relief, between 170 and 200 people per day.

"Right off the bat, we saw close to 300 (per

day) for a few days, and then it sort of tapered down," Tony Kelly, general manager of Seaside's Cannabis Nation, said. "A lot of people were coming in just to get the prerolled joints — 'joints for a penny' — that we were doing. So we went through a lot of those."

The Pharmacy declined to disclose how many customers the store sees daily, but co-owner Nick Palazzo said that about 95 percent of them are recreational customers.

Because of demand and increased clientele, Sweet Relief has added the equivalent of five full-time employees. "It's been amazing," Nelson said. "It's just a lot more consumers than I originally imagined."

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Tongue Point draws second protest

Fired worker alleges unsafe work conditions, poor treatment of students

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

A second fired employee has filed a complaint against Management and Training Corp., the private operator of Tongue Point Job Corps Center in Astoria.

Loretto Jones, a seamanship instructor fired last month, alleges she was retaliated against and eventually terminated for reporting unsafe work conditions, poor treatment of students, unqualified staff and other issues with Tongue Point's seamanship program. A report by the corporation in response to Jones' allegations found almost all of them unfounded.

Jones filed claims with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries earlier this month against both the Utah-based operator of Tongue Point and the Inlandboatmen's Union, which sponsors the school's seamanship program and employed her as an instructor.

Culinary instructor Deborah Ferguson was fired earlier this year and filed complaints with the bureau against the corporation, alleging sex discrimination, disability discrimination and whistleblower retaliation.

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Astoria OKs first pot grow business

Sign of high times in emerging industry

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

A fading warehouse off Industry Street could be Astoria's first commercial marijuana growing operation.

Jason Oei and Chris West are medical marijuana growers who are refurbishing the warehouse to grow commercial pot when applications become available next year. Sweet Relief, the pair said, will likely use space nearby for a retail marijuana shop.

"Gentlemen, welcome. This is a first for the Planning Commission," said Dave Pearson, the president of the Astoria Planning Commission, which unanimously approved the growing site Tuesday night.

"This is a first for us, also," Oei said.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission is expected to start accepting applications for commercial growers, wholesalers, processors and retail outlets in January.

With recreational marijuana only legal in Oregon since July, and limited retail sales at medical marijuana dispensaries since October, these are still early and uncertain days for an emerging industry.

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Chowder boat could go near Port

City rebuffed two previous locations

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

Looks like Teresa Estrada will get to sell her clam chowder from a vintage gillnetter, just not near the Bowpicker.

Estrada received approval from the Astoria Planning Commission Tuesday night for a food cart off Industry Street at the Port of Astoria. The site is close to the Astoria Riverwalk and could attract trolley and cruise ship passengers, as well as boaters, fishermen and other visitors to the Port and the Cannery Pier Hotel.

In May, the City Council rejected Estrada's request to sell chowder from a 1946 gillnet boat on



Teresa Estrada stands next to a 28-foot-long vintage gillnetter she plans on converting to a food cart for selling clam chowder.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

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