

Sisters couple puts music in reach for kids

By Kathryn Godsiff
Correspondent

Brian Foutz understands the power of music to make the world a better place, and he’s determined that any child who wants to learn to play music has the opportunity. He and his wife, Genny, started the Foutz Foundation last year with the goal of making musical instruments available to students free of charge.

Brian’s brother, Travis, shared the love of music and was enrolled in college, preparing to become a music teacher. His unexpected death last year at age 36 caused Brian to seek a way to honor Travis’s memory and the Foutz Foundation was created. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the foundation matches eligible students with an instrument of their choice. The student must provide a letter of recommendation from a teacher to ensure that there is serious intent to learn.

The Foutz brothers came to Central Oregon about 15 years ago to help their father with his house. It was completely different from their surroundings in Ohio, and they stayed. Brian currently works in Sisters at XPress Printing.

They both started their love affair with music in elementary school, playing multiple instruments in jazz and marching and symphonic

bands and starting their own garage bands as they grew up. Brian was mainly a percussionist while Travis played guitar and trombone.

“We understood the power of music, in good times, bad times and every time between,” said Brian.

The foundation is seeking applications from interested students and donations of instruments. Brian realizes that once a person has spent many years learning to play music, getting rid of the source of that musical joy can be difficult. He hopes the knowledge that one’s beloved instrument is causing another to experience that joy will encourage donations.

“ We understood the power of music, in good times, bad times... — Brian Foutz

Students from all of Central Oregon can apply. “We want to turn this into something where every students who wants to learn an instrument gets one,” said Brian.

Instructions for instrument donations and applications are available on the Foutz Foundation website, www.foutzfoundation.org or by calling 541-549-6063.

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Medical pot program has problems

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — The agency overseeing Oregon’s legal medical marijuana industry conceded in a report Thursday it has not provided effective oversight of growers and others in the industry, creating opportunities for weed to be diverted to the black market.

The blunt internal review echoes complaints from federal authorities that Oregon hasn’t adequately controlled its marijuana businesses, and that overproduction of pot is feeding a black market in states that haven’t legalized it.

Oregon was one of the first states to legalize medical marijuana in 1998, and in 2014 voters approved allowing recreational use. The state’s struggle to transform a business that for decades had operated illegally in the shadows into a regulated industry sets an example for other states moving toward legalization.

Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen ordered the internal review amid complaints from state and local law enforcement officials about lack of oversight of the pot industry. The health authority directs the state’s Medical Marijuana

Program, while the Liquor Control Commission regulates recreational pot.

The review showed there were more than 20,000 grow sites, but only 58 inspections were carried out in 2017.

The Oregon Medical Marijuana Program has far too few inspectors, while the tracking of growers and the pot they produce has been inadequate and inaccurate, the report concluded.

“Potentially erroneous reporting coupled with low reporting compliance makes it difficult to accurately track how much product is in the medical system,” the report said. “This limits OMMP’s ability to successfully identify and address potential diversion.”

The report said the medical marijuana oversight agency lacks reliable, independent tools to validate grow site locations and relies on inconsistent county databases.

Law enforcement authorities say they often have trouble identifying which marijuana growers are legal. Seen from a helicopter just before harvest season, marijuana grows are like a green patchwork across one southwestern county, one drug enforcement officer recalled.

In Deschutes County, the sheriff and district attorney

in February went public with their frustrations, saying the state was allowing black market operations to proliferate through lack of oversight. They asked the Health Authority to provide a list of medical marijuana grow sites, but the agency refused, saying the law doesn’t permit it to provide such a list. The agency could only respond on a case-by-case basis.

Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel commended OHA director Allen for ordering the study. The two met last month and agreed to use the results of the study to discuss improved oversight.

In a statement, the health authority said the confidentiality of grow site addresses is protected by law, but added it’s exploring ways to work more closely with law enforcement to ensure medical marijuana grow sites are operating legally.

“We are taking steps to maintain the integrity of Oregon’s medical marijuana program and make sure medical products reach the patients who need them,” Allen said. “The actions we’re taking include better tracking of growers, better enforcement, and making sure product that fails testing has been destroyed.”

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