

Gratitude!



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Many local businesses show gratitude for all of the firefighters that are here in the Valley.

Synthetic cannabinoids cause death at Brit

“ ... sometimes they’re hundreds of times more potent than THC ... ”

Nicole Wetsman, Popular Science

CJ Schatza

IVN Contributing Writer

Tragedy struck the community of New Haven, Conn. last week when upward of 80 park-goers overdosed on a potent drug popularly known as “synthetic marijuana.” According to officials, 25 of these cases occurred in a three-hour span of time on the morning of Wednesday, Aug. 15, and the tally of overdose victims grew over a two-day period during which time medical resources in the city, which is home to Yale University, were completely overwhelmed by the sudden influx of patients.

On Thursday, synthetic marijuana, also known as K2 or the brand name Spice, extracted a toll much closer to home when three attendees of the Britt Music & Arts Festival in Jacksonville, Oregon overdosed on it. One of these individuals died as a result, while two were hospitalized.

With two separate incidents occurring on opposite sides of the country, it is clear that the danger posed by K2 is not isolated to any one region or state, but rather threatens our nation as a whole. Therefore, it is essential for the general public to know what this dangerous drug is and what it can do.

Synthetic marijuana is not actually marijuana at all. The association between marijuana, a

crop and K2, a man-made chemical, is the fact that taking the derived drugs stimulates cannabinoid receptors in the human brain, resulting in the “high” that users of recreational drugs seek. So in fact K2 is more accurately referred to as “synthetic cannabinoids.”

In an interview on Jefferson Public Radio, Michael Baumann of the National Institute on Drug Abuse explained the process by which synthetic cannabinoids reach consumers in the United States: “Most of these synthetic cannabinoids are made in Asian laboratories and trafficked over the internet. Substances are purchased by cartels or street dealers, who dilute the chemicals and solvents and spray the chemicals onto inert plant material. And that’s what’s sold as K2 or Spice.”

Another important difference between so-called synthetic marijuana and its namesake is potency. Weed-derived drugs marginally stimulate the cannabinoids in the brain, while synthetic cannabinoids drastically impact them. Popular Science’s Nicole Wetsman reported, “If the cannabinoid receptors were a dial, the plant would consistently turn it up a few notches. The synthetic compounds, on the other hand, would spin it freely—sometimes they’re hundreds of times more potent than THC, a major cannabinoid in marijuana plants... This inconsistency is a major part of what makes these drugs so

dangerous.”

The rising demand of synthetics is due not only to their strength, but to the fact that standard drug tests do not detect the drug. Baumann expressed that this makes K2 particularly popular with “probationers, parolees, military personnel, (and) athletes... But there has also been a steep rise in misuse of synthetic cannabinoids among the homeless and indigent populations because the substances are very inexpensive, and they afford a very cheap way of getting high.”

The consequences of using synthetic cannabinoids can be quite severe, as reported by Foundation for a Drug-Free World: “It can be addictive and lead to withdrawal symptoms which include craving, nightmares, heavy sweating, nausea, tremors, headaches, extreme tiredness, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, problems thinking clearly and neglect of other interests or duties.

“After repeated and long-term use of the drug, users can experience forgetfulness and confusion. Some users have reported experiencing paralysis.”

Wetsman added, “Marijuana plants, or the cannabinoids developed for therapeutic use through the normal pharmaceutical process, wouldn’t cause the same effects.”

SEE SYNTHETIC ON A-8

Klondike is doing what it’s told for now

Annette McGee Rasch

IVN Contributing Writer

As the Klondike fire continues to grow, almost 1,000 firefighters are now dedicated to protecting the community - and that no structures have been lost is a testament to the high level of skill and commitment these men and women put forth.

Firefighters working around the clock say those efforts are paying dividends as the month-old 76,000 acre blaze is now 32 percent contained. Essentially merged with the Taylor Creek fire (which is 95 percent contained) the entire complex has burned about 130,000 acres so far.

Dry fuels and hot, dry weather conditions have continued to stoke fire growth - and with firefighting resources spread thin across the western states, suppression efforts on the Klondike remain “challenging.”

Still, firefighters have accomplished some amazing work. While residents living along the Wild and Scenic Illinois River Corridor are literally surrounded by the Klondike’s fiery footprint, no structures have been lost! And despite some media reports, the corridor is not damaged in any permanent sense.

“The Wild and Scenic Illinois River Corridor is not destroyed,” said Ronnie Chitum, who has lived near the McCaleb Boy Scout Ranch since 1980 - and she’s also weathered the Silver, Biscuit, Labrador and Chetco Bar fires.

“Sure, the corridor is pretty black right now and there’s a lot of ash, however if you look midway down, there’s a lot of green too,” she said. “They didn’t just wipe out everything. Life grows back and I’m just glad that so many fallen down trees from the Biscuit are gone now and I know other homeowners on the road feel the same way.”

Regarding back burns set by firefighters around structures, she said, “The fire people prepared everything so well, so the fire burned at low intensities and left a lot of nice greenery. It burned up thin dead trees and other flammable brush like poison oak and blackberry bushes and buck brush - and I still have new shoots of pine, fir and oak.”

The Klondike was split into two zones Saturday: The Alaska Incident Management Team camped out at Lake Selmac is directing work on the “Klondike East Fire,” while the “Klondike West Fire” is now managed by California Interagency Incident Management Team 4 from the Curry Country fairgrounds in Gold Beach.

This is allowing the Klondike East team to “focus its efforts on controlling the southeast corner of the fire that is directly threatening the communities of Selma and Cave Junction.”

After winds blowing from the northeast had spotted across the Illinois River last week, firefighters focused hard on stopping that blaze north of Babyfoot Road. And at the time this paper went to print, there was great success in herding the tricky blaze toward the Chetco Bar fire footprint where it is expected to settle down.

In the West Zone fire activity is being monitored and plans are being made to do some direct suppression as needed. Helicopters have dumped water on tricky spots and the team is working to protect the community of Agness while “adding depth” to contingency fire lines to protect coastal residents.

Last Monday night 150 people attended a community fire meeting at the Illinois Valley High School, and Operations Chief Russ Long said the maps “don’t do justice to the size and scope of this fire.

“We look at these flat maps and it takes all of the reality out of what kind of country you have here,” Long said. “If it was a ski slope it’d be a black diamond, if it was a river it’d be a Class 5, it’s the toughest country that there is to offer. ... We cannot put people down on the canyons, it’s too dangerous. We’re not going to put people under all those snags that kill firefighters.

“This fire keeps wanting to burn south, so while you’re sleeping we’ve got folks up there who are going for it, they’re bringing it,” Long said, referring to the 270 firefighters working along the Babyfoot Road fire line to protect all the values found within and around the Illinois Valley.

Fire managers, taking note of the unique plant life found in the Siskiyou’s, are thrilled that they have been able to keep the fire out of the Babyfoot Lake Botanical area.

The primary eastern containment line to keep the blaze away from Highway 199 is being strengthened and the fire has been kept to the west of Eight Dollar Mountain.

“Lots of plans are in place in the event we have the fire making a turn toward the east,” Illinois Valley Fire Chief Dennis Hoke explained, adding that a Red Cross trailer is pre-positioned by the main fire station in Cave Junction. Both large and small animal evacuation support services are place as well.

Residences west of Highway 199, between Eight Dollar Mountain and the California border, remain on a Level 1 evacuation “get ready” notice.

Learn more about help for evacuating handicapped people by calling the Joint Information Center at 541-474-5305 or email SWOfireinfo@gmail.com.

Sign up for citizens’ telephone alerts. Those with cell phones need to register for citizen telephone alerts at: www.co.josephine.or.us/alert.

Go to inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/5998/ or call 541-597-4784 to learn more about the Klondike.

See what’s crawling around in Christy’s head this week. Crawlies with Cri on A-12