

MEDICINE MAN

Award-winning Eugene grower **Adam Jacques** leads the way for medical cannabis

BY RICK LEVIN

It's been a heavy week for Adam Jacques. As he tours around the 40-plus-acre farm in west Eugene where he cultivates some of the most highly regarded medical cannabis in the world, Jacques, always outgoing, nonetheless seems weighted by sadness — not exactly downbeat but weary, like a man recently smacked by the cosmos.

Atop the 100-hour week Jacques and his team routinely put in breeding medical cannabis for patients, he's also been filling out the reams of bureaucratic and legal paperwork required to go recreational, a move he's making largely to fund the healing side of his profession. It's this professional work — the breeding of strains with record-breaking percentages of cannabidiol or CBD, one of the major medicinal elements in pot that, unlike THC, does not get you high — that led *Canna Magazine* to give Jacques the Most Influential Grower in the Northwest award at its Seattle conference this past August.

But there's business, and then there's the business of healing, with its hard-won triumphs and inevitable losses. On the morning of Jan. 3 came news of the passing of Frank Leeds, a cancer patient with whom Jacques had been working closely for the past five years. It was his work with Leeds — and in particular the breeding of "Frank's Gift," a high-CBD strain of cannabis — that opened up for Jacques the possibility of turning his green gifts toward the services of healing.

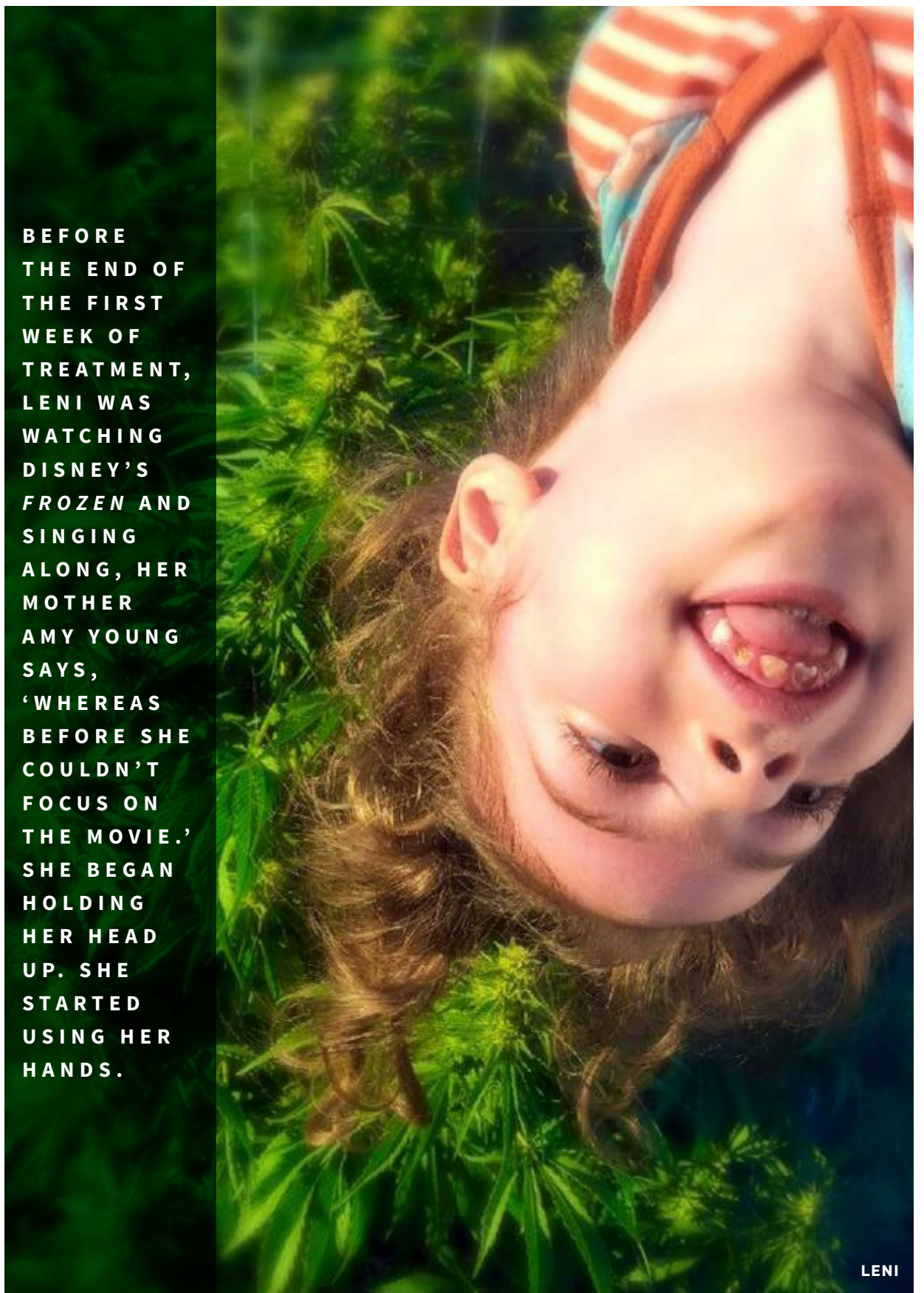
Although deeply saddened by Leeds' death, Jacques says he celebrates the man's life and what that might mean for other cannabis patients down the line. "It opened up so many doors for us to be allowed to help so many that were needing the effects of medical cannabis without the feeling of being stoned," Jacques says of treating Leeds. "While I was constantly consistently growing high-quality THC cannabis, the ability to help so many more people became available. It was a huge turning point in who I was as a person and grower. I cried and celebrated that day."

Since this breakthrough, Jacques has been propelled to the forefront of the medical cannabis movement. And he isn't just pulling down awards. Just this year he turned his efforts to helping Leni, a young girl immobilized by severe seizures, and he remains an outspoken proponent of protecting the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program from legislative assault and the encroachment of pharmaceutical corporations looking to cash in.

LENI'S STORY

Listening to Jacques, it's difficult to see his transformation from a darn good Eugene weed grower to an industry-leading medical cannabis provider as anything less than life-altering. "We're all people and we all have our lives and our life stories," Jacques says. "I can't say I'm proud of who I've been. I was not the person I wanted to be. Helping people, that's what I've needed all along. That's what gets me out of bed in the morning."

BEFORE THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK OF TREATMENT, LENI WAS WATCHING DISNEY'S *FROZEN* AND SINGING ALONG, HER MOTHER AMY YOUNG SAYS, 'WHEREAS BEFORE SHE COULDN'T FOCUS ON THE MOVIE,' SHE BEGAN HOLDING HER HEAD UP. SHE STARTED USING HER HANDS.



LENI

PHOTO COURTESY DEBRA MAE