Jacques says it was this awakening to the way his talents as a grower could help people that's set him on the healing path. "It's a damn real thing," he says of this newfound sense of purpose. "I'm finally to the point where I feel like I'm doing something that makes a difference in people's lives."

Certainly Amy Young would agree. Along with her husband and four children, Young moved to Oregon from their home outside Montgomery, Alabama, this past August just to get her daughter Leni closer to Jacques, who she calls a "legend" among medical marijuana patients. Leni, now 4, was born with only a portion of her frontal lobe intact, the result, Young says, of a huge stroke in utero.

"By her one-month checkup, it was very clear to us that something was different," Young says. "She couldn't calm down, she would cry and she had a hard time nursing."

At just 34 days old, Leni underwent a cranial ultrasound at a hospital in Birmingham, during which her condition was discovered. At that point, Young and her husband were told it was only a matter of time.

"You cannot have that much brain damage and not have seizures," she explains. "At that point, she's got a neurologist, a cardiologist, a speech and occupational therapist, because we know there's stuff coming down the road."

Medically and developmentally, Young says Leni continued to progress "almost like a normal child" until the seven-month mark, at which point the difficulties started. "Within a few days, we were in-patient at Children's Hospital," she says of visiting the University of Alabama facilities. "She couldn't stop seizing." Leni was given what Young says were "almost adult doses" of anti-epileptic meds. Young and her husband were told to call palliative care, who suggested the couple consider withholding nutrition.

"They told us she was dying," Young says. "They didn't think she'd make it to Christmas, and it was August."

The Youngs decided to take Leni home instead of placing her in hospice, because "anything that they could do, we could do," Young says. "We went home to snuggle her and love her and follow her lead, whatever it would be." Family flew in from around the country to say their goodbyes.

And then, Young says, "Leni surprised us." The anti-epileptic drugs seemed to slow down her seizures, though the infant was still having between five and 20 tonic-clonic (or gran mal) seizures a day, while suffering a series of myoclonic or smaller seizures in-between as well as "absents," which Young describes as "like a skip in a record player."

SHOULD THE MEDICAL CANNABIS PROGRAM GO AWAY, JACQUES NOTES, HIS CAPACITY TO WORK WITH KIDS LIKE LENI WOULD BE ABOLISHED, REDUCING HIM TO A SELLER WHO CANNOT MAKE A RECOMMENDATION ON TREATMENT FOR FEAR OF LEGAL REPERCUSSIONS.

ADAM JACQUES

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

Despite surviving, Leni now seemed locked into an almost vegetative state. "She had stopped moving at all," Young says. "She had stopped making any vocal noises either. We had to gauge her mood by her breathing. That went on for a good six months. She would be still and didn't make a noise. That was scary."

As happens, Young and her husband began communicating with other parents of special needs kids, seeking alternative options for care. They began hearing about epileptic children being treated with cannabis oil, and came across the much-publicized story of "Charlotte's Web," the high-CBD cannabis extract named after Charlotte Figi, a 9-year-old with Dravet syndrome whose seizures were reduced with the medicine. The Youngs joined a group of parents in lobbying the Alabama Legislature to pass Carly's Law, which in March of 2014 legalized the medical use of "marijuana-derived oil" in Alabama.

Despite the fact that a neurologist recommended Leni as a subject for an early study of pharmaceutical cannabis in Alabama, the child was excluded from the study because, Young says, "she was not taking enough pharmaceuticals" — not in dosage, she clarifies, but in sheer count. The Youngs were up against the wall again; due to the severity of Leni's condition, they were nervous about waiting for the FDA and DEA to sign off on the new law.

Alabama being, well, Alabama, and not among the most progressive states in the Union, especially when it comes to marijuana prohibitions, the Youngs realized they couldn't risk going underground to get Leni treated. "So we made the decision that we have to move," she says. "We gotta go somewhere where we can get this stuff, was our first thought. OK, where do we go? Who has been doing this the longest?"

They began shopping around states with medical cannabis programs, looking hard at Colorado Springs, where a large community of special-needs parents has sprung up thanks to that state's early passage of medical cannabis legislation. Then Young's husband, Wayne, landed a job in Portland, and the family decided to move to nearby Newberg. They arrived this past June.

"At this point," Young says, "I contact a couple friends that I trust who are part of the movement. And everybody came back with the same name. He's like a legend," she adds, speaking of Jacques. A mutual friend hooked Young up with Adam Jacques' wife, Deborah, who runs the Oregon Microgrowers Guild, the couple's medical cannabis dispensary in west Eugene. Young told Deborah about Leni. "Deborah and I started talking online," she says, "and that was all she wrote."

Simply leaving Alabama seemed to have a beneficial effect on Leni's condition; there was a 20-percent decrease in seizures, which Young says might have something to do with differences in barometric pressure. The family was careful in moving forward, making sure Leni and the Jacques got comfortable with each other before starting her on doses of cannabis oil. "We also wanted them to get to know her," she says, "so that they would have a better idea of what they were dealing with."

In August, they started Leni on a mix of cannabis oils that contained high counts of CBD as well as THC-A, a nonactive form of THC that doesn't get you high. According to Young, they began with "an incredibly small dose that both Adam and we thought would do nothing, and within the first hour it was very clear that she could focus on things further away. The whole thing happening instantly is not crap. It's real."

Before the end of the first week of treatment, Leni was watching Disney's *Frozen* and singing along, Young says, "whereas before she couldn't focus on the movie." She began holding her head up. She started using her hands.

"We bought toys this Christmas," Young says. "It's crazy."

Leni's older brother, Thomas, says it was "mind-blowing" to see the immediate results of his sister's treatment with cannabis oil. "She was a zombie when she came here," he explains. "You can't argue with what you see." Thomas, 23, now helps Jacques out at the farm.

"It's beyond anything we ever could have imagined," Amy Young says of the effects of the oil. Leni's seizures have reduced from several big ones a day, strung together