

Vaping store, lounge opens downtown

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Any number of eclectic flavors — strawberry, cinnamon roll and the like — hit the nostrils walking into Columbia Vapes.

But there's no smoke or ash trays at the region's first vaping lounge, recently opened in downtown Astoria.

Vape is a colloquial term for vaporizing nicotine-infused liquid and the Oxford Dictionary's word of the year for 2014.

"This store exists because of my experience with vaping," said Yolanda Wlodarski, adding that she'd tried everything to quit smoking, before starting to vape helped ween her off cigarettes completely more than a year ago.

She, Tony Wlodarski and Allen Estes opened the lounge and vaping shop earlier this month, tapping into a rising national trend and an increasingly popular, albeit relatively unregulated, alternative to smoking.

Behind the lounging area, vaping pen starter kits; customizable vaporizer pens, known as "mods" by aficionados; tobacco pipe-like vaporizers; and other variations line several display cases, along with tanks, mouthpieces, cases and merchandise. An atomizer inside the mods heats the nicotine-infused liquids, turning them into a vapor that can be inhaled.

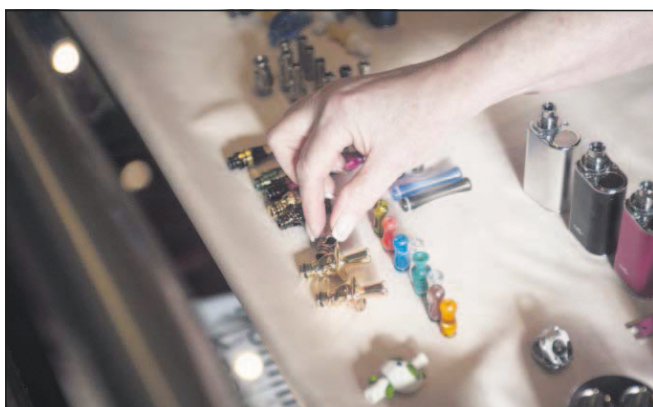
In the back, a shelf filled with small plastic vials of liquid offers more than 40 flavors of vaping liquids from Bellingham, Wash.-based Mount Baker Vapor, along with several "premium" flavors. Vaping liquids typically include water, nicotine, flavoring and either a propylene glycol or vegetable glycerin base.

The containers each carry 15 milliliters of liquid, costing about \$7 each. They also come in different strengths, from zero to 18 milligrams of nicotine per milliliter. The shop has stayed away from stronger liquids and mixing its own, said the owners, although it provides contacts for custom mixers.

"A pack-a-day smoker could



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian
Yolanda Wlodarski, left, and Allen Estes, right stand in their new store, Columbia Vape, Monday.



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian
Yolanda Wlodarski shows off various mouthpieces that Columbia Vape carries in stock.

probably vape for less than \$20 a month," said Yolanda Wlodarski, adding that for \$30 or less, someone can buy all their equipment and a supply of liquid.

In addition to a cost-savings, the owners see vaping as a viable cessation tool. After starting vaping at 18 milligrams per milliliter when she quit smoking more than a year ago, she said she's down to 6 and hopes to be vaping with no nicotine by the end of the year. Estes said that after more than 50 years of cigarettes, he's cut his smoking in half since he started vaping.

The owners said they don't sell to minors, and they check the IDs of people coming in

and ask unaccompanied minors to leave. They open at 11 a.m. Wednesday through Sunday at 1268 Commercial St. and can be found at www.facebook.com/columbiavapes or at columbiavapes@gmail.com

New frontier

Vaporizing products are not regulated by the more encompassing age and indoor restrictions or taxes facing traditional cigarettes. The Food and Drug Administration in April proposed a rule to extend its regulatory authority to e-cigarette products.

E-cigarettes and other vaping products are prohibited

on Clatsop County property, including the fairgrounds. The Astoria School District added e-cigarettes to its tobacco-free policy in April.

In August 2012, Gov. John Kitzhaber signed an executive order prohibiting the use of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, in state agency buildings and on state agency grounds. The Oregon Health Authority recommends that businesses and local jurisdictions prohibit their use.

Various studies by the FDA and other groups have found elevated levels of various chemicals and carcinogens, such as formaldehyde, in vapors from e-cigarettes.

"It's not a vapor," said Steven Blakesly, a health promotion specialist with the county. "It's an aerosol. Vapor is water in gas form."

The Oregon Legislature held hearings a year ago on H.B. 4073, which would have extended the smoking ban for minors to e-cigarettes, and H.B. 4115, which would have done the same, while additionally including e-cigarettes in the state's indoor smoking ban. Blakesly said the state is waiting to hear what the FDA decides before moving forward.



EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian
Liza Gibbons runs Raqad Fitness in Gearhart.

Making the Dollar

INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES
BY EDWARD STRATTON

Liza Gibbons, owner Raqad Fitness, LLC 3470 U.S. Highway 101 Gearhart

Liza Gibbons' Raqad Fitness takes its name from the Hebrew verb "to stamp, spring about wildly or for joy, dance, jump, leap, skip." The wife of U.S. Coast Guardsman, she started her company when they were living in Washington, D.C., but has been operating it for two years in Gearhart and now includes morning and evening classes taught by four instructors, including herself. Raqad is getting ready to move, albeit within a few miles of her current location, she said. Find Raqad Fitness' rates, schedule and other information at www.raqadfitness.com and on Facebook.

How would describe your business?

"Raqad Fitness is kind of a unique model we have. We're family friendly, first of all. Kids are welcome to come in and hang out and wait while their moms are working out. My background is public health education, and I'm a health education specialist. After being a stay-at-home mom for a long time ... starting this felt very similar in many ways. I try to keep it affordable so that women can come back and make fitness a part of their life, not just something they do occasionally."

How did you get into this business?

"I started Raqad Fitness when we were in D.C. (in 2009). It looked a little different than this. I didn't have my own studio. I rented space in dance studios, just a class here, a class there. When I moved here, I wanted to do the same thing. After a while, I found out through a friend that they were renting this old space, which was previously Gearhart Workout. I told my husband 'what do you think about this; do you mind? What if no one comes?' Because I didn't do any advertising. He said 'well I'm going to invest in you, and I just want to support you.' We put up all the money upfront to get started, and he said 'I have enough for you to continue for a year, even if no one comes.' I did the first week of free classes, and I only offered four classes a week when we started, and they were packed full of ladies."

Who is your usual clientele?

"What I love about what we've created here is that there is no usual clientele. We've really just kind of broke through the walls of who comes here. Do we have moms that drive Mercedes and Porsches? Yes. Are there lawyers' wives and doctors' wives and business owners? Yes. But we also have a whole range of people. And I'll take people who are like 'Look, I can't afford to come, but I can't afford to go.' And I work with those people on like a plan that they can afford, just so they can come and benefit."

What are some of the quirks of your business?

"Because we're loud, it's difficult for us. I really need to be in a place where I can be as loud as I want and not disturb my neighbors. Being here has been wonderful for the last two years, but it is very difficult. And I'm actually ... going to be moving. I'm looking at two possibilities. Both locations are bigger than here, and I'm going to need the next month to put in floors and mirrors and make them lovely. I want to be a benefit to wherever we are."

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Realtors announce top producers

The Clatsop Association of Realtors' Multiple Listing Service has announced the 2014 Top Producers. They are: 1. Bree Phillips, ReMax River and Sea; 2. Barbara Maltman, Windermere Stellar; 3. Debra Bowe, Windermere Pacific Land; 4. Alaina Giguere, ReMax Coastal Advantage; 5. Farzahn Kamali, Kamali Sotheby's International; 6. Melissa Eddy, Windermere Stellar; 7. Reet Vaga, Kamali Sotheby's International; 8. Marianne Pittard, ReMax River and Sea; 9. Kate Merrill, Windermere Stellar; and 10.

Sally Conrad, Kamali Sotheby's International.

Sherry Sopko at 503-440-6456 or nbia@msn.com

Lead-based paint refresher class offered Feb. 10

The North Coast Building Industry Association is offering a half-day morning Lead Based Paint Certified Renovator Refresher class Feb. 10 in Astoria. The class is required for certificate renewal.

The cost is \$150 for NCBIA members or \$200 for non-members. Preregistration is required, and the class is limited to 12 students. For information, contact

12th man ice cream debuts at Frite & Scoop

Frite & Scoop, the gourmet ice cream parlor at 175 14th St., is making a Super Bowl flavor called "Go Hawks" today through Sunday, available in scoops and pints. The flavor includes a lime curd ice cream with a blueberry swirl.

Frite & Scoop is open from noon to 6 p.m. Thursday through Monday. For more information, find Frite & Scoop on Facebook or at www.friteandscoop.com

Clatsop County Property Transactions

Seller: Clatsop County Sheriff's Office
Buyer: LPP Mortgage Ltd.
Address: 32281 Hemlock Lane, Arch Cape
Price: \$1.3 million

Seller: Leon Jackson
Buyer: Bryan K. Kumm and Debra E. Kumm
Address: 664 39th St.
Price: \$348,500

Seller: Macdonald Farm, LLC
Buyers: Michael V. Cropp and Susan C. Cropp
Address: 719 5th Ave., Hammond
Price: \$290,000

Sellers: Darryl Tucker and Julie Tucker
Buyers: Kasey T. Vu and Lauren P. Cai
Address: 2420 S. Edge-wood St., Seaside
Price: \$260,500

Sellers: Larry T. Poor, Stacey L. Brown and Mark Brown
Buyer: Federal National Mortgage Association
Address: 92904 Cherry Road, Astoria
Price: \$209,679

Seller: Clatsop County Sheriff's Office
Buyer: Nationstar Mortgage, LLC
Address: 36144 U.S. Highway 26, Seaside
Price: \$189,547



Submitted photo

Olynx Levy cuts hair and shaves faces at Oly's Barber Shop in Uppertown.

Barber brings 30-year history to Oly's

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Olynx Levy, a barber for 30 years and proprietor of the recently opened Oly's Barber Shop, describes herself as a tomboy.

She said she doesn't really cut women's hair. "I've always worked in a barbershop. Put me in a salon, and I probably wouldn't know what to do."

Her barbershop is locat-

ed at 2910 Marine Drive, the former location of Salon 29. But the location, she said, has a more than 30-year history as a barbershop, and she's looking to bring back that business and sense of community.

Levy, who's worked for Crossfades Analog Barbershop and Reef & Company Barbers, does haircuts, straight razor shaves and hot towel treatments in her 1890's Koken hydraulic-powered barber chair,

offering discounts for members of the military, veterans and for simplistic buzz cuts.

"This is a barbershop/studio," said Levy, who also does lost-wax casting and other jewelry-making at her shop.

Oly's Barber Shop is open from 10:15 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. It's closed on Wednesdays and Sundays, and takes appointments Saturdays at 505-989-3611.

Visit us online at
www.DailyAstorian.com