



EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian

Brian Harriger, center, and Patrick Gore work at Smoke 'N Vape Bloc, which includes many pieces of paraphernalia for smoking and vaping.

Smoke, vape shop opens downtown

Second in Astoria

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Downtown Astoria, without a vaping lounge at the beginning of 2015, now has two.

Yosef "Joe" Alburati, who owns the Texaco station in Astoria, expanded his business ventures downtown into Smoke 'N Vape Bloc, which he opened March 14 in the former Tienda La Costenita Hispanic grocery store next to Malternative, at 1159 Marine Drive. The shop joins Columbia Vapes on Commercial Street as the second downtown vaping lounge.

"It's the new thing to the new generation," said Joe Alburati, unapologetic about tapping into the growing trend of vaping, the inhalation of vaporized nicotine. "Across the West Coast, it's ridiculously popular."

Joe Alburati owns two stores, a smoke shop with a vape shop next door, with business partner Sadek "David" Alammari



Submitted photo

Smoke 'N Vape Bloc is run by partners, from left, Yosef "Joe" Alburati, Sadek "David" Alammari and Muhamed "Mo" Alburati.

in Madera, Calif. Helping him run the store in Astoria is cousin Muhamed "Mo" Alburati.

Beyond a social trend, vaping aficionados have hailed the practice as a way for people to cease smoking. But health officials have sounded alarm bells, saying the vaping liquids contain their own harmful mix of

chemicals, while educators have been reporting increased use of vaporizing devices in school.

The Alburatis said the store would have a sign telling minors to not go beyond the front lobby of the store, which sells clothing, candy and other merchandise.

Beyond that, they said, customers will be ID'd before

entering the store's main corridor, all black slat walls, shelves and backlit glass display cases packed with every manner of smoking and vaping supplies, along with detoxing drinks, a wide selection of lighters, knives and other merchandise. A back room is filled with bong and other water pipes.

Mo Alburati said that before, people had to travel to Under the Bridge Cigarette Shop in Uniontown to get the same stuff. The partners, he added, didn't think downtown was alive enough at night and wanted to do something locally, instead of opening a shop in Portland.

The original idea, he said, was to start a vaping display at the Texaco, which Joe Alburati came to Astoria from California's Central Valley in 2008 to manage, before he bought it from his uncle last summer.

The Alburatis come from a long line of entrepreneurs and said they hope to make Smoke 'N Vape Bloc a chain, starting with Madera and Astoria.



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Rafael Otero and his wife Patricia O'Donnell (not pictured) fixed their carriage guest house on the north slope of Astoria into a couples bed and breakfast.

Making the Dollar

INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES
BY EDWARD STRATTON

Rafael Otero, co-owner
Windwater Bed & Breakfast
172 Duane St.

Astoria
503-338-8702 or
stay@windwaterbedandbreakfast.com

Rafael Otero and Patricia O'Donnell have fixed up their 1980's carriage house into the Windwater Bed & Breakfast, which overlooks Astoria from the north slope. O'Donnell works at Columbia Memorial Hospital, while Otero primarily handles the bed and breakfast. The business is a longtime dream of the couple, who moved to Astoria from San Francisco more than a decade ago.

How would you describe your business?

"We're going for something a little different than what you see here in Astoria. It's not a Victorian, so we're going more with the modern. It's going to be a space ... we think it's a special space, and we think that it will appeal to our guests. I've done a little research with the community, what's out here. I've reached out to a lot of business owners in town. I took some classes at the college, because this is a new venture for us."

How did you get into this business?

"I and my wife moved here 11 years ago, and it's something we've always wanted to do. But life happens, and 10 years went by, 11 years went by, and we never really did what we wanted. So this past year, we said 'you know; let's focus on what we really wanted to do.' We found Astoria in a fluke. We were driving through, and we spent the night here, and we thought 'what a special place.' We decided to move here. We quit our jobs in California, and we purchased our home, kind of got involved in the community. It's just my wife and me, so we just did things like we got involved with the (Clatsop County) Historical Society, and we found that a lot of people had the same passion we did, with restoration and history."

What is your main clientele?

"In the 10 years we've been here, we've seen Astoria grow, everywhere from the breweries, to the distilleries, to the eateries, and I've done a little research for what's out here for people to stay. We're not going to be a big market. We're not going to have a lot of rooms. We're just going to have one space for hopefully one couple that may want a luxurious, romantic getaway. And we're going to kind of market it as that."

How will you do differentiate your business from other bed and breakfasts?

"I'm hoping to present my guests when they come here with a gift certificate to one of the local eateries in town, where they can go have breakfast or lunch at their own time. Not to say that there's not going to be stuff here to eat. It's also a way to involve the community, the local restaurants. It will be a little different than what the other B&Bs are doing. They usually serve breakfast between 7 and 9 (a.m.). I've talked to people. Some people leave earlier; some people don't get up until 9 o'clock. So there's that short window. We want you to be comfortable here; we want you to have the privacy; and we want you to have choices."

Employment rises a bit on the coast

Seasonally adjusted unemployment through February dropped in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties, according to data released Tuesday by the Oregon Employment Department.

Seasonally adjusted figures compare expected changes with actual changes.

In Clatsop County, the 5.6 percent seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in February was a 0.2 percent drop from the previous month and a half-percent drop from the year prior. It was lower than the state rate (5.8 percent) and slightly higher than the national rate (5.5 percent). Clatsop County has the eighth-lowest employment rate of Oregon's 36 counties.

The county added 200 non-farm jobs in February, 90 more than expected. That left non farm payroll employment at 17,640, 600 more than the same point last year. State economist Erik Knoder said the increase was mostly attributable to existing businesses adding employees, from one to a dozen.

Over the past month, the private sector added 130 jobs, and government employment rose by 70. Leisure and hospitality grew by 80 jobs; transportation, warehousing and utilities added 40; and local government education added 60 as the school year continued after the winter break.

Industries adding the most jobs over the past year included retail trade (190); leisure and hospitality (140); and professional and business services (140). The industry shedding the most jobs in the past year was paper manufacturing (50).

Columbia County

Columbia County's 7.1 percent seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was a 0.3 percent drop from the month and the

Jobless rates for Feb. 2015*

Area	Feb. 2015	Jan. 2015	Feb. 2014
Clatsop	5.6	6	5.9
Columbia	7.1	7.7	7.4
Tillamook	5.6	6.1	6.3
Oregon	5.8	6.7	6.9
U.S.	5.5	5.6	6.7

*Preliminary, seasonally adjusted rates.
Source: Oregon Employment Department
Daily Astorian graphic

year prior. It has the 23rd lowest unemployment rate out of Oregon's 36 counties.

The county added 70 jobs in February, as predicted, that left nonfarm payroll employment at 10,080, 120 more than the year before.

Over the past month, the private sector gained 20 jobs, and government employment increased by 50. Durable goods manufacturing added 30 jobs. Local government education grew by 60.

Private sector employment rose by 30, and government employment increased by 90, over the past year. Industries adding the most jobs since last year were manufacturing (140); and trade, transportation and utilities (70). Industries losing jobs included professional and business services (120); and construction (60). Local governments, including school districts, added 80 jobs over the year.

Many Columbia County residents commute elsewhere for work, so it is not uncommon for the total number of employed people residing in

the county to change without a similar change in the number of payroll jobs located within the county.

Tillamook County

Tillamook County's 5.6 percent seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in February was down 0.2 percent from the previous month and 0.7 percent from the year prior. The county has the eighth-lowest unemployment rate of Oregon's 36 counties, tracking alongside Clatsop County's rate.

The county lost 60 jobs in February, when it was expected to gain 60. That left non farm payroll employment at 8,620, 300 more than the year prior and a growth rate of 3.8 percent.

Over the month of February, the private sector shed 50 jobs, and governments trimmed 10. The professional and business services industry and private educational and health services industry each lost 20 jobs. Local government education gained 20 jobs, but other local governments cut 20.

Over the past year, the private sector added 310 jobs, and governments trimmed 10. Industries adding the most jobs included retail trade (100); professional and business services (60); educational and health services (60); and food manufacturing (30). Leisure and hospitality was down 30 jobs over the year.

The Oregon Employment Department plans to release the March county and metropolitan area unemployment rates on April 21, and the statewide unemployment rate and employment survey data for March April 14. To obtain the data in other formats such as in Excel, visit www.QualityInfo.org, select Economic Data, and choose LAUS or CES.

mann and Caroline R. Siegmann

Buyers: Miachel J. Mann and Judy M. Mann
Address: 150 Kensington Ave., Astoria
Price: \$379,900

Sellers: Sam Kwang San Liu and Angela Lang Liu
Buyer: Wendy L. Hemsley
Address: 2930 Expedition

Lane, Astoria
Price: \$365,000

Sellers: James Franz and Alexis Khoury
Buyers: Mark R. Barnes and Heather Reynolds
Address: 290 Chelmsford Ave., Astoria
Price: \$360,000

Sellers: David S. Shan-

non and Bonnie Boyd Shan-

Buyer: TMCJ Pacific, LLC
Address: 2364 S. Hemlock St., Cannon Beach
Price: \$350,000

Sellers: Charles W. Bergerson and Charlotte M. Bergerson
Buyers: Dary L. Ebright

and Lori D. Ebright

Address: 296 Silverside St., Hammond
Price: \$335,000

Sellers: Richard S. Mitchell and Velda C. Mitchell

Buyer: George Ruth
Address: 2855 Mill Pond Lane, Astoria
Price: \$335,000

Clatsop County Property Transactions

Seller: Christina L. Trolinger
Buyers: David I. Pullin and Carol C. Pullin
Address: 1459 Pacific

Drive, Gearhart
Price: \$600,000

Sellers: Adrian J. Sieg-