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What's on your list today?

LOCAL NEWS

Cannabis Café Starts Anew

Adjustments made in move to 82nd Avenue

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The country's first cannabis cafe reopened its doors on Saturday on Southeast 82nd Avenue, giving medical marijuana patients a place to once again openly medicate and socialize.

The Cannabis Cafe originally opened last November on Northeast Dekum Street in the Woodlawn Neighborhood. Operated by the Oregon chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, the cafe quickly drew national attention as the first of its kind in the U.S., where holders of medical marijuana cards could use the drug in a cafe setting.

But six months after opening, Oregon NORML got into a dispute with the building's owners over the naming of the cafe, and decided to move it elsewhere.

Since May, volunteers at Oregon NORML had been searching properties on Craigslist located all over the city looking for a new location, eventually settling on Aaron's Wine Cellar and Piano Bar located at 322 S.E. 82nd Ave.

On the first day at the new location, sausages crackled on grills outside the building. Folk-rock songs blared on speakers while people lined up for its 4:20 p.m. opening.

"I'm really excited about the potential here," said Madeline Martinez, the executive director of Oregon NORML, while giving reporters a tour of the cafe.

She noted that Oregon NORML made sure that the 5,000 square foot space was located near public transit like the spot on Dekum to accom-



Madeline Martinez

modate big crowds and for environmental reasons. However, it differs from its last location.

It looks like the place you might take your straight-laced parents to after dinner, if it wasn't for the loaded bong sitting on one of the tables scattered throughout the cafe and a sign that reads, "Parking for hippies only. All other will be stoned."

The cafe is also much better lit, with wood panels lining the walls—a departure from the murky building on Dekum that seemed to always have its curtains drawn.

"We don't want it to be that dark kind of a bar atmosphere," said Martinez of the building, which costs \$4,000 a month to rent.

There's already air hockey, a pool table, and shuffleboard. A Wii console will be set up with a big screen television for tournaments, and there are plans in the works to install a confection oven to serve food to patrons. However, the big black piano is on its way out, said Martinez. Alcohol also won't be served and cigarettes need to be taken outside, she said.

People wanting to get in must have an Oregon medical marijuana card, pay the \$35 annual fee to join Oregon NORML and pony up a \$20 annual fee to use the cafe, in addition to a \$5 cover for each entrance. Two "very large guys" will be monitoring the door to ensure compliance, said Martinez.

Martinez said that the police haven't expressed any concerns about the cafe, and she doesn't expect that to change. She also said that they've been warmly welcomed by the tobacco shop and tattoo parlor in a strip mall next door.

Marijuana will be offered free to patrons since it is illegal to sell it, noted Martinez. Pot-infused food will be available later on, she added.

But Martinez stressed that the cafe was more than a novelty: It's a gathering space for patients who've previously had to relegate their activities to the shadows.

"We do know that there are so many people out there that need the type of service we offer here because it's the camaraderie and the socialization. When you're home and disabled, you get very depressed," she said.

The need for a community space for medical marijuana patients was echoed by Ben Cunningham, a Willamette Valley pig farmer who is helping with the business aspects of the cafe.

"Really, I'm just here because I've lived my whole life for this day," said Cunningham, in his Texas drawl.

Cunningham uses medical marijuana for stomach ulcers. Like many patients, he said he had to keep use of the drug concealed, and have wanted a social environment to medicate. He said that many patrons of the cafe "will get flat emotional about the fact that we've waited this long simply to hang out."

Sex Trafficking Story Apology

The Portland Observer has apologized to a woman profiled in last week's cover story about sex trafficking in Portland (Modern Day Slavery, July 28).

Sherry Dooley says the story was written out of context with misquotes and damaging falsehoods. In par-

ticular, she says her son's father was never her pimp. She also was prostituted on the streets for a far less time than was stated in the article.

Dooley was just 16 years old when she became a victim of sex trafficking. By telling her story, she wanted to shed light on the dehu-

manizing and criminal nature of prostituting minors as Portland leaders and advocates for victims tackle a growing problem.

The Portland Observer and the author of this article sincerely apologize for any harm done to Dooley and her family.