



continued ▲ from front PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Southeast Portland siblings Isabelle Shmeer, 2, and Isaac Shmeer, 5, try to stay dry at the Sauvie Island Pumpkin Patch.

Help with Street Trees

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New Laws for Cannabis

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drivers, and an expansion of black market crime and violence. Other opponents don't like the creation of the OCC, a seven-member state agency, calling it "needless government."

The Portland Observer hit the streets to hear what local residents think about legalizing the most commonly used illicit drug in America.

"I'm all for it. Absolutely," said Shawn Snyder, 39, a northeast Portlander raised in Prineville, Oregon, when asked if he would vote yes on Measure 80. "I'm tired of them [the state] spending money on busting people for it."

Snyder, like his friend who responded anonymously, questioned how Oregon's plan to tax and regulate cannabis would play out. Both men agreed that state regulation might create more problems than it would solve, creating a hassle like the OLCC has in the past for people trying to get a permit to open a liquor store.

Sid, 31, last name anonymous, also supports cannabis legalization but fears consequences of state regulation.

Sid worries the law would put small growers out of business. He said the actual implementation of it gives the federal government overbearing power that seems to do less good than intended, but like everything "it's a process-- there's a balance to be had."

Sid continued, "And in order to create that balance, I think we need to legalize it, so the feds are not overbearing and so that the world of marijuana is in check."

Sid's partner Beckie, 39, who uses medicinal marijuana in brownie form not to get high, but to take the edge off pain caused by her Fibro- myalgia, says she will vote yes. She said people are as capable of being responsible with mari-

juana as much as they are with alcohol, though both have their pros and cons.

"If it passes, it's going to create jobs and revenues for our state and I think that's very smart." Beckie also strongly supports the deregulation of hemp. Hemp, she said, is an amazing, sustainable agricultural product that our state would benefit from.

Other folks talked about how legalizing cannabis would change the stigma of the drug.

Lynn McDonald, 28, doesn't use the drug anymore, but says it's a very benign substance. "It's not the threat people think it is," he said, "so I'm 100% for getting it legalized."

Many residents voiced varying, definite opinions.

"I don't smoke marijuana," said a man who practiced law for a living. He will not vote on the issue.

"I'm not really for it," said Kiely Johnson, 31, a Portland resident of 14 years. "It's a poor idea—I don't really see anything good coming from it."

The legalization of marijuana is long overdue, said a northeast Portland resident. "Restricted like this, where they control it really well, I think is a great idea," he said.

"We ought to decriminalize all drug use," said a 65-year-old local resident. "The war on drugs is a failed policy—it's hooey."

A retired Portland English school teacher, 79, has witnessed the measure come on and off the ballot since the 1960's. "It's silly to keep it illegal," he said. "It breeds disrespect for the law. People do what they want to do anyway."

While legalizing marijuana will bring its own set of new problems, the elderly African-American man said we should just face the problems and do it.

"Prohibition didn't work," he said, "Maybe we should have learned a lesson from that."

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