



PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Nicole Kennedy and Karanja Crews are business partners for their new Green Hop dispensary in northeast Portland. The owners are pledged to give back to the community by running training and internship programs for young African Americans wanting to find employment in the legal cannabis industry which under represents blacks.

# Green and Equitable

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the expungement of convictions for past possession of a drug that is now state-legal.

“We have seen several generations of young black men and young black women become felons,” Frederick said at the Green Hop ribbon-cutting ceremony. By getting these convictions expunged, he said, folks can actually “get jobs, get housing, get education, get loans to become entrepreneurs in the community.”

The dispensary was the recipient of a \$96,000 grant from the city’s three percent cannabis tax for the purposes of workforce development and support for minority-owned cannabis businesses.

The revenue will be used to run the training program Green Hop Academy, geared for young African Americans over the age of 21 working toward getting licensed as a bud tender. They also run a 10 week paid internship program that is done in partnership with Portland Opportunities Industrial Center to give newly

licensed bud-tenders workforce experience.

City Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who championed the cannabis tax, and urged for a portion of it to go to economic development in communities of color that have been disenfranchised by past cannabis prohibitions, said the dispensary was exactly the kind of place she’d hoped the revenue would support.

“We particularly wanted to start repairing some of the wrongs of the past,” she said.

Mayor Ted Wheeler, who has worked with other U.S. mayors to fight to end cannabis prohibition nationally, voiced his support, too.

“The City of Portland will be with you 100 percent,” Wheeler said.

Congressman Earl Blumenauer, who was also in attendance, has been backing cannabis reform bills in Congress, pushing for states’ rights on legal pot and to correct inequities in punishment from cannabis cases. Less than one percent of the legal can-

nabis industry is African American, Blumenauer said.

“Barbara Lee and I introduced a resolution this week in Congress to encourage the development of policies that corrects that. We’ve got legislation to deal with criminal records,” he added.

Kennedy and Crews both have teaching backgrounds, with Kennedy originally starting out as a nurse and medical assistant, and Crews dedicated to bolstering the African American community for non-profits in and outside Portland.

When asked what inspired him to become an entrepreneur, Crews said the elements of hip-hop, as outlined by rapper KRS-One, set him on the path to becoming a business co-owner.

“One of the elements is street entrepreneurship. So just me being a hip-hop head, just understanding the importance of economic development...that’s always been in me, it’s been in my spirit. We took a leap of faith to run the business, to start the business,” he said.



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