

A Reversal of Fortunes

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

has helped her business greatly.

“We’ve been able to move into a better position, re-assess our needs, and be able to meet some of the needs we already had, like marketing and things like that. So that’s been amazing,” Kennedy said.

Kennedy runs the dispensary with her business partner Karanja Crews, and together, they launched what it called “the world’s first hip-hop dispensary,” at its grand opening last year.

Green Hop also runs an educational program for youth of color who are of legal age under Oregon’s legal marijuana laws, and are interested in working in the cannabis industry. Green Hop Academy facilitates hands-on training in the cannabis profession, classes, as well as setting up students with real-world internships in every area of the cannabis business—from growing to budtending.

Economists have found disparities between the success rates

of white and black businesses is in large part due to the smaller amount of capitol that’s accessible to black entrepreneurs. According to an investigation by BuzzFeed in 2016, less than one percent of cannabis dispensary owners nationwide were black.

In Portland, the NuLeaf Project was founded by an African-American couple to help communities of color thrive in the legal cannabis industry. The nonprofit was selected by the city to manage and disperse grants funded by the city’s marijuana tax.

“NuLeaf and the City of Portland are addressing the economic harm caused by cannabis criminalization while also funding growth businesses that are typically overlooked,” said Jeanette Ward Horton, NuLeaf’s executive director.

Adrian Wayman, the founder and chief executive officer of Portland’s Green Box delivery service, described how coming up short on capital was something that inhibited the growth of his company.



PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Kaitlyn Verret is employed as a budtender, helping customers pick from a selection of legal cannabis to purchase for recreational use at the Green Hop dispensary, a black-owned business on Northeast Killingsworth Street.

Getting financial support from Portland’s dispensary taxes was a leap forward and an unbelievable opportunity, he said.

The economic justice investments Portland makes from its

three percent cannabis tax, an initiative that was passed by voters in 2016, is also meant to reverse disparities in communities of color in terms of the impacts from marijuana criminalization in the past.

In the nine years prior to cannabis legalization in Oregon, African Americans made up 21 percent of cannabis-related arrests in Portland while accounting for just six percent of the city’s population.

In addition to investments in cannabis businesses and jobs training, revenues from the marijuana tax are meant to help expunge cannabis convictions. Portland is the first government in the U.S. to leverage cannabis tax revenue in this way.

Kennedy, who grew up in the neighborhood where the dispensary now stands, said seeing this kind of community reinvestment is meaningful to her after seeing the area go through so much change over the years.

“I know people very close to me who have been impacted by the war on drugs,” Kennedy said. “Being able to be here and to have funds reinvested back into the shop has just been very powerful to me,” Kennedy said. “We’re reinvesting it back into the shop to dig our stake deeper into the ground to say we are going to stay, we’re going to be here.”

In a video on NuLeaf Project’s website, Wayman recalled the irony of recently getting finger-printed to get his retail license to sell cannabis for his delivery service, remembering that 10 years earlier he had been finger-printed after getting arrested for pot possession.

“And now, today, fast-forward, I’m receiving a grant to sell the same thing that I got arrested for. Like, that’s mind blowing, that’s a true full circle. It shows that the community wants to fix the wrong,” he said.

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SNAP assistance available at ALL locations

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

Mulino Childhood Development Coalition
13700 S Freeman Rd, Mulino
Mar 19.....9:15-11:15 a.m.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY

CareOregon
315 SW 5th Ave, Portland
Mar 8.....10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Mar 13.....9-11 a.m.
Mar 20.....9-11 a.m.
Mar 27.....9-11 a.m.

Clackamas Service Center
8800 SE 80th Ave, Portland
Mar 12.....10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Department of Human Services Alberta
30 N Webster St Ste A, Portland
Mar 5.....1-3 p.m.

Department of Human Services SE
8129 SE Malden St, Portland
Mar 12.....1-3 p.m.

Department of Human Services SW
50 SW 2nd Ave, Portland
Mar 5.....9-11 a.m.
Mar 12.....9-11 a.m.
Mar 19.....9-11 a.m.
Mar 26.....9-11 a.m.

JOIN
1435 NE 81st Ave Ste 100, Portland
Mar 14.....12-2 p.m.

North by Northeast Community Health Fair
714 NE Alberta St, Portland
Mar 8.....2-5 p.m.

Parkrose Community United Church of Christ
12505 NE Halsey St, Portland
Mar 18.....1-4 p.m.

Portland Rescue Mission
111 W Burnside, Portland
Mar 14.....8-10 a.m.
Mar 28.....8-10 a.m.

Union Gospel Mission
3 NW 3rd, Portland
Mar 26.....2-4 p.m.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Beaverton Library
12375 SW 5th St, Beaverton
Mar 13.....1-3 p.m.

For information, or to host our team, call Tamara at 503-416-1479 or Caleb at 503-416-4883.

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