

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

Examining marijuana use as misconceptions follow changes to state law

By Caitlyn May
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Rob Farquhar is in constant pain. He estimates that he hovers somewhere around a three on a scale from one to 10 and that if he thinks about it long enough, the pain returns even after he's been medicated. "I would say my pain could get up to a seven. At eight, it's time to call the doctor because at eight, you want to kill yourself," he said. At first, it was opiates: OxyContin and the like that would take the edge off for Farquhar. "It's legal heroin," he said, noting that he was on several prescribed narcotics before being offered another solution by his doctor: medical marijuana. That was approximately 16 years ago and he's been using the medical marijuana on and off since. It's currently the only pain medication he is on.

"I doubted it was working last February and so I quit cold turkey," said Farquhar, who has lived in Cottage Grove since 2005. "But that created other health problems because I didn't realize how much the marijuana had been helping my pain. I'm just in so much pain, I didn't realize," he said.

Farquhar joins thousands of others that have turned to medical marijuana to help ease the burden of both physical and emotional pain. Veterans have begun

using it to ward off the effects of war and for Farquhar, it helps dull the pain in his hips, back and legs. It also helps stave off the memories of finding his infant daughter dead in her bed.

While medical marijuana has been used for years, the state of Oregon legalized recreational marijuana with the passage of Measure 91 in November of 2014. Subsequently, the legislature moved to tax the new good and revenue poured in. Last year, Oregon reported tax revenues of \$14.9 million from the retail sale of marijuana and in November of 2016, Cottage Grove residents approved an additional three percent tax on recreational marijuana.

But despite economic upsides, the legalization and subsequent confusion over laws and usage have stoked division between those who oppose the former party drug and those who find solace in its ability to mask pain and anxiety.

"I would say the biggest misconception is that we're doing it to get high," Farquhar said. "We are not. We're not doing it to get stoned. Everyone who's seen coming out of the dispensary doors, people assume they're getting high. No, they're patients getting help."

The misconceptions seemed to spring up after recreational marijuana became legal with residents 21 and older able to purchase up to one-quarter ounce of dried

marijuana, have up to four immature plants and an unlimited amount of seeds.

More recently, further clarifications and mandates to the original law have altered the blurred lines between medical and recreational marijuana.

As of January, medical marijuana dispensaries were prohibited from selling recreational marijuana. Buyers of recreational marijuana were also permitted to buy a larger quantity and pay a lower sales tax.

"It's expensive," Farquhar said. Before slipping on the ice and further injuring himself, Farquhar said he used to spend between \$50 and \$100 on medical marijuana. Now, that amount has doubled. "It's harder financially because federally it's still illegal and I don't know if I can claim it or how it works," he said.

Long-held worries over marijuana contribute to misconceptions over medical use and a 2016 study by the Oregon Health Authority seemed to support the notion of use among minors. The student found nine percent of eighth graders reported using marijuana. Moreover, OHA found that 48 percent of adults in Oregon had also used the drug at some point.

"I would say it helps chronic pain," Farquhar said in addressing his specific use. "I think it's important that people understand it's not to get high. It's not to get stoned. It's to help."

LCC declares itself a "sanctuary campus" for students

Follows the lead of University of Oregon, others

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Lane Community College has joined several other entities around the state in declaring it-

self a sanctuary campus. The announcement came on Feb. 8.

"Sanctuary" campuses, cities and other entities have become more common in the wake of President Donald Trump's executive order banning individuals from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States for a period of 90 days. Further concerns emerged as rhetoric surrounding illegal immigration and a potential wall at the U.S., Mexico border and stories of ICE round-ups of individuals based on their immigra-

tion status became public. Non-violent activist group, Cosecha initiated the idea of sanctuary campuses as part of its mission to help the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living and working in the United States.

LCC, in a statement concerning the new designation, said it would, "protect students from intimidation, unfair investigation and deportation and will take every legal measure to support students." It would also take actions to protect students who may be in the country undocumented.

The University of Oregon also made the move to become a sanctuary campus in November, citing Trump's campaign promises to crack down on illegal immigration. UO President Michael Schill said at the time that the university would go "as far as the law allows" in protecting its undocu-

mented students.

However, recent action concerning DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, has prompted further discussion of sanctuary spaces. DACA allows children brought to the United States by their parents, and who qualify, to receive two years of deferred action concerning possible deportation.

South Lane School District may also consider adopting sanctuary status according to superintendent Krista Parent. The issue, according to Parent, has been brought to the district's attention and may end up on a future school board agenda after the district does further research concerning the consequences and requirements of declaring itself a sanctuary school district.

The state of Oregon currently prohibits local

law enforcement from detaining or otherwise interacting with an individual based solely on their immigration status. Governor Kate Brown essentially extended ORS 181.850 by prohibiting any state agency from acting on immigration status alone.

According to the Pew Research center, a non-partisan research entity, approximately eight million undocumented immigrants were working in the United States in 2014. During the same year, statistics showed that 52 percent of undocumented immigrants originate from Mexico but that number has decreased in recent years. States with the highest number of undocumented immigrants include New York, New Jersey, Texas, Florida and Illinois.



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