

# The changing face of pot

Medical dispensaries may sell marijuana to all on Oct. 1

By Emily Mentzer  
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Alex Andrade, 40, is perhaps the least likely person to run a medical marijuana dispensary. She has never smoked marijuana — or cigarettes, for that matter. She's never had a drop of alcohol.

"I've gotten some flak from people about being a non-smoker, but I'm proud of my lifelong sobriety," said Andrade, owner of Blackbird Indica, one of two medical marijuana dispensaries in Polk County.

Healing — and sobriety — run in her family, Andrade said.

"I'm the great-granddaughter of Lassen Willis-Kol-Kold, who was a medicine woman of the Mountain Maidu People," she said. "I do believe she used cannabis in her healing, too. And she did not partake herself, either, so I

just look at it as being a healer like my great-grandma."

Andrade opened Blackbird in January, and, though she voted against Measure 91, she will begin selling recreational marijuana on Oct. 1.

So far, she compared her facility to a frozen yogurt business — profitable, but not as much as people may suspect.

Her clients vary from life-long marijuana users to people recently diagnosed with cancer.

"I have 90-year-old farmers who just don't want to take 15 pills a day and are choosing a more holistic approach to feeling better," Andrade said.

Business has died down a bit during the summer, leading her to believe she had more student clients than she suspected.

"Apparently, we have a lot," Andrade said. "It will be

interesting to see how Oct. 1 goes."

Right now, only Oregon Medical Marijuana card holders may buy flowers, concentrates, edibles and other marijuana products. On Oct. 1, anyone older than 21 may buy flowers, or bud.

At first, recreational marijuana will be tax-free. After Jan. 4, 2016, a 25 percent tax will be added at the point of sale — Oregon's first true sales tax — for purchases made at a dispensary.

A gram will cost from \$6 to \$12 for recreational marijuana flowers at Blackbird Indica, Andrade said.

She said the lack of taxes, at least at first, is important to try and kill the black market.

"The black market is still stronger than the dispensaries, in my opinion," she said. "We have people come in all the time and say, 'I can get this on the street for this much.' Well, you can, but I



Alex Andrade, 40, will begin selling marijuana flower to people older than 21 starting Oct. 1. Right now, the owner of Blackbird Indica only sells medical marijuana.

don't recommend it."

Healing Green and Blackbird are the only two medical marijuana dispensaries in Polk County.

Whether or not the coun-

ty will see any more marijuana businesses could be up to local jurisdiction.

The Oregon Legislators decided that counties and cities that voted no on Measure 91, which Polk County voters did — 52.6 to 47.3 percent — may opt out of allowing dispensaries. While cities debate the topic, Independence Police Chief Bob Mason said he hasn't had any problems with either dispensary — no more calls than from any other retail business.

Monmouth Police Chief Darrell Tallan said whether or not a dispensary in Monmouth would increase police calls is yet to be seen.

Monmouth was a dry town until 2002, when it first changed its ordinances to allow beer and wine sales.

Tallan said the alcohol-related criminal activity — minor in possession, driving under the influence, having an open container in public — did not increase after selling alcohol was legal in Monmouth.

When it comes to selling marijuana, Tallan said he suspects it will put additional work on officers doing background checks for licensing, similar to Oregon Liquor Control Commission licenses for alcohol sales.

As for marijuana theft, Tallan said he and his officers already deal with theft of medical marijuana plants.

"The potential is there more now that more people are able to grow, but I guess time will tell if that's going to be an issue or not," he said.

Come to Me all of you  
who are weary and carry heavy burdens  
and I will give you rest  
— Matthew 11:28



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