

Oasis out to break marijuana stereotypes

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Oasis Cannabis in Monmouth is ready to break the pothead stereotype.

"We want to remove the stigma from pot, and introduce ourselves and educate our community," said Benjamin Figueroa. "There's the word 'stoner,' but we actually provide medication. We provide a service to the community. That would be my favorite part (about this business), taking away the stigma about marijuana that isn't necessarily true."

Manager Patrick Gump agreed.

"Having experience in other dispensaries and bud-tending, our greatest asset are the people who come in and see us," he said. "They usually come in wanting something, wanting to find a little bit of peace and happiness, and knowing we get to be a part of finding their happiness and finding them something that will make their life a little more enjoyable, something that will be a benefit to them."

The business had a soft opening on May 20 during the annual Monmouth-In-



Sherrena Jenkins, Benjamin Figueroa, Matthew Mallett, Patrick Gump, Mia Clinton and Palmer Baldwin.

EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

dependence Chamber of Commerce's Discover MI Town, and took the opportunity to show people around the shop — including families.

Figueroa said Oasis prides itself on its curb appeal.

"We're not trying to hide anything," he said. "We're trying to be part of the community and let them know we're here. We're here to help you and educate you."

"I have extreme passion about the cannabis industry, everything, all the way from processing at the cannabis plant to the flower and seeds and everything," Gump said. "This plant is magic."

The cannabis shop offers both recreational and medical-grade products, from flower to edibles — and will begin selling clones — or marijuana plant starts, and

seeds. It also offers a variety of methods to consume the products, from handblown glass pipes by MJ's Glass & Vape, out of Salem, to infusers.

Monmouth is the third location for Oasis, and Gump said they've learned a few things about the business through their first two stores, one in Seaside and one in Newberg.

"We have a fantastic crew

out here," Gump said. "It's been a lot of heart, a lot of work. We've also learned from our past stores, so we really expect this to be the leader of the community as far as cannabis goes."

One of their goals in helping to break the stigma is by sharing research-based information, Matthew Mallett said.

"It's natural," he said. "We're not synthesizing it

from anything. Pharmaceutical companies do more work than we do."

Mia Clinton said that she saw great improvements in her patients that used cannabis when she was a certified nursing assistant.

"I like helping people," she said. "I want to give them something healthy, something that's not going to give you this side effect, or take something away. It's not going to kill you, and you're not going to die from this."

With two veterans on staff — Gump and Palmer Baldwin — Oasis offers veterans discounts.

The Monmouth City Council had considered banning marijuana shops in the Main Street District, but decided to allow it at the end. Gump said he is grateful for that decision and the warm welcome he has gotten from Mayor Steve Milligan and city councilors.

"We understand the 360 that took place and are very grateful for it," he said.

Oasis Cannabis is at 221 Main St. E., Monmouth. Hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Sunday.

WOU grad ready to improve value of the chamber

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH/INDEPENDENCE — Vikkye Fetter is eager to begin her job as the Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce executive director.

She technically started on May 22, but plans to begin in earnest — "Without training wheels," as she put it — next week.

"I'm inheriting three people's organizational system," she said. "My first plan is to



Fetter

lock myself in that office and really see what information we have, what stuff we need, what stuff we don't need and just have in there because no one's had the time to go through that."

During that process, Fetter, 26, said she hopes to get more acquainted with chamber programs, includ-

ing some that could use some revamping.

"Our Chamber Rewards program is one," she said. "I don't think that a lot of the members know that's a thing they can be in or know what it does for them. I'm going to scavenge hunt to see what I can do to add more value to the chamber for folks, so the question of, 'What is the chamber and what can it do for me,' isn't the question so much as, 'I heard about the chamber, and I'd love to be in it because of this.' That

would be my dream."

Fetter graduated from Western Oregon University in 2013 and majored in English. After college, she ran a haunted history tour company — researching the history of towns in 30 states and writing tours while managing tour guides.

When she saw the job posted for a chamber director in December 2016, when former chamber director Jean Love stepped down, she went for it.

"It seemed like all the

skills that I'd been using my whole life was in this job," Fetter said.

The chamber board of directors chose Ryan Kingsella, who announced his resignation earlier this month. Rather than repost the job, board president Miriam Haugen reached out to Fetter.

"I was really excited to hear that they were still interested in me, and that they remembered me at all was very flattering, and that they still thought of me for the position," Fetter said. "I'm

excited about it."

She didn't know a lot about chambers at first — just through companies she'd worked with who belonged to them.

"As far as I knew, it was a way to get advertising," Fetter said. "And it is, don't get me wrong, but it's also an advocacy group. It's a network. It's a way for you to get connections as a business owner and as a member that you would have to search out yourself, normally, and not be able to find."



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