

Medical marijuana business thriving

Recreational pot petition coming back

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

It's been about six months since the Rocky Mountain Dispensary opened just west of John Day and began offering medical marijuana products to state-certified customers.

The dispensary has about 85 to 95 regular customers, all referred by a doctor, store manager Haley Olson said. Medical marijuana is regulated by the Oregon Health Authority. Olson said about 75 percent of her customers are over 50 years old.

"It's a growing business in Grant County, with new patients still getting state cards," she said.

Family business

Rocky Mountain Dispensary is a family business, with Olson, her mother and father and her uncle and cousins being the only employees. The dispensary belongs to the National Cannabis Industry Association, and Olson was invited to speak to the association in Denver in February about prohibition and discrimination in Grant County. She said she's been interviewed several times by High Times magazine, which has become the industry's trade journal.

"In the past, the industry got a bad record because some people were not professional," Olson said. "This created a stoner stereotype."

A security system at the dispensary cost \$27,000, Olson said. There have been no incidents since the business opened, and the store has been toured by the Grant County Sheriff's Office and the John Day Police Department, she said. Some security requirements are required under state law: A 5-foot-tall safe, for example, stores product at night when everyone is gone.

"State law requires it weigh at least 750 pounds or be bolted to the floor," Olson said.

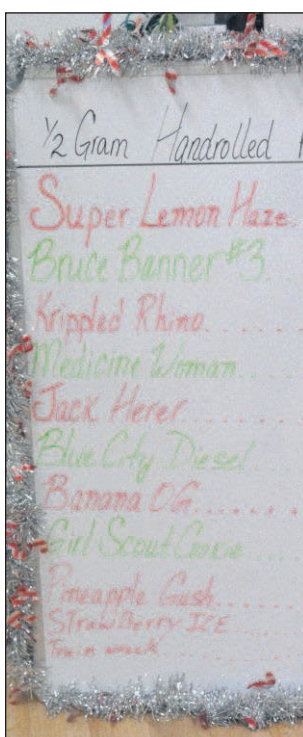
The Oregon Health Authority conducted a random inspection at the dispensary in December. An agent walked through the premises and inspected inventory and the store's 90-day security video backup to ensure the business was checking customer IDs.

All products sold at the dispensary are inspected by a lab in Portland and tracked by bar code, Olson said. Products are tested for THC content, mold and numerous



Haley Olson stands in front of the safe that safely stores medical marijuana products at the Rocky Mountain Dispensary west of John Day Jan. 4.

Eagle photos/Richard Hanners



Hand-rolled medical marijuana joints advertised for sale at the Rocky Mountain Dispensary.

pesticide chemicals. The tests cost about \$400 per strain per harvest, she said.

"We can't accept any product that hasn't been tested," Olson said.

She recommends that people buy marijuana from a certified dispensary.

"You don't know if your buddy used chemicals to grow his pot," she said.

Marijuana farming

The family also operates Rocky Mountain Farms in John Day, which grows marijuana both outdoors and indoors using hydroponics. The latter requires adding nutrients to the water, but they only use only food-grade nutrients, Olson said.

The John Day store mostly sells marijuana grown by 15 farmers in the county, not their own, Olson said.

"We want to help the local growers by buying their product," she said.

State law prohibits growing or processing medical marijuana in a dispensary building. Processed products sold in the store are made by other vendors, but the family plans to start a processing facility in Grant County this spring to make extracts, vape cartridges, tinctures and oils using locally grown marijuana, Olson said. The plan is to sell the products in the John Day dispensary or to other dispensaries.

About 10 to 15 of their regular patients are suffering from glaucoma, Olson said. Medical marijuana will not cure glaucoma but can relieve pressure on the eye. Other patients have blood pressure issues, she said.

Many patients don't smoke but use lotions for arthritis or purchase topical and edible tinctures, candy and drinks. Medical marijuana products contain THC, which has psychoactive properties, and cannabidiol, which has topical effects but "won't get you stoned," Olson said.

Many of the dispensary's patients are on pain killers, including opioids, which are blamed for a deadly epidemic across the nation. Olson noted that seven patients who come to her store have stopped using opioids and switched to medical marijuana.

Recreational marijuana

Most opioid addicts don't have a medical condition that would qualify them for a state medical marijuana card, Olson said. But these people could benefit from using recreational marijuana, she noted.

Olson is helping organize a petition to overturn the ban

in Grant County of sales, distribution, processing and growing marijuana for recreational purposes. A petition in May 2016 lost 1,689 to 1,469.

The Rocky Mountain Dispensary pays no tax to the county, but recreational marijuana sales would provide a tax revenue to the county, she said. Grant County will no longer receive a share of the statewide tax revenue from recreational marijuana sales because recreational sales are prohibited here.

"This is about helping the local economy and trying to make up for the lost timber industry," Olson said.

The county could use this new tax revenue for a multitude of purposes, she said. Legalizing recreational marijuana would also help the economy — cannabis industry jobs start at \$15 per hour, she said.

"A person with a commercial kitchen could make marijuana baked goods and sell them to us and make a great amount of money," Olson said.

The recreational marijuana industry is regulated by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission. Olson noted that Grant County consumers currently travel outside the county to purchase recreational marijuana. In Sumpter, they pay 20 percent in state and local taxes, she said.

Olson also noted that if the petition passed, recreational marijuana use locally wouldn't change much. People over 21 can legally possess and consume marijuana and grow up to four plants per residence under state law, even though the county has banned commercial growing and sales.

Olson said it can also be obtained illegally.

"Grant County has a thriving black market for cannabis," she said.

Student goes the distance to help cancer patients

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Zwegardt

Prairie City High School senior Brianna Zwegardt oversaw a project that raised over \$1,500 to assist Blue Mountain Hospital cancer patients with fuel expenses for travel to out-of-county appointments.

Zwegardt said she learned from a friend's grandmother, who was diagnosed with cancer, of a program in Harney County that distributes fuel cards to cancer patients.

"Living in this rural area, we don't have access to a facility for them to be treated," Zwegardt said. "This often leaves them with long travel times."

Making frequent trips for out-of-town doctor appointments can add up to large fuel bills, so Zwegardt stepped in to help and fulfilled her senior project requirement at the same time.

The daughter of Lance and Louanne Zwegardt, Brianna

plans to major in veterinary science and play softball at college.

She raised money for her senior project selling T-shirts and raffling off baskets with items donated by Grant County businesses.

The Prairie City Athletic Department also donated money paid at the gate for the Panther volleyball team's cancer awareness match.

"I want to give a huge thanks to all those who helped me through donations and support," she said. "This project also allowed me to work with a lot of my amazing community members."

She said fundraising is always a challenge, but if it's for a good cause, the community is supportive.

"I am very glad I chose this project," she said. "It taught me a lot about how one person can make a change."



Contributed photo

Prairie City High School senior Dorran Wilson, center, presents a check for \$1,126 to Blue Mountain Hospital CEO Derek Daly, left, and radiology manager Larry Leos. Wilson organized an alumni basketball game, held Dec. 29, for his senior project with the proceeds assisting BMH cancer patients.

Alumni basketball game supports local cancer patients

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

gas cards, hotels and meals.

The Prairie City Panther boys went head to head against a team of 12 alumni players ranging in age from about 19 to 50.

The Panthers, coached by Sam Workman, came out on top 70-60 against the alumni, coached by Sam's father, longtime and now-retired basketball coach Mike Workman.

"It was fun watching the old guys play. We gave them the gray jerseys to match their hair," Wilson quipped.

He said the alumni game was fun and the first one they've had in three years.

"I hope that future students put on alumni basketball games, even if it's not for any fundraiser," he said.

Wilson said he plans to pursue his dream of playing college basketball and a degree in construction management and engineering.

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Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum has resolved two lawsuits she brought on behalf of Oregon natural persons against certain manufacturers of liquid crystal display ("LCD") flat panels and cathode ray tubes ("CRTs"). The lawsuits allege the manufacturers illegally agreed upon the pricing of LCD flat panels and CRTs.

Oregon has settled with all defendants for a total of \$36,900,000 ("Settlement Fund"), and you may be entitled to a portion of the Settlement Fund.

Who Is Included?

Natural persons who indirectly purchased at any time during the years 2002 to 2006, for their own use and not for resale, LCD panels incorporated into flat panel TVs, computer monitors or laptop computers; or who indirectly purchased at any time during the years 1995 to 2007, for their own use and not for resale, CRTs incorporated into TVs or computer monitors. A purchaser must have been an Oregon resident at the time of the purchase. An indirect purchaser is someone that purchased products containing LCD flat panels or CRTs from someone other than the company that manufactured the LCD flat panel or CRT component, such as from an electronics retailer or a device manufacturer other than one of the Defendants. "Natural persons" means a human, not a business.

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More information about the lawsuits, settlements, and the claims process can be found at www.OregonScreenSettlement.com, by calling 1-877-940-7791, or writing to: Oregon Screen Settlement, c/o GCG, P.O. Box 10240, Dublin, Ohio 43017-5740.

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