

---

Saturday, May 01, 2010

## **Marijuana shop will open *Nature's Own Wellness Center comes to Cortez amid state controversy***

**Hope Nealson**  
**Journal Staff Writer**  
Journal/Sam Green

Travis Pollock plans to open a medical marijuana shop, Nature's Own Wellness Center, Monday at 7 W. First St. in Cortez.

Another medical marijuana dispensary is set to open in Cortez as legislators haggle in Denver over the first bill that would regulate the thriving industry.



Ganjapreneur Travis Pollock will open Nature's Own Wellness Center, located at 7 W. First St., on Monday, marking the third dispensary to open in Cortez.

Pollock said the need is definitely there, with roughly 1,500 cards applied for each day in Colorado, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Pollock said he is seeing a five- to six-month waiting period to receive a card once the notarized, doctor-signed forms are sent off.

Pollock saw the dispensary boom firsthand while living in Denver. He decided to investigate and switched from his real estate career.

"Once I saw those developing in the Denver area, I did a good eight months of research and, being business-minded, I'm always looking for different business ventures." he said. "We started in Denver a year and a half ago as a delivery store."

Pollock said he worked at it for about six months during 2008 and 2009 before setting up "our first brick and mortar" operation in Durango, where he grew up.

"We thought it was a better fit for us due to the fact that I knew the community and I was a landowner - the oversaturation in the Denver area made it a better for us being able to find a location," he said, adding he still offers statewide delivery service.

The 27-year-old entrepreneur said he ran Nature's Own Wellness Center in Durango for eight months before deciding to branch out to Cortez.

"We have a lot of patients who drive from Cortez," he said, estimating about 50. "We felt there was a big need in this area."

We're primary caregivers for 250 patients total, with 1,000-plus patients who have gone through our facility, he said.

"I compare it to the dot-com era," he said. "The industry is rapidly changing and expressing itself."

---

Pollock also has his eye on Pagosa Springs, which currently has a moratorium on dispensaries until August in hopes for more guidelines from the state.

House Bill 1284, passed by the House on April 20, 2009, is currently being debated by the Senate.

"It still has another four votes it needs to go through," he said. "If the Senate makes any amendments, it will have to go back to the floor. So right now there are so many things thrown on the table, you can't guess what direction it's going to go."

Since the passage of Amendment 20 in 2000, which authorized the medical use of marijuana for people suffering from debilitating medical conditions, this is the first bill to regulate the industry. The bill would allow medical marijuana dispensaries to stay open, but restricts who can operate them, forces owners to grow 70 percent of the marijuana themselves and would allow local governments to ban dispensaries. It would also make the medicine available only to adults, 21 and over.

Pollock said all nine of his employees are trained to provide education about how to obtain a medical marijuana card, which requires a doctor's signature.

"The law is so vague right now that patients get a lot of different information from different sources," he said. "Our doors are always open for anyone to come in and ask questions. We'll have three people always in the facility."

Pollock touted his Denver connections, which provide him with 14 varieties of "confections" ranging from coffee to truffles to peanut butter brittles and peanut butter cups.

"Since we are originally based out of the Denver area, we bring a lot of products from that area, like topical solutions such as balms or cream for muscle ailments like fibromyalgia, arthritis and gout," he said, noting "severe pain" or muscle spasms can be qualifiers for a card, according to doctor discretion. "We also have other products like capsules and pills mixed with hash with digestive aids in them, so a chemo patient who doesn't want to smoke the medicine can take it in a capsule."

Pollock will also offer drinks, tinctures and teas from the Denver/Boulder area.

"We will carry smokable and nonsmokable products," he said. "We always have 25-plus strains of smokable medicine on our shelves."

Pollock noted a grand opening, scheduled May 15 from noon to 7 p.m., is open to the community, and he invites people to enjoy barbecue, stop in and ask questions.

"We are definitely big advocates for the community," he said. "We want to have open lines of communication for anyone who has questions."

Nature's Own Wellness Center will provide free, monthly educational classes with topics like what's going on with the legislature, cooking with medical herbalism, growing techniques and Medical Marijuana 101, Pollock said. The store will bring in a doctor twice a month, a free masseuse once a month, and provide free notary and paperwork processing.

The doctor will travel from Durango to see potential patients who will need to bring in records of conditions approved for medical marijuana use.

"The need to be able to help patients through an alternative medicine with resources like this has been benefiting," he said. "We make sure to have a very friendly and knowledgeable staff, and it helps with the paperwork process to compile and get it sent off correctly to the state."

Nature's Own Wellness Center will be open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. For more information, call 565-1070.

Reach Hope Nealson at [hopen@cortezjournal.com](mailto:hopen@cortezjournal.com).

