

Happy 420 Community Comment April 23, 2015 Mike Goldsby

Monday I was walking down Fifth Street in Eureka, past the Post Office, and I walked through a cloud of thick marijuana smoke. Two colorful characters were standing by a parked pick-up truck, smoking weed in public, celebrating 420. For the record, I didn't inhale.

April 20th is the marijuana holiday. In the past, this was celebrated by thousands of people converging on Redwood Park in Arcata. But not everyone was mellow and there were many arrests, a lot of property damage, environmental damage and a lot of garbage, including empty Dorito Bags. The City of Arcata and the Arcata Police clamped down and I applaud their actions. A few people protested that being locked out of the Park on 420 violated their Second Amendment Rights of Free Speech.

First off, there is no shortage of free speech around marijuana. I think it would be hard to go an entire day WITHOUT reading an article, seeing a billboard, seeing a print ad or hearing a radio ad. Nobody is clamping down on the topic of marijuana. That green leaf symbol is everywhere.

Secondly, people do have a right to gather peacefully but 420 in Arcata was anything but peaceful. It was chaos and created a significant expense for the tax payers. And I think marijuana is still illegal. The constitution doesn't say government needs to provide a public park to allow thousands of people to engage in illegal activity and leave a big mess.

Someday, in the future, when weed is legal for recreational use, some agency can sponsor 420 in the park, similar to a beer fest or the Oyster Fest. That could be a big money maker.

I would like to tell you about my 420 celebration. I teach part time in the Addiction Studies Program at College of the Redwoods and my students sponsored a Career Night on Monday, April 20th. This is the second year we have made it a class project in the spring. Our students invite a panel of program graduates who have jobs in fields related to chemical dependency treatment and prevention.

My students organize the event, develop objectives and evaluate the event to see if they met their objectives. They promote the event, decide on the agenda, moderate the event and even cater refreshments.

I have taught in Addiction Studies since 1987. The field has grown, with improved treatment techniques, scientific breakthroughs on the causes of addiction, improved medication and more. Addiction Studies is a vocational technical program, meaning in two years people can earn the academic background necessary to apply to become a State Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor.

The panelists, all graduates, made me proud to be associated with them. Some worked at local treatment programs and drinking driver programs. Another went on to further her education and become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, treating alcoholics and addicts.

Another is associated with a medical provider and works to connect addicts with treatment, medication and medical care. And another became a writer, with an emphasis on addiction and recovery issues.

They were all enthusiastic representatives of an important profession, hopefully a profession that will grow with increased treatment opportunities through the affordable care act.

So, I got to spend my 420 with a bunch of smart, caring people who want to improve lives in our community. And chances are I remember more about my 420 celebration.

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment