



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

Suzanne Pfeil enjoys a cup of tea with 'cannabis tincture' on the porch of her Santa Cruz home. Pfeil is one of an estimated 2,000 medical marijuana users in the county. The Santa Cruz City Council this week passed an ordinance legalizing medicinal marijuana use and implementing usage guidelines.

Reefer rules now in place

Pot clubs are legal in city's eyes

By **HEATHER BOERNER**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Gary McMillan takes 58 pills a day to combat the effects of AIDS-related diseases. And to combat the ravages of the pills on his stomach, he smokes marijuana.

"By smoking a half a joint or a joint in the morning, I can then eat breakfast and take my pills and it reduces my nausea," said McMillan, who was diagnosed with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, in 1986. He started showing symptoms of AIDS in 1990.

"It also helps me sleep. I can take the tincture (tea) at night, and it helps me go to sleep. If I take something like valium, it stays in my system for weeks and I can't wake up the next day. I'm not as grogged out with marijuana."

McMillan also said he's using mari-

juana to increase his appetite and gain back the 22 pounds he lost in a bout with staph infection that sent him to the hospital in March.

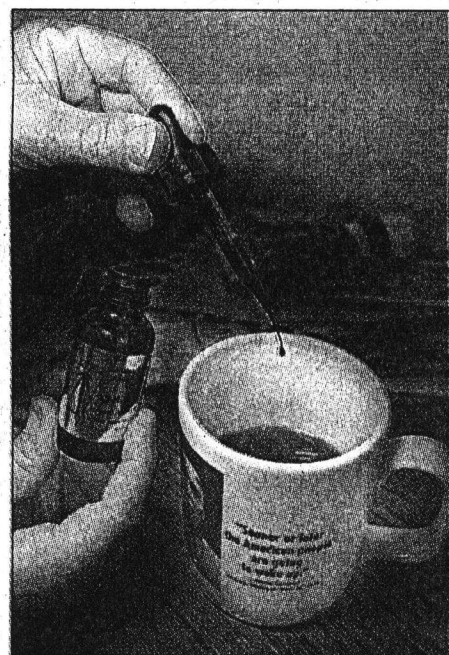
Now, what McMillan has done for 10 years is legal. The Santa Cruz City Council unanimously passed a medical marijuana ordinance earlier this week, which officially sanctioned the marijuana club McMillan has belonged to for five years. The ordinance, which went into effect the moment the council approved it Tuesday, allows medical marijuana dispensaries to grow and distribute the drug in industrial and commercial-industrial areas 50 feet from homes and 1,000 feet from schools. That essentially limits the dispensaries to the industrial area on the Westside, and to parts of the Eastside and the Harvey West industrial area.

It also requires medical marijuana patients to carry an identification card from their medical marijuana group that permits them to possess the drug. The city's two marijuana clubs, Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana and Santa Cruz Cannabis Pharmaceuticals, say they are using identification cards already but may make some changes.

Changes both groups need to make are their addresses. Currently run out of homes in residential areas, the groups are scrambling to find space to meet the regulations. City Attorney John Barisone said that while the city creates an application form for the groups to become official medical marijuana distributors, the city will not penalize them.

"Technically they're not in compliance now, but I don't think we're going to take

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Regulations spell out who can get it and where

By **HEATHER BOERNER**
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Many people — about 2,000 in the county, according to Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana — use marijuana to treat cancer, anorexia, AIDS, chronic pain, spasticity, glaucoma, arthritis, migraine and other illnesses. While some of those people already are members of local medical marijuana clubs, those who wish to join the groups now that they are legal must follow a protocol established by the city and long practiced by some groups.

Patients who think they may be eligible for medical marijuana must check with their doctors and receive a recommendation. Under the city's new law, a note from a doctor saying a patient has one of the diseases for which marijuana is usually prescribed is not enough. A change in the ordinance between the first and second

Providers

WAMM: Membership is capped at 250, but patients can ask to be placed on a waiting list. 423-5413.

SANTA CRUZ CANNABIS PHARMACEUTICALS: Membership is open. 460-0420.

readings requires doctors to actually recommend, in writing, the use of marijuana to treat symptoms.

At either WAMM or Santa Cruz Cannabis Pharmaceuticals, patients must produce that recommendation from a California doctor with whom they have a long-term medical relationship.

Patients also must produce proof of California residency, such as a driver's license or passport, and a Santa Cruz city address and telephone number. Pager num-

bers and post office boxes will not be accepted.

Both groups also have applications that patients must fill out, certifying under penalty of perjury that they will not share, sell or give away their marijuana. In addition, WAMM members must certify that they are willing to be part of a collective.

Patients may only belong to one medical marijuana group.

The clubs say they will contact doctors to verify their recommendations and patients will be issued laminated medical marijuana identification cards containing a 24-hour hotline number police can call if they find patients in possession of marijuana. The clubs will track the amount and form of marijuana used by patients and stay in contact with physicians. The groups also will be subject to yearly audits by a local health czar who is yet to be named.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Suzanne Pfeil displays her medical marijuana user's card.

Marijuana

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any immediate action," Barisone said. "WAMM is looking for a new place and so is the group in Seabright."

City planner Susanna Montana, who helped draft the ordinance, said she's been working to help the clubs find space that meets their needs and fits the new zoning requirements.

Kate Wells, who founded Santa Cruz Cannabis Pharmaceuticals, said her group has been looking for a new place since its Seabright Avenue neighbors began a campaign in April to force the group to move. The club hasn't had much luck, she said.

"It's a little ridiculous that we're being asked to move," said Wells, a lawyer. "I mean, you wouldn't zone a pharmacy to an industrial area."

Both groups also complain that, as non-profit groups that charge little or nothing for marijuana, they aren't sure how they'll pay for the new space. They not-so-subtly say they'll need an outside benefactor.

But they also praised the ordinance. They say the city's stamp of approval

will change the medical marijuana clubs from clandestine groups run out of walk-in closets to growing organizations that will soon have their own space.

"It's a paradigmatic shift, and it's so positive," said Valerie Corral, executive director and founder of Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana. "What's happened now is that we aren't so marginal. This ordinance is a statement not just of support from the council but respect."

For medical marijuana patients like Suzanne Pfeil, a wheelchair user who's been using marijuana for years to treat insomnia, muscle spasms and other problems, the ordinance means relief from the fear she says she and others lived with before.

"This law means everything," she said. "It takes away the element of fear that's been a big, strong element in every meeting. We're always afraid of being arrested. And for the chief of police and Police Department in general to be so supportive, it's just amazing. It's amazing that they realize that this is medicine."