

X Drugs
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Drug Enforcement's Reefer Madness

By Brian Caulfield

Valerie Corral is the latest victim of the war on medical marijuana.

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office raided Corral's home in Davenport on September 21, searched her home for three hours, cited her for felony cultivation of marijuana, and seized the marijuana she needs to control her violent epileptic seizures.

Corral and others who need marijuana for medical use have inspired lawmakers and activists nationwide to fight for the elimination of the ban on marijuana for medical care. The latest victory came on September 8, when the California State Legislature passed Senate Joint Resolution 8, which asked the Clinton Administration to legalize the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

"It was tough getting the resolution passed, because you mention the word marijuana and everyone runs for cover," State Senator Henry Mello (D-Watsonville), who sponsored the bill, told City on a Hill Press. "I had to make it very clear to them [that] it is not pot

smoking, it is marijuana use under prescription for medical uses only."

Mello said marijuana can be used to help people undergoing chemotherapy, AIDS survivors, and epileptics, among others. The California Medical Association is among the groups which oppose the ban on the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

Advocates of medical marijuana are now looking for vindica-



Wendy Yonagihara

tion in court. According to Scott Imler, spokesperson for Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is trying to overturn an earlier ruling that would have forced the DEA to recognize the medical value of marijuana.

A Washington D.C. Court of Appeals heard arguments Friday on the case, known as ACT vs. DEA. DEA spokesperson Roger Guvara declined to comment on the details of the case.

"I feel this provides the first opportunity in twelve years to move forward on this issue," said Imler, who is also affiliated with the Santa Cruz-based Citizens for Medical Marijuana.

Meanwhile, the ban remains in effect, which has created legal problems for Corral and her husband, both of whom will be arraigned for felony cultivation of marijuana in November. District Attorney Art Danner dropped an earlier charge of felony cultivation against Valerie Corral last March, after an earlier raid by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office.

The raids on Corral's house occurred despite the passage of Santa Cruz County Measure A last year. The non-binding measure asked the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's office and District Attorney to use their discretion to leave people using marijuana for medical purposes alone.

"Valerie was clearly targeted,"

said Theodora Kerry, a member of Citizens for Medical Marijuana. Kerry said Corral was growing openly and felt she had some protection, since she had proven her case to the District Attorney. "The raid was clearly vindictive," said Kerry.

But Sergeant Joseph Hemingway of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office does not agree. "Our office was not looking to go after [Corral]," said Hemingway. Hemingway added Corral's garden was discovered

while eradicating other marijuana in the area. "Once we discovered the marijuana we had to go in, we had to enforce the law impartially," said Hemingway.

"It's really sad," Corral said of her encounters with the County Sheriff. "I have already gone through enough without being made a target. I am not a criminal, I am not a threat to society. With so many criminals out there, the Sheriff office should not waste his energy on me."