

Voyles: No need for marijuana in society

Coolidge Examiner

County attorney and CYC meet to discuss drug



Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles and Sharon Boyd and Michael Flores II from the Coolidge Youth Coalition are trying to prevent teens from using marijuana.

October 2, 2013

BY ROBBY GAL, Staff Writer
Coolidge Youth Coalition does a lot for the youth in town. But much of their focus is making sure that the youth know the dangers of drugs and substances that can cause problems for them in life.

Sharon Boyd and Michael Flores felt a great opportunity was right down the road for them and their efforts to fight drug abuse with the youth. Their answer was to call on Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles, who is a strong advocate for elimination of marijuana.

“Lando is so well-versed on all topics and arguments pertaining to legality and consequences of marijuana,” Boyd explained.

Voyles will come out and say it adamantly that he is not in support of marijuana use and sees no use for it in society period. And that includes medical marijuana.

“No, absolutely not I don’t see a need for marijuana in society,” Voyles said.

And the line is drawn much closer to Voyles’ office, where if you’re a medical marijuana cardholder, you are out of luck.

“If you have a medical marijuana card I won’t admit you,” Voyles said. “I won’t bring you in on my office for employment. It sounds harsh, but this is a little step overall.

“I have a basis for it. The Federal Government has come down and told me I can’t have any Schedule One drug use in my office and accept the grants that I apply for, for the programs that I have.”

In an Arizona Youth Survey in Pinal County 20 percent of youth are past 30-day users of marijuana. And nationally, 6.5 percent of high school seniors smoke marijuana every day. The stat is the highest rate in 30 years.

“People don’t realize that with a Schedule One drug, it puts it in a category where Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the FDA have both stated it has zero medical use,” Voyles said. “That hasn’t changed. They have not come out and issued a new set of rules, it still doesn’t have a medical use.”

The Office of National Drug Control Policy state that marijuana can be subjected to the same clinical trials and scrutiny that the FDA applies to all new medications and maintains that marijuana has not met these standards.

But currently, the FDA approved the medicinal use of isolated components of the marijuana plant and related synthetic compounds, including Dronabinol and Nabilone. Sativex, an oral spray approved in Canada, the UK and other parts of Europe for the treatment of multiple sclerosis spasticity and cancer pain, is in the late-stage clinical trials with the FDA. And currently evidence that marijuana is a sufficient treatment of HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other conditions, has been deemed not sufficient at this time by the FDA.

However, THC-based drugs to treat pain and nausea are already FDA approved and prescribed, and scientists are continuing to investigate the medicinal properties of cannabinoids.

Voyles stated that 90 percent of medical marijuana cardholders are complaining of severe or chronic pain. And Voyles also stated that 18-30 year-olds are the largest demographic of holders of the cards.

“When I was growing up, and got hurt or got a sprain it wasn’t chronic enough to need to puff on a marijuana cigarette,” Voyles said. “And the way it was sold to the public was let’s help those elderly people who have no other remedy to decrease the pain. But that’s not how it’s being used.”

Recently, the United States Department of Justice stated it would not challenge state laws that legalize marijuana use in Colorado or Washington.

“This move opens the doors for other states such as Arizona with Medical Marijuana to go forward with the personal use legalization of marijuana without threat of a challenge from the U.S. Department of Justice,” Boyd said.

The Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, who is the training arm of the Drug Free Community Grant (DFC), recently released a statement that said, “The fact remains that smoked marijuana is not a medicine, it has damaging effects on the developing adolescent brain, and can be addictive, as evidenced by the fact that 1 in 6 youth who use it will become addicted.

Coolidge Youth Coalition’s Boyd and Flores support CADCA’s statement. Which closely falls in line with that of Voyles beliefs.

“If you go back and look at my campaign and at the top of the list was irradiate drug use,” Voyles said. “With medical marijuana it is extremely difficult now. Because what was illegal, is now legal, or appears to be legal on the face.”

Boyd and Flores explained that they are seeing the lines blurred where parents and kids are saying if it’s natural then using it is ok.

“We have a medical marijuana facility here open now and a medical marijuana delivery service,” Boyd said. “We have the lowest perception that we have ever had of the effects of marijuana.”

Boyd and Flores asked Voyles to come and speak to the youth and work with CYC on educating the youth in Coolidge about the effects of marijuana and the legal matters that pertain to the use of the drug.