

EDITORIAL: Marijuana party embarrasses state

By Associated Press
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As Colorado's 4-20 "holiday" came and went Monday, our new identity was more clear than ever. We aren't best known as a high-tech hub, the Napa Valley of craft brews or the paradise of skiing, climbing and other outdoor sports. That image is just so yesteryear. Today, we are known for pot. It is an image North Holland was glad to relinquish.

This year's 4-20 spectacle in Civic Center Park coincided with the High Times Cannabis Cup, a celebration of marijuana and the drug scene that began as all the rage in Amsterdam in the 1980s.

"As the epicenter of all things pot has shifted to the United States, the Cannabis Cup in Denver is now debatably the largest event in the weed world," reported ABC News.

Oh, we know. Marijuana has come a long way. We are told it is respectable now. The people who use it are high-end professionals and students who will improve our standard of living. Pot parties are cocktail gatherings of the 21st century's in crowd of young professionals.

Anyone prone to believe this didn't see Civic Center Park in the hours leading up to and after 4:20 p.m. on Monday.

In all fairness, this was a peaceable event. We witnessed no brawls or threatening behavior. Police were scarce, meaning they weren't overly concerned about a stoned crowd becoming out of control or violent.

Most in attendance were friendly and happy to visit with us. It was difficult to find anyone with a job or plans for a career. More than half the dozen-plus attendees we interviewed were drawn to Colorado as visitors or new residents by the world's most permissive marijuana experiment.

"You moved here?" we asked Dale in a videotaped conversation.

"From Louisiana; March of last year," Dale said.

"And why did you move here?"

"The weed."

"How come?"

" 'Cause it's cheap and it was a great year and it had good THC so I can be able to talk to people, and you know, it helps me on mind where I can be able to socialize with the outer dream of this life where sometimes I can get capsized in depression and stay in my little hole and if I don't get balanced of fatigue. I tried different medicines but we thought Medicaid and if your homeless you can get it but I tried the other way and it ain't working for me like it used to so I'm kind of trying to get more weed for later down the road so I don't have to afford to keep buying, buying, buying because I don't have the money."

We could not find a high achiever in the crowd. There were no prospective scientists, doctors, architects or engineers.

It was a display of thousands of people — old and young, men and women of all ethnic backgrounds — with few apparent aspirations beyond consuming pot. It had nothing in common with gatherings at the annual Great American Beer Festival, any wine-tasting event, music festivals, rock concerts or even Woodstock. Business leaders and heads of functional households would not have been impressed.

We can only hope the 4-20 party is not an accurate sample of Colorado's burgeoning marijuana scene. If so, our status as the growing "epicenter of all things pot" will become an increasingly embarrassing and costly distinction of underachievement and dysfunction.