

The businessman as political organizer: Richard Lee

Oaksterdam U. Offers Cannabis-Oriented Curriculum

Activist/businessman Richard Lee, founder of the Bulldog Café, proprietor of the Coffeeshop Blue Sky, creator of the *Oaksterdam News*, owner of the Oaksterdam Gift Shop, and a key backer of Oakland’s legalization effort, “Measure Z” —has launched an educational enterprise: Oaksterdam University.

*The classes cover every aspect of running a dispensary.*

The OU curriculum covers every aspect of running a dispensary. The basic classes are taught over the course of a week-end. Advanced classes are offered the following weekend (see box at right).

OU Classes are held in a one-room schoolhouse —a storefront in downtown Oakland— that seats 40. The first session, held in early January, was given rave reviews by the students who attended and even got favorable coverage from Fox News.

An about-to-open Sonoma County dispensary sent six prospective employees for training at the second session. February, March and April classes were already filled as we go to press at the end of January. Night classes will be added, Lee says.

Faculty members include Frank Lucido, MD, who lectures on both the medical uses of marijuana and legal aspects of the dispensary-physician relationship; Dennis Peron, founder of the San Francisco Cannabis Buyers Club and the world’s greatest maitre d’; Ed Rosenthal, a successful businessman and authority on cultivation; and attorney Robert Raich, who explains how to set up and run a business (both for-profit and non-profit structures).

“I was extremely impressed by the Oaksterdam students,” Raich commented. “These were focused, serious people who want to do things right.”

Decentralized Production

Lee opened the Bulldog Café on Tele-



OU STUDENTS at a class on “Growing Cannabis Responsibly.”

Basic Classes

Politics/Legal Issues

Overview of laws regulating medical-marijuana distribution, cultivation, possession, and use; plus an introduction to Oakland’s Measure Z and the issue of legalization for consumption by adults.

Horticulture/Production

Production of cannabis flowers and starter plants. Pest control, smell abatement, security, hydroponics, organic techniques, indoor/outdoor, and drying/curing will be covered.

Budtending

Bartending for the cannabis industry. Learn how to effectively and responsibly dispense cannabis by understanding strain differences, their effects, and their use in treating various medical conditions.

Cooking

The fine art of baking and cooking with cannabis. Hundreds of edible cannabis products have been developed, including: confections, cheesecakes, salad dressings, and drinks. Learn about regulating dosages.

Advanced Classes

Packaging/Distribution

Getting cannabis from producers to retailers. Product grading, weighing, storage, and safe transportation.

Retail Management

Security, managing personnel, community relations, and customer service.

Starting a business

Obtaining city, county, state permits and licenses. Payroll and sales taxes, workman’s compensation, health insurance, and other requirements for operating a business.

Horticulture 102

Hydroponics and other advanced cultivation techniques



*OU hitches the entrepreneurial zeal that energizes capitalism to a social goal —ending the marijuana prohibition by overgrowing the government.*

This was great for folks living in rural areas but they still had to separate male from female plants and look out for hermaphrodites. With clubs releasing clones of sexed females and offering instruction, decentralized production could become the norm.”

Decentralized Distribution

In Oaksterdam U., Lee has created an institution that furthers decentralized distribution. Why would a capitalist —which Lee is, wholeheartedly— create competition for his own dispensary business? “I’m about politics and changing the laws,” he says matter-of-factly.

He’s being modest. Oaksterdam U. is a brilliant idea on every level. It hitches the entrepreneurial zeal that energizes capitalism to a social goal —ending marijuana prohibition by overgrowing the government.

OU is located at 410 15th St. For more info call 510-251-1544 or go to <http://www.oaksterdamuniversity.com/>

Lee —a serial entrepreneur— is also launching a bike-rental business at the OU site “to encourage healthy alternatives to sitting in cars when visiting Oaksterdam.” But OU is not offering PE classes —yet.

graph Ave. soon after Prop 215 passed. His interest in training medical-cannabis users to grow their own was both political and economic. As an organizer he wanted to involve as many people as possible in the movement. As a retailer he wanted to be supplied by as many vendors as possible and to have the assurance —which only decentralized production could provide— that a few busts wouldn’t disrupt the pipeline through which product arrived.

In 2002 Lee hired landscaper Andrew Glazier to teach a cultivation class. “Years of dealing with powdery mildew on roses helped me prepare for the same

on cannabis,” says Glazier, who helped plan the OU curriculum. “Soil chemistry is soil chemistry no matter if one grows tomatoes or cannabis. Temperature, humidity and pH —you need to understand their role whatever you’re growing.”

Glazier recalls Lee’s approach at the Bulldog with admiration. “They carefully selected the best strains and released them as clones —exact reproductions of desired female plants. Imagine a pharmacy which sells you medicine and then gives you the recipe, too. It was revolutionary. Folks from Southern California came north to get the best genetics.”

According to Glazier, “In the early 1990s seed companies had begun shipping cannabis seeds all over the world.



Indoor garden with a college education.



OU’s Richard Lee



OU CLASSES WERE BOOKED four months ahead as of late January.

Another Benefit of Organic Growing

Organically grown tomatoes (grown with cover crops, compost and manure) have almost double the flavonoid content of tomatoes grown by the prevailing U.S. method (synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides), according to UC Davis researchers writing in the June Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry.

Flavonoids have strong anti-oxidative properties that may help prevent aging.

Alyson Mitchell and co-workers compared tomatoes grown in organic and conventional soil. They determined that flavonoid levels kept rising for 10 years in organic soil. “We sort of went into this expecting higher levels,” Mitchell said. “We did not expect to find the levels that we found.”

Mitchell hypothesizes that organic crops might have more flavonoids —which are produced by plants in part to ward off pests— because they have more pests to ward off than crops grown in chemically treated soil.

Modern/Traditional Herbalism

Discovering the medical benefits of marijuana often leads people to an interest in other herbs.

Chinese Herbalism is the oldest continuously practiced medicine in the world. The combination of scientific and energetic classification of herbs is what makes this system unique. The Chinese created a complex way to describe the characteristics and functions of more than 2,000 herbs.

Each herb has its own taste (sweet, sour, bitter, salty, neutral, acrid), its own thermal property (hot, warm,



cold, cool, neutral), and each herb goes to a specific organ or organs.

The greatest difference between Chinese and Western herbalism is the way formulas are written. Unlike Western herbology, which uses a single herb to treat a specific condition, Chinese herbalism uses multiple herbs in a formula to address both the cause and manifestation of illness. This is called the “root and branch” theory.

Many physicians now recognize the value of Chinese herbs as a complementary therapy to conventional treatments. Cancer patients can use Chinese herbs to better cope with the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation. The World Health Organization has recognized Chinese medicine as a viable and effective therapy to treat a broad spectrum of disease.

As with medical marijuana, patients using Chinese herbs ultimately take a greater role in their own self-healing.

Joanna LaForce, R.Ph., CGP