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Carmel Foundation talk explores medical marijuana

By CHRIS COUNTS

BRINGING UP a subject that's bound to raise a few eyebrows, the Carmel Foundation offers a free talk Wednesday, June 1, on the "Wonders of Cannabis: Healing Your Body Naturally."

The talk on medical marijuana will be presented by a Karen Mankins, a nurse, and Valentia Piccinini, a patient and philanthropist.

The event is part of the foundation's Wednesday program series, which tackles a wide range of topics of interest to seniors, including some that are informative ("Take Control of Your Driving Future"), and others that are simply interesting or entertaining ("Ethiopia, Land of the Mystic Lion of Judah").

So how did such a hot button topic end up at the Carmel Foundation, which offers a wide range of programs and services for local seniors — but nothing particularly controversial?

"I was very nervous about it early on," foundation president Jill Sheffield conceded. "I'm pretty conservative, and we're a pretty conservative organization."

A year ago, the foundation agreed to host a workshop on the subject of medical marijuana, but only its members could attend. "It was very popular," Sheffield told The Pine Cone.

In contrast, Wednesday's event is open to the public. While the two women who will give Wednesday's talk are advocates for using marijuana for medical purposes, Sheffield said the foundation is staying neutral on the subject. "We are in no way taking a stand," she said.

Mankins told The Pine Cone she became familiar with medical marijuana while working as a nurse in a residential facility for seniors.

"A daughter wanted to get her mother off the narcotics she was taking," Mankins explained. "She was in excruciating pain. She was completely miserable."

But after the bedridden mother switched from traditional painkillers to cannabis, her condition improved by leaps and bounds, Mankins said.

"Little by little, she got off the narcotics," the nurse explained. "She was up and walking around, and coming to meals. Her quality of life changed immensely — it was amazing."

Mankins was so impressed by what she saw that now she gives cannabis to her dog, who suffers from arthritis. "She could barely walk and she's running now," she added.

Piccinini, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, said she has learned first-hand how effective cannabis can be for treating a medical condition.

"I wear a cannabis patch, which eliminates inflammation and pain," Piccinini explained. "I can move around now and exercise. I don't need a walker anymore. The quality of my life has been improved dramatically."

While Piccinini is an outspoken advocate for medical marijuana, she recommends against smoking it because she said the process destroys the valuable medicinal properties of the plant. Piccinini also said cannabis can be very effective in surprisingly small doses.

"This is not about getting high," she added. "This is about wellness. We use it to manage pain, sleep, anxiety and depression."

The talk starts at 2:30 p.m. The Carmel Foundation is located at Eighth and Lincoln. Call (831) 624-1588.

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stone fireplace warms the living room adjacent to the separate dining room and kitchen. There are two bedrooms upstairs as well as a guest room with en suite and separate entrance.

Student-golfers earn scholarships

THREE MONTEREY County high school students — Hayley Yukihiro, Derrick Ow and Pedro Ortiz — have been named scholarship awards winners by the Men's Golf Association at Quail Lodge Golf Club in Carmel Valley.

More than \$60,000 has been awarded over the past eight years to students "who have achieved high academic performance, demonstrated a financial need, displayed a strong commitment to community service and golfing accomplishments."

The scholarships are funded by donations from Men's Golf Association members and proceeds from the annual Scholars Cup Golf Tournament.



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