

# Moscow's Hemp Fest draws big, colorful crowd

By Terri Harber, Daily News staff writer | Posted: Monday, April 18, 2016 12:00 am

People active in the hemp and marijuana legalization movement spoke between musical acts during this year's Hemp Fest at Moscow's East City Park on Saturday, while others socialized, ate food prepared by various vendors and perused a variety of items for sale, including crafts and pot paraphernalia.

Frankie Morales, of Pierce, Wash., enjoyed the weather and watched a band play. He said he came to the festival with friends to look around, and they had seen pretty much everything they wanted and were preparing to buy some food.

"I heard the atmosphere is always very good," he said.

Sitting on a park bench just outside of the Hemp Fest staging area was Connie Colvin, a long-time Moscow resident. She was enjoying watching passersby in colorful outfits and said she also likes to see how many piercings they have on their ears, noses and lips.

Most of food sold at Hemp Fest smelled inviting but Colvin said she could do without the "smell of patchouli and weed."

She said she does understand why the event garners so much interest.

"Today, they can be a different person ... a day to do whatever they want," she said.

Hemp Fest started off in 1996, focusing only on legalizing hemp but eventually included support for medical marijuana.

Though plenty of political groups were ready and willing to motivate people attending this year's Hemp Fest, there were no petitions to sign for legalizing marijuana or hemp in Idaho.

Proponents of medical marijuana in the Gem State are going to try again after they recently pulled the plug on a proposal for legalizing the substance and industrial hemp because one of the groups thought to be supportive of the effort wanted out of the document, said Bill Esbensen, who spearheaded the petition drive set originally for statewide ballot inclusion later this year.

"After I showed everything to my lawyer, he told me to just pull the petition," Esbensen said Saturday. "It was a misunderstanding. We'll be back here next year with a new petition for people



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Moscow Hemp Fest attendees admire gemstones at BrightStar Crystals booth Saturday at East City Park in Moscow.

to sign."

People at Hemp Fest were able to ask Esbensen and others involved in the legalization movement questions about the law and what the new proposal will be about. They had a booth in the park.

He expects to submit a new proposal for medical marijuana only to the state as soon as next week. The subsequent petition will require 47,623 signatures. The goal is to get the new proposal on the ballot in 2018, he said.

"We didn't fail," Esbensen said. "We made it to the next stepping stone to success."

Another political group, the local Palouse Peace Coalition, asked people at Hemp Fest to envision the future. The group had a poster-sized pad and markers for people to write down their thoughts. The group formed soon after 9/11 and gathers 5:30-6:30 p.m. Fridays in Friendship Square to hold vigils and demonstrate.

"Everybody thinks about the future," said Miriam Kent, who would like to see people hold "dialogue with kindness and respect."

Michael Dickey, who joined Kent, said people need to think more about the well-being of others because "the time will come when everybody will have to give of themselves."

The Climate Change Lobby of the Palouse encouraged people to send letters to political representatives and express their views about climate change, marijuana legalization or what they deem important, member Jeff Ramsey said. The group handed out stamped envelopes addressed to elected officials.

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