

Curaleaf Looks to Change the Face of Medical Cannabis

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While Curaleaf may be vying for one of the state's few initial state producer licenses, the word marijuana is largely absent from its vernacular.

Company officials say medical cannabis is a product that can provide important relief to state approved patients. That will involve reaching "cannabis-naïve" patients who may be unfamiliar with the herb's long medicinal history and its vast benefits both known and unknown, according to the company.

Too often in other states, marijuana is cultivated for maximum THC content and marketed as a high, they contend, leaving behind many who would benefit.

"We're trying to change the face of it," said chief operating officer April Arrasate. "At the end of the day, it's one more option for patient. We are for the cannibas naïve patient."

As it hopes of gaining just one of [three initial state licenses](#), the company on Tuesday applied for a special exception use for the 40,145 square-foot building at 100 Grist Mill Road in Simsbury, currently owned by Grist Mill Partners, LLC.

Like many involved with Curaleaf, the issue is very personal for Arrasate, a Collinsville based lawyer and businesswoman.

Arrasate said her mother Rachel went through many ordeals as she battled breast cancer after a September 2008 diagnosis and eventually passed away in February of 2011, after the disease was found in her brain.

As the Connecticut 2012 "Act Concerning The Palliative Use Of Marijuana" was becoming reality, Arrasate, who has a background in pharmaceutical research and development, furthered her research, talked to her mother's doctor and began meeting other advocates and professionals.

On her journey, Arrasate met Curaleaf president Eileen Konieczny, a 20-year oncology nurse, board member of the American Cannabis Nurses Association and former executive director of the Connecticut Cannabis Business Alliance. Konieczny, who also has a personal passion, has been a strong advocate, educating legislators and advising the state during the process, company officials said.

She's also lost family members and patients to cancer and both women believe their product could help many.

"When you see that medical cannabis can probably change the world, you don't stop talking," Konieczny said at [a past Simsbury Zoning Commission meeting](#).

At a subsequent meeting, the commission [adopted proposed regulations requiring a special exception for medical marijuana facilities](#). While it was not yet official on Tuesday officials expected a public hearing on the special exception to be set for Dec. 16.

Arrasate described the proposed facility as one that would house a pharmaceutical company specializing in medical cannabis.

Others involved in the company include Chief Executive Officer Robert Birnbaum and Compliance officer Joseph Stevens, founder of Greenleaf Compassion Center, the only operational medical marijuana alternative treatment

center in New Jersey.

Company officials said its board of advisors includes medical professionals, physicians, advocates and others. Many community leaders have also written recommendation letters. The company's efforts also include substance abuse prevention, Arrasate said.

The company said its commitment includes \$2 million in banked cash to satisfy the state's escrow requirement and another \$6 million in committed capital. Most of that funding is from state residents using their own funds, according to company executives.

Under the 2012 "Act Concerning The Palliative Use Of Marijuana," the state has set up an approval process for those who are 18, live in Connecticut, are not an inmate confined in a correctional institution or facility under the supervision of the Connecticut Department of Corrections and are "being treated for a debilitating medical condition by a Connecticut-licensed physician." Those include:

- Cancer
- Glaucoma
- Positive Status for Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- Parkinson's Disease
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Damage to the Nervous Tissue of the Spinal Cord with Objective Neurological Indication of Intractable Spasticity
- Epilepsy
- Cachexia
- Wasting Syndrome
- Crohn's Disease
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder