

## WHO BENEFITS FROM WEED CANDY MARKETING?

Look very closely. Candy, soda and toaster pastries of all shapes, sizes and flavors. No, this isn't a pre-Halloween advertisement. It's the new norm in marijuana consumption. Parents and communities across the Kansas City metro area, Missouri and the United States should take note of the targeted marketing being done and the consequences of an emerging industry of what is being called "weed candy."



Long before personal use for marijuana was legalized by voters in the state of Colorado – and let's remember that Amendment 64 passed with just 1.383 million votes approving of the measure of the 2.5 million that cast ballots – so-called weed candy was being manufactured in locations across the United States.



Proponents of legalized, recreational marijuana began cutting, mixing and injecting the drug into candy and other edibles to market to a new generation of users. And much of that marketing appears clearly geared toward the Millennial crowd and high school-aged kids.

Drug-laced candies have been confiscated in Missouri in an alarming show of arrogance as marijuana products continue to move out of Colorado and into Midwestern states.

Prior to Halloween in 2013, packages of gummy bears, lemon drops and assorted mints were seized in Joplin, Missouri. Although the items appear to be safely packaged like traditional candies, observant members of the local drug task force spotted the THC levels printed on the packages.



Although the drug-laced candies were taken in Joplin, Barry County authorities believed the packages were headed toward Pineville. Barry County Sheriff Mike Epperly sounded the warning bells to parents as Halloween approached and said he hopes the flow of drugs from Colorado to southwest Missouri ended with that seizure.

Epperly told Ozarksfirst.com that he wants to educate parents, kids and other law enforcement on the dangers of the weed candy and how to easily spot it.

A simple scan of the ingredients on the candy package should indicate if there are THC levels present.

After the weed candy was taken in southwest Missouri, a school superintendent from Arkansas also addressed the issue with parents and students.



Wyandotte Superintendent Troy Gray sent a district-wide note out warning of the drugs that were found just across the border. Interestingly, some “medical marijuana” proposals in Arkansas have advocated for kids with a doctor’s note to be allowed to carry the drug on school grounds, leaving even more room for error if kids bring pot-laced candy to school and are not subject to constant oversight by teachers and administrators.

And for those who don't believe it can happen in their backyards need look no further than Limerick Township and Upper Merion Township in Pennsylvania.

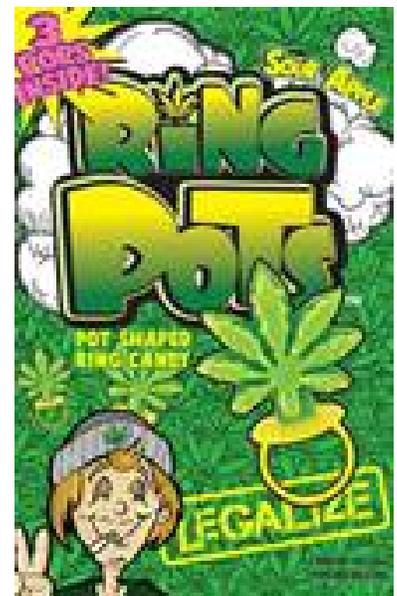
The small communities found themselves in the national spotlight in early 2013 when pieces of marijuana-laced candies turned up in the area. The candy was actually turned into the police in Upper Merion Township.

The package of green candies caught the attention of a parent, who wisely turned the substances into local police. The candies follow a similar, disturbing pattern: finely ground marijuana cooked with glucose-based liquids, then hardened to look like traditional candies.

More candy was seized in Indiana in March of 2013 by Indianapolis law enforcement.

Capt. Robert Holt told Indianapolis's WTHR NBC 13 that the drugs are likely a byproduct of states that have legalized marijuana.

“We've probably had no more than a handful of cases come through in the past six months. Most of it sprouts from states that have legalized marijuana,” Holt said.

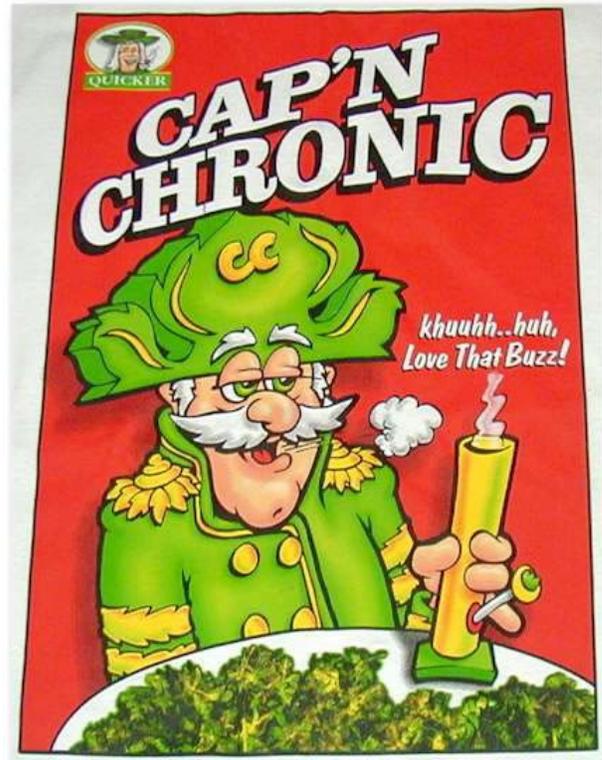


Identifying that stopping the early use of marijuana is critical in any community, from Indianapolis to Lee's Summit. In that area of Indiana, coordinators for Drug Free Marion County report that 17 percent of kids have admitted trying pot by eighth grade.

That number frighteningly skyrockets to 50 percent by their senior year.

Nationwide, federal figures, according to Monitor our Future, showed that 36 percent of high school seniors reported use of marijuana in the past year. And a staggering 60 percent of those polled revealed they thought regular marijuana use was not harmful.

"The acceptance of medical marijuana in multiple states leads to the sense that if it's used for medicinal purposes, then it can't be harmful," Dr. Nora D. Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which issued the report, told a New York Times blog. "This survey has shown very consistently that the greater the number of kids that perceive marijuana as risky, the less that smoke it."



**Close-up of the front graphic.**