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Event to Highlight History of Industrial Hemp Farming in Oregon

First Annual Hemp History Week Organized to Celebrate Hemp as Nutritious Food, Sustainable Fiber and Eco-friendly Building Material

Portland, OR – On Tuesday, May 18th, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the Heritage Room of the BridgePort BrewPub at 1313 NW Marshall Street in Portland, Oregonians will gather to learn about Oregon's hemp farming history and discuss the business potential the sustainable crop has for the state as part of the **1st Annual Hemp History Week** taking place in cities and towns across the United States. BridgePort BrewPub, historically located on the site of a former hemp rope factory will provide the perfect venue for a reminder of hemp's business history in Oregon.

"Hemp was once an important crop for George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and thousands of American farmers across the U.S., including farmers here in Oregon, from colonial days until the last commercial crop was grown in 1957. Hemp was essentially outlawed in 1970 by the Controlled Substances Act," said Christina Volgyesi, project coordinator of Hemp History Week and a Portland resident.

Volgyesi was among those who successfully lobbied the Oregon Legislature to pass SB676 in 2009, which legalized hemp farming in Oregon. The federal ban continues, although 16 states have now passed legislation supporting hemp farming and eight states (Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Montana, North Dakota, Vermont and West Virginia) have removed barriers to its production or research. North Dakota has issued state licenses for the past three growing seasons and the upcoming one. Canada has allowed hemp farming since 1998.

"**Hemp History Week** will help Oregonians across our state learn about our rich hemp heritage as well as the tremendous environmental and economic benefits that would come with growing hemp in America once again," said Volgyesi, who is organizing the national effort.

Volgyesi is a founding partner of Living Harvest Foods, a Portland based company, and the largest manufacturer of natural and organic hemp food products in the country. Hemp foods have become one of the fastest growing trends in the natural foods industry, experiencing double digit growth.

At the May 18th BridgePort BrewPub **Hemp History Week** event, the public is invited to sample free hemp food and body care products, learn about textile, body care and building material products and Oregon's hemp farming history. Displays will be featured by Hemp Technologies,





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Living Harvest Foods, Merry Hempsters, Green Solutions Printing, Wilderness poets and more. Speakers will include Lisa Sedler, president and chief operating officer of New Seasons Market, Ken Barker, president of Naturally Advanced Technologies and David Madera from Hemp Technologies. A free tour of BridgePort BrewPub will be led by Bob Negele, Director of Retail Operations, who will discuss the history of the venue, what a ropewalk is and how hops, hemp and farming tie in.

Organizers are convening educational events in all 50 states, and the campaign aims to generate at least 50,000 hand-signed postcards addressed to President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder asking them to end the ban on hemp farming and let farmers grow the versatile and profitable crop.

Hemp History Week volunteers across the country have visited libraries and historical societies to research old newspaper articles and other documents about local hemp farming and manufacturing before the crop was banned. The newly discovered research will be presented at public events throughout *Hemp History Week*, including at the Portland event.

Natural product retail outlets are participating in **Hemp History Week** by sampling best-selling hemp products in their stores including: Nature's Path's *Hemp Plus*™ Granola Cereal, Sunny Hemp™ Granola Bars and Hemp Plus™ Waffles; Living Harvest Foods *Tempt*™ hemp milk and frozen desserts; Nutiva's organic shelled hemp seed and Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps.

Sustainable hemp seed, fiber and oil are already used in nutritious food, textiles, body care and even auto-parts. Companies like Ford Motors, Patagonia, and The Body Shop, in addition to Hemp Industries Association members such as the companies listed above use imported hemp in their products with broad acclaim.

The American retail hemp industry is estimated to be over \$300 million annually. Because farmers are prohibited from growing the crop domestically, all hemp-based raw materials (fiber and seeds) have to be imported from other countries. "Hemp History Week advocates to give American farmers the same economic opportunities given to farmers in other countries," added Volgyesi.

Hemp History Week – May 17-23, 2010 is an unprecedented industry-wide project initiated by The Hemp Industries Association and Vote Hemp, involving hundreds of hemp manufacturers and retailers. The **Hemp Industries Association (HIA)** is a non-profit trade group representing hemp companies, researchers, farmers and supporters. **Vote Hemp** is a national, single-issue, non-profit advocacy group founded in 2000 by members of the hemp industry to remove barriers to industrial hemp farming in the U.S. through education, legislation and advocacy. While 16 states have passed pro-hemp farming legislation to date, Hemp History Week organizers want to influence significant policy changes on the federal level as well.

Further information, along with a full list of sponsors can be found at: <http://www.hemphistoryweek.com>

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