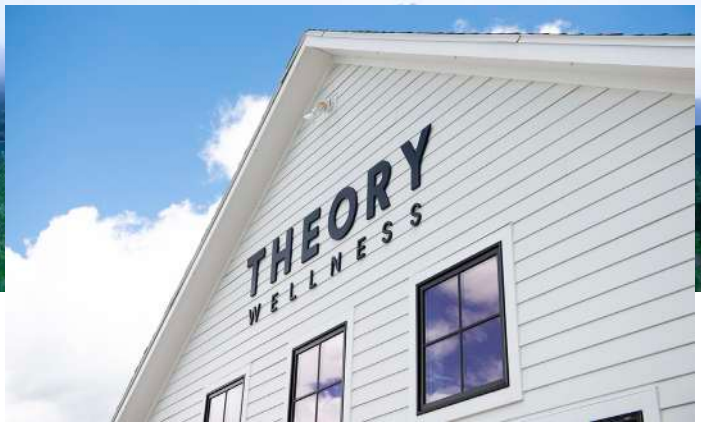
Theory Wellness: Three years of community commitment





By Arlinda Smith Broady

Sponsored content contributor

GREAT BARRINGTON, Mass. – In 2016, Massachusetts became the ninth state to legalize recreational cannabis use. But unlike many other industries, it took another two years before the state licensed sales. From the outside looking in, the cannabis industry may appear to be authorization for businesses to print money, but it's not that simple. Although retail cannabis sales in the state exceeded $1.25 billion in 2021, which was nearly double the $696 million of 2020, the highly regulated, taxed, and monitored dispensaries have proven participation in this field isn't just about the money.

Theory Wellness is one such operation that began three years ago with a medical and recreational dispensary in Great Barrington. With no established blueprint to follow, the founders knew there would be changes along the way, but had no idea that the small start-up would grow its impact on the industry as well as the community.

"Our focus has always been to define the future of what legal cannabis can be, and how it starts to manifest in the communities we operate in," Thomas Winstanley, vice president of Marketing for Theory Wellness said. "We've been exceedingly fortunate so far and remain cautiously optimistic about our future."

As the industry continues to grow, so does the company, but its commitment to giving back remains constant.

"The vision continues to evolve with the industry, with the main difference being that at the inception, Theory was a medical-only company and we had no idea adult use (recreational) cannabis would be legal here in the Commonwealth," Winstanley said. "Ultimately, we're focused on improving our operations, our offerings, and how we can provide a better cannabis experience for our customers and patients."

With locations and operations spread throughout Massachusetts, Theory has proven to be a good neighbor. It operates a philanthropic arm of Theory Wellness with a mission to support local communities, foster a sustainable industry, advocate for social justice, and advance critically important research into cannabis.

"Theory has always maintained close ties to any municipality where we operate. Our goal is to always lead by example on how cannabis can be a benefit, not just for individuals but for residents, too. Our sales generate millions of dollars in tax revenue that directly benefits the communities as those funds can be allocated to a range of uses," Winstanley said. "Beyond the tax dollars we contribute, we work closely with local non-profits that align with our core values. That can be a range of things from affordable housing, arts focused groups, and environmental conservatism. Actively participating in supporting the community is a net benefit for all and something we remain passionate about."

Theory has worked to give back to local communities through a range of sponsorships, volunteering, educational events, and financially, donating hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to host municipalities.

"We work with a wide range of local community advocates, non-profits, and conscious organizations that align with our values. You might see us at a concert, a farmer's market, or a food bank," Winstanley said. Theory has sponsored the likes of the Berkshire International Film Festival, partnered with the Railroad Street Youth Project and the Berkshire Community Radio Alliance.

Besides supporting charities, Theory is also committed to growing the local workforce.

"Above all, we're proud to be a key employer with over 80-plus