

Cathy Jordan, Florida's Medical Cannabis Advocate, Dies at 74

Cathy Jordan, Iconic Medical Cannabis Advocate, Dies at 74

Cathy Jordan, renowned for her pioneering advocacy of medical cannabis and its potential benefits for ALS patients, died on July 4 at her home in South Florida. She was 74. Her passing was confirmed by Jodi James, president of the Florida Cannabis Action Network, who received the news from Jordan's son, John.

A Legacy in Medical Cannabis Advocacy

Cathy Jordan was often hailed as the "patron saint" of medical marijuana in Florida. Diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) in 1986, Jordan defied the odds by living for 38 years with the condition, far exceeding the typical life expectancy of two to five years post-diagnosis.

Discovery of Medical Cannabis

Originally from Delaware, Jordan's life took a significant turn in 1989 during a visit to Florida. A friend introduced her to a cannabis strain called Myakka Gold. "I smoked it and I felt the disease stop," Jordan recalled in the documentary "The Cathy Jordan Story." Despite the legal risks, she smuggled the cannabis back to Delaware, convinced of its benefits.

Relocating to Florida

Jordan and her husband, Bob, eventually moved to Parrish, Manatee County, where she began using cannabis regularly. She credited it with significant physical and mental improvements. This marked the beginning of her long-term advocacy for medical cannabis.

Early Activism

In the late 1990s, Jordan began speaking publicly about her experiences. She first met Jodi James at a hemp festival at Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa. "She and I worked together hand-in-glove for 27 years," James reflected.

Leading the Charge

Jordan's relentless activism saw her becoming president of the Florida Cannabis Action Network from 2011 to 2015, continuing her efforts even after stepping down. She tirelessly lobbied for medical cannabis legalization in Florida, despite numerous setbacks.

Legislative Struggles

Despite her efforts, legislative progress was slow. The “Cathy Jordan Medical Cannabis Act” of 2013 failed to advance in the GOP-controlled state legislature. The same year, Bob Jordan was arrested for cultivating cannabis, although the charges were later dropped.

Triumphs and Setbacks

In 2014, a constitutional amendment to legalize medical marijuana fell short, receiving 57% of the vote. However, a subsequent amendment passed in 2016 with over 71% support. The Florida Legislature’s 2017 ban on smokable marijuana led to further advocacy, with Jordan testifying against the law in 2018.

Governor DeSantis’ Support

In 2019, newly elected Governor [Ron DeSantis](#) advocated for the repeal of the ban on smokable medical marijuana. Reflecting on the lengthy battle, Jordan told Spectrum Bay News, “If you had told me 22 years ago that this was going to take 22 years, I may have rethought it.”

Community Reactions

Jordan’s death resonated deeply within the cannabis community. Pete Sessa, co-founder of the Florida Cannabis Coalition, remarked, “She was just an amazing woman and such a big loss to the community. She really was just the patron saint of cannabis here in Florida.”

Carlos Hermida, owner of two hemp shops in Tampa Bay, added, “She lived more than 30 years [after her ALS diagnosis] by smoking joints. She was such a sweet lady... it really is a dark day in the movement that she’s not around anymore.”

Remembering Cathy Jordan

James poignantly noted, “Cathy Jordan was born on Jan. 1. She was a New Year’s Day baby, and she left us on Independence Day. Any other day would have just been boring, and Cathy is nothing if not interesting, and so her passing on the Fourth of July was just auspicious.”

Cathy Jordan’s enduring legacy as a champion for medical cannabis and her remarkable journey with ALS will continue to inspire. Her contributions to the movement have left an indelible mark on Florida and beyond, paving the way for future advancements in medical cannabis legislation.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +415-226-4060

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