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## Flower Power

### ***Great Barrington's Calyx Berkshire Dispensary Is Forging a Path for Women in Cannabis***

After three years of wading through red tape, Donna Norman finally opened the doors of Calyx Berkshire Dispensary in Great Barrington this November. As a small business owner entering the recreational cannabis space without outside investors or an existing medical license, she had been caught unexpectedly in an endless bureaucratic loop with Massachusetts's Cannabis Control Commission (CCC).

Since Calyx is a woman-owned business, Norman's path to a recreational license was supposed to be expedited. To prove to the CCC that Calyx was woman-owned however, it had to be third-party certified through an on-site visit to the store—made impossible without the license to open from the CCC. Norman eventually brought the unrealistic hurdle to CCC Commissioner Shaleen Title, which prompted the CCC to change its requirements. "For three years, I've had paper on my windows, and I honestly couldn't blame the people who doubted that we'd ever open," Norman says.



The runaround might have quelled the ambitions of other small business owners. But as a woman with a 26-year-long career in New York City finance, Norman was used to navigating spaces that weren't designed for her.

Making space for women in the world of cannabis was actually one of the reasons Norman wanted to open Calyx in the first place. After visiting dispensaries on a trip to Colorado, she instantly saw the potential for one back in the Berkshires when recreational cannabis was legalized. "But it was intimidating walking into those dispensaries and seeing that it was all men working there," Norman says. "I wasn't going to walk up to the counter and ask how to find products that were specific to women."

At Calyx—a name Norman chose as a reference to the resin-dense female part of the cannabis flower that she says "holds all the good stuff"—women are front and center. Staffed by a majority of women (including Norman herself), the space on Main Street is decked out in a trendy pastel color palette that fits in with the warm vibe of a curated clothing or home goods shop. On one wall, an artful display case highlights a line of glassware inspired by Keith Haring's artwork as well as hand-carved soapstone pipes by New England artist Terry Harlow.



"We really focused on making it a shopping experience," Norman says. "Right now we're only letting six customers in the showroom at a time. It's very much an intimate experience where we can spend more time getting to know customers and sharing our cannabis knowledge while maintaining social distance. Customers are pleasantly surprised to find us located in the heart of downtown Great Barrington. Many people are 'canna-curious' since they have never stepped foot in a dispensary before and leave our shop enlightened from the visit."

Over the last five years, Norman has also established relationships with other small cannabis cultivators and manufacturers in the region. She's partnering with a chef to do lower sugar infused edibles and ice cream and is working to add products from several cultivators who were right behind her in the licensing process. Last year, Calyx was also chosen as one of only four woman-owned companies to receive products from Boston-based Beantown Greentown.

"We were thoughtful in designing our menu to provide our customers with plenty of options. We opened with 17 different strains of flower, which I think is as many if not more than anyone around here," Norman says. "We're definitely already feeling the love." In just the few weeks since the dispensary opened, it has already established itself as a neighborhood spot with a following of repeat customers—all drawn to the fact that Calyx is anything but your typical flower shop.