EKU students aim to educate on hemp

Associated Press

RICHMOND — An Eastern Kentucky University student group is taking a tutoring role on the differences between marijuana and hemp, a once-popular crop whose roots go back to colonial times in the region.

Members of the EKU student branch of NORML, a marijuana advocacy group, say they are not trying to promote lighting up, The Richmond Register reports.

"We're not advocating smoking, we're advocating educating people about industrial, medical and personal uses. We want the community involved," said Ashley Sharp, 19, a sophomore and president of EKU's NORML chapter.

The national group's ultimate goal is to decriminalize marijuana and hemp, but that can be accomplished only by informing people about the nature of marijuana and hemp, she said.

Kristina Waters, the Richmond chapter's vice president, said the group plans to get the community involved by inviting elected officials and others to give public presentations.

State Sen. Joey Pendleton, D-Hopkinsville, said he plans to file a bill during the 2011 legislative session that would legalize industrial hemp as a cash crop in Kentucky. Industrial hemp could be used as a source for renewable fuels and other products including paper, clothes, cosmetics and carpet, he said.

"The time is right for industrial hemp in Kentucky," Pendleton said.