



New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse & Recycling Inc.

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In Oneida and Lewis Counties

Pharmacy-Based Drug Take-Back Program Launched

New York - Today, four pharmacies in New York's Oneida and Lewis counties will begin collecting leftover pharmaceuticals from residents free of charge. Designed and implemented by the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) and the New York Product Stewardship Council (NYPSC), this drug take-back pilot program offers county residents convenient locations to dispose of their leftover and expired medications - just one part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce the public health and environmental impacts resulting from unwanted drugs.

Funded through a grant awarded to PSI and NYPSC by the United States Department of Agriculture, the pilot program will use pharmacy-based collection receptacles and pre-paid mail-back envelopes to facilitate the proper disposal of leftover pharmaceuticals.

The locked receptacles and envelopes, acquired through Sharps Compliance, Inc., allow residents to dispose of unused medications -- both over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription (Rx) drugs (schedule II-V) -- for free, no questions asked. In contrast to the collections that take place at police stations and non-pharmacy locations, this program represents the first time that pharmacies are collecting controlled and non-controlled substances in the two counties on an ongoing basis. The pilot program is scheduled for six months.

"Every year more than 1,000 people in New York State die from a drug overdose - most commonly from prescription drugs," said Jan Oatman, regional recycling coordinator of the Development Authority of the North

Country, NY. "Along with our Lewis County partner, we are honored to be working with an impressive coalition of pharmacies, local government agencies, non-profits, and waste managers to offer this collection service and negate the environmental and health effects leftover drugs pose to our communities."

Over \$1 billion in leftover drugs are flushed down drains, tossed in the trash, or relegated to medicine cabinets each year. When flushed or trashed, over-the-counter medications and prescription drugs can potentially contaminate open waterways and local drinking water. Equally dangerous, drugs left in the home can find their way into the hands of children or potential addicts. Prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the U.S. In New York, the number of drug-related poisoning deaths doubled from 2003 to 2012, and the number of deaths involving prescription opioids increased more than four-fold.

Pharmacy collection of controlled substances was made possible in New York last fall, when Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law a bill (A6062/S3687) that directs the NY Department of Health to oversee a program for the safe disposal of unused controlled substances at convenient locations like pharmacies, long-term care facilities, and narcotic treatment programs.

"Pharmacies are the most convenient, accessible location for residents to safely dispose of their unwanted medications," said Scott Cassel, chief executive officer and founder of PSI. "This project provides hassle-free

collection of unwanted medicine from citizens and will be a model for pharmacies across the state and nationwide."

Participating pharmacies include:

- Bonaparte Pharmacy, 8210 Main St, Harrisville
- The Falls Pharmacy, 6805 McAlpine St, Lyon Falls,
- U&I Pharmacy, 5236 West Seneca St, Vernon,
- Garro Drugs, 704 Bleecker St, Utica

"As a pharmacy owner, I recognize the need for convenient locations where county residents can safely dispose of their unwanted and expired medications," said Kristine Richardson, owner of U&I Pharmacy in Vernon, Oneida County, NY. "Not only are we providing an important service to our community, but our business also benefits from increased customer loyalty and community awareness."

At the end of this project, PSI and NYPSC will compile a How-To Guide detailing best practices for establishing and operating pharmacy-based medication collection programs in rural communities. This guide will serve as a resource to other rural communities across New York State and nationally to support safe and environmentally sound pharmaceuticals management as part of a sustainable rural economy.

Learn more about PSI's work on pharmaceuticals on the PSI website, or contact Vivian Futran Fuhrman at (617) 236-4771.