

# NEW COUNTY INITIATIVE TO PREVENT PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

## *STOP-DWI Program offers new drop box program to expand safe disposal efforts*

**Poughkeepsie, NY** ... In conjunction with National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, the Dutchess County STOP-DWI Program has announced new prescription medication disposal drop boxes are now available at four locations throughout the county in addition to the one already established at the New York State Police Troop K Headquarters in Salt Point. These medication disposal sites offer residents places to anonymously dispose of unused and unwanted prescription medications and controlled substances.

"These medication drop boxes address a vital public safety and health issue. The rate of prescription drug abuse is on the rise across the county because it is often far too easy to access these drugs, since they are often as close as the family medicine cabinet," said Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro. "These drop boxes offer another way to safely dispose of expired or unwanted medications and prevent potential misuse or abuse."

The four new secure prescription medication disposal sites will accept unused prescription medications, medicated ointments, over-the-counter medicines and inhalers. Medicines deposited into the drop boxes should be wrapped or sealed in plastic bags. Hazardous materials and needles are not accepted and pharmacies and medical providers are not allowed to take part in the program.

Medication drop boxes are now available 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the following locations\*:

- **Dutchess County Sheriff's Office** at 150 North Hamilton Street, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
- **East Fishkill Police Department** at 2468 Route 52, Hopewell Junction, NY 12533
- **Hyde Park Police Department** at 3 Cardinal Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538
- **Red Hook Police Department** \* at 7467 South Broadway, Red Hook, NY 12571

*\*Available daily from 8am to midnight.*

According to a 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, more than 70 percent of people who abuse prescription pain relievers get them through friends or relatives, often by simply raiding their medicine cabinet. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that nearly 15,000 people die each year of overdose due to prescription painkillers.

"We can close our eyes and pretend this isn't happening, or we can make major changes to the way we address drug abuse in our community. This was a very positive step to not only get unneeded medication out of homes, but also raise awareness to this serious problem," said Legislature Assistant Majority Leader Angela Flesland who also serves on the STOP-DWI Board.

According to Dutchess County STOP-DWI Program Coordinator William Johnson, there are a number of simple steps residents can take to prevent prescription drug misuse and abuse in addition to utilizing disposal sites including:

- **Keep an inventory of prescription medicine(s).**
- **Secure your medicine chest to prevent children and guests in the home from accessing it.**
- **Talk to children about the dangers of prescription drug abuse.**

The new drop box program seeks to build on the success of the Dutchess County Resource Recovery Agency (RRA) Medication Disposal events that are held several times a year. Since 2009, the RRA has offered several medication disposal events each year at their facility in the Town of Poughkeepsie, collecting over 3,700 pounds of unwanted pharmaceuticals from residents, preventing their potential misuse.

Several other county departments and agencies are working to address this important issue including the Departments of Health, Mental Hygiene and Community and Family Services as well as other county agencies. County Executive Molinaro has directed the Health & Human Service Cabinet to coordinate a comprehensive countywide effort. "Thank you to all those who are working to combat this problem - from education and prevention efforts to law enforcement and rehabilitation. Together, we must tackle this growing epidemic and we encourage residents to join us in this effort with safe medication disposal," concluded the County Executive.

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