

Clean Wisconsin: Drug take back boxes gain support from Gov. Evers

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Drop boxes around city help protect drinking water from medical waste

MILWAUKEE — Clean Wisconsin joined Governor Tony Evers and Take Back My Meds Milwaukee to promote responsible pharmaceutical disposal at a press conference Wednesday announcing a new drug drop box at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center.

“When unused drugs are thrown in the trash or flushed down the toilet they end up in Lake Michigan, the source of Milwaukee's drinking water,” said Amber Meyer Smith, Vice President of Programs & Government Relations at Clean Wisconsin. “Drop boxes are the key to keeping pharmaceutical contaminants out of our drinking water.”

In 2016, Clean Wisconsin helped to form Take Back My Meds Milwaukee, a coalition of environmental organizations, health groups and law enforcement agencies working to build a network of prescription drug drop boxes in Milwaukee to reduce drug abuse and protect drinking water.

Unused medicines that are flushed down the toilet or thrown in the trash can end up in drinking water, since water treatment facilities are unable to filter out pharmaceutical compounds. Research from the School of Freshwater Sciences at

the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has found chemicals from prescription drugs as far as two miles from Milwaukee's treated waste water outfalls in Lake Michigan.

"Pollution from prescription drugs threaten public health and the safety of drinking water for people in Milwaukee," said Meyer Smith. "We applaud the leadership of Aurora Health Care and all the pharmacies committed to making drop boxes a convenient disposal option for people who want to be part of the solution to this environmental and public health problem."

Gov. Evers also spoke in support of efforts to develop a network of drop boxes around the city. The governor declared 2019 the "Year of Clean Drinking Water" during his State of the State Address in February.

"Gov. Evers has shown a strong commitment to protecting drinking water for all Wisconsin residents during the Year of Clean Drinking Water," said Meyer Smith. "We face many drinking water challenges in both urban, rural, and suburban areas of the state. Gov. Evers' support of this effort is yet another example of his leadership in making clean drinking water a reality in every corner of the state."