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STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

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Take a Moment, Save a Life

October 23, 2021 is officially National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day. It is a day set aside to encourage all of us to collect and dispose of unused, expired and unwanted prescription drugs in a safe way so that they are not abused, stolen or polluting our natural environment.

The National Drug Take-Back Day effort has paid dividends. Since it started in 2016, approximately 4,473 tons of prescription drugs have been turned in during Drug Take-Back Day nationwide. There are an average of 5,500 collection sites throughout the country with more than 4,400 law enforcement agencies participating. This concerted effort has led to permanent collection sites in many of our communities where we may drop-off unused medication any time of the year.

But we must continue to battle the opioid epidemic. According to the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 9.7 million people misused prescription pain relievers, 4.9 million people misused prescription stimulants and 5.9 million people misused prescription tranquilizers or sedatives in 2019.

As we continue to battle the dangers of prescription drug abuse, Drug Take-Back Day remains a good reminder to take action. There are 118 official events planned for Saturday, October 23, 2021 statewide. Five will take place in the 17th Senate District:

- Elroy Police Department, 8 a.m. – noon, 1717 Omaha Street, Elroy.
- Highland Police Department, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., 530 Main Street, Highland.
- Juneau County Sheriff's Department, 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., 200 Oak Street, Mauston.
- Richland Center Police Department, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., 470 S. Main Street, Richland Center.
- Spring Green Police Department, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., 137 N Washington Street, Spring Green.

There are also a number of permanent, 24/7/365 disposal sites in many of our communities where you can drop-off unused drugs any time to be safely disposed. To find the nearest site to you, please visit <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/drug-take-back-day.htm> Search by county.

Most disposal sites will accept:

- controlled and uncontrolled substances
- over-the-counter medications
- ointments
- patches
- creams
- non-aerosol sprays

- vials
- pet medications

Most disposal sites do not accept needles, sharps, aerosols, inhalers or medical waste, but check with your local site to confirm.

Safe drug disposal is very important because it keeps powerful drugs out of the hands of someone who may abuse them or sell them. Old prescriptions in your cabinets are prime temptations for young people to steal, sell or take to parties where miscellaneous, random prescription drugs are abused. Many abused prescriptions are taken from family and friends. Statistics show that many heroin users start by abusing prescription opioids like oxycodone, Vicodin and other common painkillers that are often prescribed following routine surgeries.

Unfortunately, many people do not understand the extreme danger of abusing prescription drugs. They assume that prescription medications are “safe” because they are prescribed by doctors. But they do not understand that over-dosing and mixing medications can be lethal. The majority of teenagers who abuse prescription drugs get them from family and friends, often simply out of the medicine cabinet.

Safe drug disposal is also important to protect our environment. Flushing drugs down the toilet or throwing them into the trash bound for a landfill contaminates our water supply. Municipal water treatment cannot remove some very powerful medications from our water. It is also important to keep them out of landfills where they leech into water and may be either stolen and abused or consumed by wildlife.

If you have ongoing prescriptions and medications that you keep in your home, consider keeping them in locked storage. For more information on techniques to secure your medications, please contact your county health department or visit www.lockyourmeds.org.

Your quick clean-out this week may save a life. Drop-off your old medications today!

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have any questions or need assistance with any state-related matters.