

Unused, expired medicines bound for proper disposal

Phyllis Schwab used to flush unused medication down the toilet.

She knows better now.

Schwab, 83, was among residents who took advantage of Saturday's Operation Medicine Cabinet, part of National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. Five Richland County law enforcement agencies participated in the collection program designed to decrease prescription drug abuse.

Schwab, of Mansfield, visited the Richland County Solid Waste Management Authority, the drop-off point for Mansfield police.

"A friend died," Schwab said. "She had old Tylenol. Some of the over-the-counter drugs were outdated."

METRICH Commander Lt. Ken Coontz said he was pleased with the results of the second initiative of its kind locally.

"It's pretty significant, the amount of drugs that are being taken out of homes and are going to be disposed of properly," he said. "We don't ask where you got it, we just accept it."

A 75-year-old woman who asked not to be identified dropped off inhalers.

"I (formerly) threw it in the trash," she said.

Another woman deposited Halls mentho-lyptus drops.



Prescription medication dropped off Saturday at the Richland County Solid Waste Management Authority. / Dave Polcyn/News Journal

"Anybody got a cold?" quipped city police Lt. John Wendling.

Coontz said in addition to pills and liquid medicines with leak-proof containers, organizers collected syringes and needles, which originally were not going to be accepted. Police partnered with MedCentral/ Mansfield Hospital to dispose of syringes and needles properly.

"We want to get those things out of the household," Coontz said.

Police also partnered with the county's solid management waste district.

"Part of the program is to keep it out of our groundwater from people dropping it in sanitary sewers," director Ken Bender said.

Coontz said many of the people who dropped off medication were elderly, a group whose medication often is stolen and abused.

"Some of the others (drop-off sites) have even had doctors show up with their expired medication," he said.

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