



Madison County develops innovative program to dispose of prescription drugs

April 22 2015 4:00 PM



A glimpse into the bathroom cabinets of many homes throughout Madison County can reveal an assortment of prescription and over-the-counter medications which, if not

properly used or disposed of, can cause many problems and can have a dramatic, negative impact on the environment.

For decades, when it came time to dispose of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, the preferred method for most people was to either throw them away or flush them down the toilet.

“When you turn on the tap in your home, you expect the water to be safe to drink and, fortunately, in Madison County it generally is safe,” stated Leah Dettmers, Madison County’s sustainability coordinator. “But chlorine treated water does not necessarily remove all drugs. In many parts of the country, traces of drugs ranging from antidepressants to pain-killers can be found in drinking water. We want to keep those drugs out of our water.”

Madison County has developed an innovative program to help residents dispose of prescription drugs. Working in partnership with Sheriff John Lakin and the law enforcement community, the county has placed secured medication collection bins in the lobbies of the police departments in Alton, Bethalto, Collinsville, Edwardsville, Highland, Roxana and Troy, in addition to the Madison County Sheriff’s Office.

According to Sheriff Lakin, the problem of unused and improperly disposed prescription drugs extends beyond the environment. “Unused prescription drugs can be accidentally ingested, stolen, misused and abused. The number of people who abuse of prescription drugs, especially painkillers such as hydrocodone and oxycodone, far exceed the number of those using heroin, cocaine and other drugs,” Lakin stated.

“And the majority of the abused prescription drugs are obtained or taken from the medicine cabinets of family members and friends,” Lakin added. “By putting medication collection bins at police departments throughout the county, we are helping make families and our communities safer.”

The medication collection bins are provided by Republic Waste and the American Water Company. Periodically, Madison County Deputy Sheriffs will transport the collected drugs to approved U.S. Environmental Protection Agency locations where they will be incinerated.

Because of the location of the medication collection bins in police department lobbies, the public can dispose of prescription medications every day of the year.

Among the medications which can be deposited at the bins are antibiotics, hormones, blood pressure regulators, painkillers, steroids, any over-the-counter medications, anti-depressants, sedatives, cough syrups and other controlled substances.

Medications which should not be disposed of at the bins include sharps/needles, mercury thermometers, IV solutions, hearing aids, oxygen tanks, x-rays or other household waste items.

For specific questions, residents should contact their local police department.