

Drug Take-Back program appears to be working year-round in county

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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The local approach to the Drug Enforcement Administration's National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day appears to be having a positive impact year-round.

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons, Coroner Steve Nonn and Sheriff John Lakin have all been supportive of the Drug Take-Back program.

The three offices have taken part in the program for four years. Gibbons said he thinks the program is a perfect way to raise awareness of the potential problems of unused or expired prescription drugs.

“One of the great things about this is it gets word out about having dangerous prescription drugs in homes and the possibility of them being used inappropriately,” Gibbons said. “We have found that abusing prescription drugs is a pathway to heroin addiction and overdose. Having these events twice a year raises awareness about it.”

Gibbons stressed that there are 13 permanent locations at police stations, the sheriff’s department to drop off unwanted and expired medications.”

He said in 2011, his office, the coroner’s office and area law enforcement bonded together trying to come up with new answers for the problem of drug abuse and overdoses. Along the way, he said they discovered many of the addicts got their start with prescription drugs.

About 70 percent of young people get hooked on these things and get the drugs from their parents or grandparents, Gibbons said.

The Edwardsville Police Department has had a medication disposal unit in its lobby since 2013. Lt. Charlie Kohlberg coordinated the Edwardsville Police Department’s program on Saturday at the station and he said with every person that came in, it was an opportunity for him to explain it.

"The drug take back is absolutely a great service and it gives people the ability to get rid of prescription medications they don’t need,” he said. “We want people to be responsible and not let the old prescriptions get in the water system or landfills. We have a place here in the police department in the lobby that they can bring in at any time.”

Kohlberg said the awareness about the program is essential for it to continue to have an impact, one of the reasons he likes days like this past Saturday.

"We want to raise public awareness and people to be aware is a problem and there is a solution to it," he said.

Kelly Rogers of the Madison County Coroner’s Department spent some time at a Drug Take-Back location in a parking lot near the sheriff’s department on Saturday. He said he is glad to see the program and thinks it has been successful.

Gibbons made probably the biggest point to convey to people possessing expired prescription drugs in their homes at the end of his interview: “You don’t want to be an accidental drug dealer.”

He urged people to participate in the program throughout the year.

