

Missoula County Media Release

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Residents Encouraged to Dispose of Unneeded Medications at Prescription Drug Take Back

MISSOULA – The Missoula Prescription Drug Task Force will partner with the Missoula Police Department, the University of Montana Skaggs School of Pharmacy and the Montana State University School of Nursing to help area residents dispose of their unused, expired or unneeded prescription medications at this weekend’s DEA Prescription Drug Take Back.

People can drop off pills, with or without the bottles, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 28, by the clock tower at Southgate Mall – no questions asked. The Missoula Prescription Drug Task Force, coordinated by the Missoula Forum for Children and Youth and the Missoula City-County Health Department, hosts these events twice a year to help reduce the harm caused by prescription drug misuse and accidental poisonings.

According to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, around 19 million Americans ages 12 and older have misused a prescription painkiller, sedative or stimulant in the past year, and one in four teens has misused a prescription medicine in their lifetime.

Additionally, according to Safe Kids Worldwide, medications are the leading cause of child poisonings and are now the overall leading cause of injury death in the U.S., having surpassed deaths by motor vehicles and firearms each year since 2008. In around 86 percent of emergency room visits for medicine poisoning, the child got into medicine belonging to a parent or grandparents.

To address this, the Missoula Prescription Drug Task Force has worked since 2009 to reduce prescription medicine misuse and accidental poisonings in the greater Missoula community through education, community engagement and law enforcement efforts.

“The largest concern in our community is the relative ease of access to prescription medication,” said Brandee Tyree, prevention specialist for the Missoula Forum for Children and Youth. “Around two-thirds of those misusing medications report that they obtained them from family members or friends, most often for free. This is of particular concern for

our young people, as teens report getting many of these medicines from home medicine cabinets and mistakenly believing that abusing them is 'safer' than other drugs.”

The Prescription Drug Task Force encourages community members, especially parents and grandparents, to keep medications locked up and out of reach and to properly dispose of any unused or expired medications at one of the biannual DEA Take Back events. Missoula also has four permanent drop box locations. A complete list of those locations, as well as more information on the proper use, storage and disposal of medications, is online at www.choicesmattermissoula.com.

For more information, call Tyree at 406- 529-8260 or email btyree@missoulacounty.us.

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The Missoula Forum for Children and Youth is a Missoula City-County Health Department program that works to prevent underage substance abuse in Missoula County through the coordination of coalitions that organize and implement communitywide projects to provide early childhood support, promote positive healthy choices for young people and carry out environmental strategies to prevent underage substance abuse.