

Hall County Participates In National Prescription Drug Take Back Day

April 25, 2013

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has scheduled the fifth National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day for Saturday, April 27, 2013 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Members of the Hall County Sheriff's Office will be present at the Sterling on the Lake Community Center in Flowery Branch during that time to help citizens dispose of unwanted, unused prescription drugs.

In addition to that location, the Gainesville Police Department will be accepting prescription drugs at their headquarters on Queen City Parkway. Braselton Police will also participate in the program at their police headquarters on Highway 53 in Braselton.

The service is free and participants remain completely anonymous.

This initiative addresses a vital public safety and public health issue. Medicines that languish in home cabinets are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse, and abuse. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the U.S. are alarmingly high, as are the number of accidental poisonings and overdoses due to these drugs. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet. In addition, Americans are now advised that their usual methods for disposing of unused medicines—flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash—both pose potential safety and health hazards.

"Winning the war on drug abuse begins within our own medicine cabinets. Further, improper disposal of certain medications can result in a dangerous discovery by a small child," Hall County Sheriff Gerald Couch said. "When you conduct your spring cleaning this year, don't forget to check all the nooks and crannies around your home. Then, join the Hall County Sheriff's Office on April 27 in the proper disposal of your unused and expired prescription medications. As we participate in the DEA's National Take Back Initiative, our goal is to make neighborhoods and homes throughout Hall County a safer environment to live, work and raise our families."

Nationwide, one in five teens have abused prescription drugs, and next to marijuana, prescription medications are the most commonly abused substances. Every day, almost 2,500 teens abuse prescription medication for the first time. Fifty-six percent of people who use prescription medications non-medically say they obtain these drugs from friends and relatives (SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2008), meaning that these drugs are freely shared or taken from medicine cabinets or other easily accessible places.

Prescription Take-Back events have been held in Hall County each of the past five National Prescription Take Back Days sponsored by the Drug Enforcement Administration. The DEA sponsors Take Back Days twice a year. As awareness grew there has been a steady increase in the amount collected. In April 2011, the first time there was a local Take Back, 6.2 pounds were collected. Six months later, October 2011, 44 pounds were turned in, and in April 2012 a total of 58 pounds were collected. In September 2012 a total of 196 pounds of prescription and over-the-counter drugs were collected by local law enforcement within Hall County.

"Prevention is vital to reducing drug abuse and local participation in the DEA's National Prescription Take Back Day is one way every Hall County resident can contribute," stated J.P. Banks, Coalition Director. "Proper disposal of medications is one of four steps to preventing prescription drug abuse. The

others are: take medicines only as prescribed; do not share medications; and store medications safely and securely. Together we can reduce and prevent drug abuse."

For persons unable to participate in the April 27th Take Back Day, two permanent medication drug drop boxes are located in Gainesville. The Hall County Sheriff's office and the Gainesville Police Department have responded to the public's positive reaction to properly dispose of unused and unwanted medications by establishing permanent drop boxes at their offices. The Drop Boxes are located at the Gainesville Police Department's office located at 701 Queen City Parkway; the Hall County Sheriff's office drop box is in the front lobby of their office at 610 Main Street. Both boxes are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Illegal substances such as marijuana, methamphetamine will not be accepted. Intravenous solutions and hypodermic needles are also not accepted. Acceptable items are: expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs and over-the-counter solid medications. All medications will be disposed of safely and properly by law enforcement officers. A complete listing of National Take Back initiative collection sites throughout the nation can be found at http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/.