

Keep meds out of waterways

As an organization that strives to engage individuals to take greater responsibility in improving our community's environment, Keep Greenville County Beautiful (KGCB) is continually looking to partner with local, civic, private and public organizations that share our passion to promote the reduction of litter, encourage recycling, and engage in beautification of Greenville County.

After learning about Project Rx: A River Remedy and its mission to keep medications out of our waterways and promote proper disposal, we are proud to call ourselves their newest supporter.

Many households contain a medicine cabinet or drawer. After several years, these cabinets may fill up with numerous bottles of old medications that are no longer needed or have expired. Their clutter can lead to quick disposal through flushing or pouring them down the drain. What people do not realize, however, is that this common and simple act of disposal allows the medication to make its way through our sewage treatment process and into our waterways. Traces of medications in water sources have proven to cause adverse effects on aquatic wildlife and have the potential to be of long-term harm for humans.

In 2010, the City of Greenville recognized this problem and through an unprecedented collaboration among local organizations in the Upstate, the first Project Rx: A River Remedy drug take-back event was held in November. Since then, there have been five take-back events, with the sixth on Saturday, April 27. These events have collected and properly disposed of over 6,700 pounds of medication in an effort to protect our environment and our community.

The benefits from Project Rx are numerous. Apart from the environmental benefit, the program builds awareness about proper medication responsibility and helps prevent prescription drug abuse. The abuse of cough syrups and painkillers has become an unsettling trend among adolescents. In 2010, the National Institute on Drug Abuse reported that one in 12 high school seniors reported nonmedical use of prescription drugs, with 70 percent reporting these medications were obtained from a relative or friend. Project Rx helps to curb this trend by de-cluttering medicine cabinets

IN MY OWN WORDS by
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and promoting responsible medication use.

You may think that the medications in question are strictly prescription drugs or those in pill form, but in fact, any medication – including over-the-counter drugs, supplements, topical creams, syrups, liquids, inhalants – contain chemicals that can harm our environment when discarded improperly.

People throw away medications for various reasons: a change in prescription, improvement in one's health, discontinuation or an excess supply. However, the methods of disposal are not the most ideal. Children or pets can easily find medications tossed in the trash. Thousands of children are treated each year for ingestion and accidental poisoning from pharmaceuticals, according to the Poison Control Center.

So what is the most environmentally sound way to discard these medications? Incineration has been found to be safer than other disposal methods. It is highly regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and handled in a way that minimizes contamination of the air. After Project Rx volunteers collect the unwanted medications, the medications are sorted and placed in bins that are picked up and delivered to a plant for incineration, thereby destroying them permanently.

We ask that you help keep our community safe by collecting your old or unwanted medications and bringing them to the next Project Rx event on Saturday, April 27, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at our McAlister Square (225 South Pleasantburg Drive) or St. Francis Millennium (2 Innovation Drive) locations. Additionally, there are more than 20 other drop-off sites available throughout the 11-county DEA district. For more information or location details, please visit ariverremedy.org.

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