

## VOICES

## THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

## Get rid of old medications safely

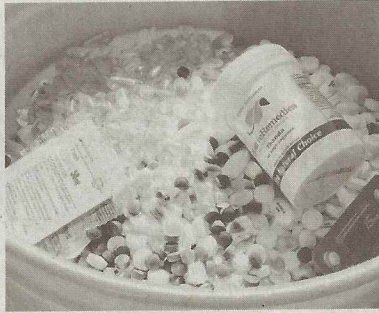
**E**ach year people dispose of unused or expired medications in a way that damages the environment. Or they simply leave the old pill bottles sitting in a medicine cabinet where someone else may take the medicine by mistake or even use it in an inappropriate or dangerous manner.

Saturday provides a great opportunity to dispose of expired or unused medications safely. Project Rx returns for its second time this year, and the sponsors and organizers are making it easy to get rid of unused or unwanted drugs in an effort to keep them from getting into the wrong hands or being flushed down the toilet.

Project Rx: A River Remedy is a successful collaboration between a number of community organizations that share a common goal. As Debbie Nelson of DNA Creative Communications wrote earlier this year in an op-ed, "Each organization comes to the table for a different reason — be it environmental protection, pharmaceutical education or drug prevention — yet for the same ultimate purpose: to safely dispose of unused medications to keep our community safe and healthy."

Project Rx was first held in November 2010, and 220 pounds of medications were collected at the various sites. As one indication of the success of the project, the most recent one was held in April of this year and 1,052 pounds were collected. The grand total for eight events has been 9,967 pounds of drugs.

The main collection sites this year are: Greenville Technical College McAlister Square on South Pleasantburg Drive, the St. Francis Millennium Campus on Innovation Drive and the Greenville County Medical Society at 1395 South Church Street. Other Upstate locations are Travelers Rest City Hall at 6711 State Park Road, Cannon Memorial Hospital on 123 W.G. Acker



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Project Rx offers people a chance to get rid of old and unused medications. This fall's event is Saturday at multiple locations.

Drive in Pickens, Baptist Easley Hospital on Fleetwood Drive in Easley and Clemson Free Clinic on Tiger Boulevard in Clemson.

Complete information about Project Rx including instructions can be found at [www.ariverremedy.org](http://www.ariverremedy.org). The event will run from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday, and the major sites allow vehicles to just drive through.

About 4 billion prescriptions are filled each year in the United States, and it is estimated that about one-third of the medication isn't completely used. That's a lot of drugs to be sitting around. Some of them are dumped down the drain or flushed in the toilet, and they eventually make their way into our streams and rivers. The Associated Press reported a few years ago that at least 41 million Americans drink water with detectable levels of pharmaceuticals.

Some of these medications are taken accidentally by other people in the household, and it's possible such a mistake can produce an allergic reaction. Other drugs can prove tempting for someone in the house, particularly a younger person, who is curious about narcotics or painkillers.

One of the sponsors since the beginning of Project Rx has

been the Greenville County Medical Society because, as Dr. Stefanie Putnam wrote in a Sunday op-ed in this newspaper, "our physicians believe in the purpose of this project and their patients."

Physicians are concerned about people sharing prescription medications, she wrote, because the dosing and selection of the medication is carefully based on the weight and age of the patient, the presence of allergies, existing conditions and potential interactions with other medications. A prescription that is appropriate for one person may be inappropriate for another one.

The partners for Project Rx are Bon Secours St. Francis Health System, Greenville County Sheriff's Office, Greenville Family Partnership, Greenville Technical College, Carolinas Institute for Community Policing, Upstate Forever, DEA, Greenville County Medical Society and Renewable Water Resources. Supporting organizations include Greenville Water, Powdersville Water, Keep Greenville County Beautiful, *The Greenville News*, *Greenville Journal*, Martin Printing, Greenville Health System and Presbyterian College School of Pharmacy.

Collection sites on Saturday will take unwanted or expired prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements, and veterinary medicine from households. Sharps and syringes have not been accepted in the past, and participants have been asked to leave the name of the drug visible on the bottle but to use a black permanent marker to eliminate personal information.

Project Rx makes it easy and convenient to get rid of old medications that can harm our rivers, wildlife and people. Collect any old drugs sitting around your house and dispose of them safely Saturday.