

Permanent Drug Drop Box Installed at Sheriff's Office

November 7, 2012

In response to the increasing amount of medications collected in Hall County during the past two years of bi-annual "Take Back" days for prescription drugs, two permanent drop boxes have been established in Gainesville. The Hall County Sheriff's office and the Gainesville Police Department have participated in four National Prescription Drug Take Back Days. As awareness has increased the total weight of returned medications has steadily grown from 6.2 pounds in April of 2011, the first "Take Back" day in Hall County. A total of 196 pounds of prescription and over-the-counter drugs were collected on Saturday, September 2, 2012. The September 2012 collection was more than three times the 58 pounds collected at the April 2012 event, just six months earlier.

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 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

"We are pleased to offer this service as yet another resource in our on-going efforts to deal with the problem of unused prescription medications in the home," said Sheriff Steve Cronic. "This is a great tool that will make it convenient for citizens to make their homes safer by eliminating the potential for abuse, while at the same time providing a safe means of disposal. Fighting the prescription drug abuse problem just became easier for all the citizens of Hall County, and we're proud to partner with these other agencies on this project."

As with the "Take Back" events, acceptable items for the drop boxes are expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs and over-the-counter solid medications. Illegal substances such as marijuana, methamphetamine will not be accepted. Intravenous solutions and hypodermic needles are also not accepted. Both law enforcement agencies will check and empty the drop boxes daily. All medications will be disposed of safely and properly by law enforcement officers. "In our continued efforts to increase the safety of our community it is important that the Gainesville Police Department partners with organizations that work to educate the community on the dangers of prescription drugs that are left in areas accessible to our youth", stated Gainesville Police Chief Brian P. Kelly. "The abuse of prescription drugs continues to be of great concern for our communities and the ability of our agency to join with our local, state and federal partners in the Prescription Take Back Program to provide an easily accessible location for our citizens to drop off expired and/ or no longer needed medications is just one way we can work in partnership to increase the safety of our community. We urge all of our citizens to take advantage of this program to rid their homes and businesses of unneeded prescription drugs which will make a safer environment for all."

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.

Nationwide, 1 in 5 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. "We are pleased that the Sheriff's office and the Gainesville Police have taken the next step in our continued efforts to keep unused medications out of the hands of our youth. It is our hope to soon establish drop boxes throughout the county, stated JP Banks, Project Coordinator, Drug Free Coalition of Hall County.

In collaboration with the Drug Free Coalition of Hall County the Hall County Sheriff's office drop box was paid for by the Medical Association of Georgia Foundation. "The MAG Foundation is pleased and honored to donate the prescription drug drop box that's being dedicated at the Hall County Sheriff's Office," says Gainesville Eye Clinic ophthalmologist Jack M. Chapman Jr., M.D., who co-chairs the MAG Foundation's 'Think About It' prescription drug abuse reduction campaign. "Along with education and awareness, this is one of the core steps that we are taking to improve the quality of life in this and other communities across the state." The Gainesville Police Department's drop box was provided free by the National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators (NADDI). Both drop boxes are part of the NADDI's national effort to distribute drop boxes to law enforcement agencies.