

PRESCRIPTION DRUG TURN-IN DAY A MAJOR SUCCESS ***FINAL TALLY EXPECTED TO REACH TWO TONS***

(Portland, OR) – March 17, 2010 -- The statewide Prescription Drug Turn-In Day is being called a rousing success by organizers as a result of record amounts of prescription drugs collected at some thirty sites. Organizers believe that about two tons of pills, tablets, and other drugs have been turned in.

The event was coordinated by the Oregon Medical Association Alliance, Community Action to Reduce Substance Abuse (CARSA) and Oregon Partnership. “Thanks to community involvement throughout the state, the event was more successful than we ever thought it would be,” said Leanna Lindquist, President of the Oregon Medical Association Alliance. “Prescription drug abuse and the safe disposal of unused drugs are increasingly on the radar of Oregonians.”

Some sites received a steady stream of participants during the day. And the drugs collected ran the gamut - from a prescription dated 1936 to liquid morphine. At the Portland site, almost 3,000 tablets of controlled substance medication were turned in with an estimated street value of \$57,000.

In Hillsboro, 882 bottles of prescription drugs and 489 bottles on non-prescription drugs were collected. While individual communities have sponsored similar turn-in events, this was the first statewide effort of its kind, hoping to attract thousands of people and increase awareness about the disposal of potentially dangerous and addictive drugs.

The US Geological Survey and Oregon DEQ water quality samplings have found trace amounts of pharmaceuticals in Oregon’s surface water, and focused studies have found pharmaceuticals in groundwater. Flushing unwanted drugs down the toilet - - at households, hospice and palliative care providers and long term care facilities - - are one way drugs reach wastewater treatment plants.

Today, the average American takes more than 12 different prescription drugs each year - - more than 3.8 billion prescriptions purchased annually, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. One recent survey estimated the amount of wasted drugs is as high as 45 percent. Oregon ranks among the top states for non-medical use of pain relievers among 12-17 year olds. Teens say prescription drugs are widely available from an array of sources, including their homes, friends and relatives.

Locking your meds is a household strategy that is gaining more popularity, as parents realize that most teens who abuse prescription drugs acquire them from medicine cabinets at the homes of parents, relatives, or friends. Young people often perceive prescription drugs to be safer than illicit drugs to get high, leading them to casually share these drugs with friends. These include painkillers (OxyContin), depressants (Xanax) and stimulants (Adderall and Ritalin).

More teens abuse prescription drugs than cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine combined. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), prescription drug abuse is higher among 18-25 year olds than in any other age group.

Although the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs among youth has declined from 2002 through 2008, over this time many teens have turned to misusing prescription drugs, according to SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

In fact, prescription drugs are misused more by this age group than any illicit drug, except marijuana. The nonmedical use of these medicines—the same drugs used to legitimately relieve pain, and treat conditions like anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, or ADHD in some people—is a growing and under-recognized problem that puts young lives at risk.