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William Bosworth
Chief of Police

D.A. Leone and Stow Police Address the Dangers of Unused Prescription Drugs

New Drug Collection Units Offer Safe Disposal

STOW – Stow residents will now have a free, safe method to dispose of unused or expired prescription medication thanks to a new drug collection program announced today by Middlesex District Attorney Gerry Leone and Police Chief William Bosworth.

MedReturn Drug Collection Units will be delivered by Friday to 29 police departments in Middlesex County, including Stow. The Middlesex District Attorney's Office purchased the units for the departments through drug forfeiture funds, which can be used for the purpose of drug rehabilitation, drug education and other anti-drug efforts.

“Illegal use of prescription drugs is the nation’s fastest growing drug problem,” DA Leone said. “Part of the problem is that these harmful drugs often sit unused in medicine cabinets, offering easy access for young people to take and abuse them. These new drug collection units provide an effective and convenient method for disposal of unwanted medications without harming our environment and keeping powerful drugs off of the streets.”

The effort is part of the District Attorney’s goal to address issues of substance abuse among young people. An estimated 2.4 million Americans misused prescription drugs for the first time within the past year, and about a third of those users were age 12 to 17, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

“There is a misunderstanding about the dangers of prescription drugs,” said Chief Bosworth. “No one should ever take a prescription drug that was not prescribed for them by their doctor. All too often we see instances where people have misused and abused these drugs with deadly consequences. Having the drug collection unit in Stow will make it easier for all residents to safely dispose of unused drugs and hopefully prevent future drug-related incidents.”

The drug collection units will be placed at the Stow Police Station. Medication can be disposed of anonymously at any time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has classified prescription drug abuse as an epidemic. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, more than 70 percent of people who abused prescription pain killers got them from relatives or friends. Additionally, the study reports, more and more opiate overdoses are now a result of prescription painkillers.

Every day, on average, 2,500 teens use prescription drugs to get high for the first time, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. The DEA also reports that 56 percent of teens say prescription drugs are easier to get than illicit drugs. Two in five teens believe that prescription drugs are safer than illegal drugs.

Middlesex County is the largest county in Massachusetts and one of the largest counties in the country with 54 towns and cities and 26 colleges in urban, suburban, and rural areas, comprising over one quarter of the population of Massachusetts. The Middlesex District Attorney's Office has offices throughout the county, including communities such as Ayer, Cambridge, Concord, Framingham, Lowell, Malden, Marlborough, Natick, Newton, Somerville, Waltham and Woburn.

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