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**MEDICATION COLLECTION BOXES INSTALLED  
IN 10 POLICE DEPARTMENTS IN LEHIGH COUNTY**

Lehigh County residents who have expired and unused over-the-counter and prescription medications will be able to discard those medications in permanent collection boxes that have been installed in 10 police departments in Lehigh County.

The boxes, which usually cost \$500 and are similar to mail boxes, have been delivered to the 10 Lehigh County police departments who applied for them through a grant program made possible by a partnership between the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association (PDAA), the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) as part of Gov. Tom Corbett's Healthy PA Initiative.

The MedReturn boxes were provided for free to police departments who submitted successful grant applications.

District Attorney James B. Martin and members of his staff worked with police chiefs to identify departments that were located throughout the county so that there would be numerous convenient locations for county residents.

Martin announced the collection box program at a news conference at the Upper Macungie Township Police Department, which has one of the boxes, on Tuesday, Dec. 17. The news

conference was attended by Ken Martz, Director of the Bureau of Treatment, Prevention and Intervention, Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs; Donna Zimmerman, executive director of Lehigh County Aging and Adult Services; Darbe George, Administrator of Drug and Alcohol in Lehigh County; Jim Carlisle, manager of injury prevention and emergency preparedness for the Allentown Health Bureau; and police chiefs of departments where the boxes have been installed.

“County residents have responded enthusiastically to the twice yearly drug collections that have been coordinated by my office, police departments, the Pennsylvania State Police, the U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration and the Allentown Health Bureau,” Martin said. “Because of that positive response to the National Take Back Day collections that have been held since 2010, I wanted to ensure that residents could take medications to drop-off locations on a more timely basis. This grant provides for 10 boxes for safe disposal of medications year round and means that residents will not have to wait six months or more for the next collection.”

“This is an important initiative from a public safety and health standpoint because residents won’t have accumulations of medications in their homes,” Martin added. “These medications often include prescription drugs that are abused by teens and adults.”

Gary Tennis, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, said that the Governor’s initiative focuses on ensuring safe and appropriate access to prescription medications. “Our goal in creating the program is to provide educational opportunities for the public, while reducing drug abuse and dependency,” Tennis said.

Martin said that the nature of the prescription drug abuse problem in Lehigh County has become more defined over the last several years.

Statistics compiled by Coroner Scott M. Grim are sobering regarding prescription drug

overdoses.

As of June 30, 2013, there were 18 deaths ruled accidents and two determined to be suicides. “Accidents” includes decedents who had overdosed on anti-depressants, pain-killers, other prescription drugs and heroin and, many times, a combination of drugs.

These cases include people who have gotten out of rehabilitation facilities and relapsed. Often times, when they resume drug use after their systems have been clean, they use the same amount of heroin or prescription drugs as they did in the past, and it leads to overdoses, according to Grim.

In 2012, there were 66 deaths that were ruled accidents, 11 suicides and two undetermined. In 2011, there were 59 accidents, nine suicides and two undetermined.

The cases ruled suicides are ones in which there was an intentional drug overdose. This is determined by the level of drugs in their system, a history of mental illness, the finding of a suicide note or other attempts at suicide in the past.

The Lehigh County Regional Intelligence and Investigation Center analyzed crime statistics from Jan. 1, 2010, to Sept. 1, 2013, to determine how many crimes were related to prescription drug use and abuse. A sampling determined that there were 162 crimes or police incidents in that category, and that number does not even include the City of Allentown, whose officer reports of such incidents are not searchable.

Burglary, drug investigations, fraud and theft topped the list of crimes in which prescription drugs were involved.

Martin said that in addition to enhancing public safety and promoting the health of county residents, the boxes help to reduce environmental risks because they give residents an alternative to discarding medications in landfills or in drains where they can end up in the water supply.

The boxes have been installed at these departments where medications can be discarded on the days and hours listed below:

- **Catasauqua Police Department**, 118 Bridge St., Catasauqua. Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; hours will be expanded after a new station is built and opens in 2015;
- **Allentown Police Department, 1005 W. Hamilton St. substation**, Allentown. Open 24 hours, seven days a week;
- **Bethlehem Police Department**, 10 East Church St., Bethlehem. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; visitors entering the City Hall location should advise the front desk that they are there to go to the Police Department to discard unwanted medications;
- **Emmaus Police Department**, 400 Jubilee St., Emmaus. Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., excluding holidays;
- **Slatington Police Department**, 125 S. Walnut St., Slatington. Sunday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.;
- **Whitehall Township Police Department**, 3731 Lehigh St., Whitehall Township. Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. by appointment with Officer Paul Davis at 610-437-3042 extension 223. No holidays;
- **Upper Saucon Township Police Department**, 5500 Camp Meeting Road, Center Valley. Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.;
- **South Whitehall Township Police Department**, 4444 Walbert Ave., South Whitehall Township. Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. excluding holidays;
- **Upper Macungie Township Police Department**, 37 Grim Road, Upper Macungie Township. Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., excluding holidays;
- **Salisbury Township Police Department**, 3000 S. Pike Ave., Salisbury Township. Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. After-hours visits, if necessary, can be scheduled by calling 610-797-1447 during business hours. There may be some Saturday hours in the future.

During the seventh National Take Back Day event on Oct. 26, 2013, Lehigh County residents disposed of a record amount of 2,014 pounds of drugs at 17 sites that included police departments, grocery stores, pharmacies and malls.

In Lehigh County, the total collected during seven Take Back Days since 2010 is 6,840 pounds, or nearly 3 ½ tons. After the collections, DEA personnel had picked up the boxes of medications at all sites and had taken them to an incinerator where they were burned.

The Lehigh County District Attorney's Office included in its grant application letters of support from police chiefs, Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol Abuse Services, the Allentown

Health Bureau, Lehigh County Aging and Adult Services, Lehigh County TRIAD, Project Lifesaver in Lehigh County, and Treatment Trends, Inc.

Detectives with the Drug Task Force will pick up the discarded medications. The collected medications will be incinerated in cooperation with the Berks County District Attorney's Office through the Berks County Solid Waste Management contract with an incinerator in York County, which is an authorized facility designated to perform the destruction of controlled substances.

The one-way collection boxes are bolted to the floor to prohibit removal of the boxes and retrieval of medications from within the boxes without proper authorization.

The boxes, which are the MedReturn II model, are 55'' tall, 22'' wide and 17'' deep and weigh 120 pounds.

Residents can place medications in the boxes anonymously. There will be no charge to residents for this service and no requirement to provide personal information or identification when using the box.

Signs are posted on each box informing residents of the types of items that can be placed in the boxes and those that are not accepted. Items that are accepted are prescription and over-the-counter medications, samples, vitamins, prescription ointments, prescription patches and pet medications.

Items that are not accepted are syringes, needles, Sharps or other sharp objects, medications from businesses and clinics, lotions or liquids, aerosol cans, inhalers, hydrogen peroxide and thermometers.

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