

September 24, 2010

## **NATIONAL TAKE BACK DAY**

BISMARCK – Saturday September 25 is national “Take Back Day,” and Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem encourages North Dakota residents to check their medicine cabinets for unused or expired medications and dispose of them safely.

The national Take Back day is a special one-day event to promote safe disposal of unwanted prescription medications. Attorney General Stenehjem launched the state’s Prescription Drug Take Back program in December 2009.

“Thousands of North Dakotans have left-over medications in their medicine cabinets. We never know what to do with them: We’re told not to flush them because they are an environmental problem. We’re told not to throw them in the trash for the same reason, or because someone might steal them. Our children, or their friends, can take them from bathroom drawers where they might have been there forgotten for months, and might never be missed,” said Stenehjem. “Now, we know what to do with these drugs.”

Initially launched as a pilot program in five cities, public demand has brought the Prescription Drug Take Back program into ten communities so far. By the end of the year, permanent disposal containers will be located in 24 law enforcement agencies across the state, providing residents of 17 counties with the ability to safely dispose of their unused and unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medications.

“The rate of prescription drug abuse in North Dakota is alarming. Almost one in six high school students reported having taken a prescription drug, such as oxycontin, without a doctor’s prescription,<sup>1</sup>” said Stenehjem. “Education and awareness are steps in the right direction; providing people with the ability to safely dispose of these medications is part of the solution. Response to the Take Back program has been phenomenal; as of this week, over 895lbs of unwanted medications has been collected,” he continued.

Information about the state’s Take Back program and the location of Take Back sites is available at <http://www.ag.nd.gov/PDrugs/TakeBackProgram.htm>. Residents wishing to hold special “Take Back” events or request a permanent Take Back disposal site in their community, should contact their local law enforcement agency.

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<sup>1</sup> 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, ND Department of Public Instruction