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News

Police to take back drugs

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By Catherine Kavanaugh, Daily Tribune Staff Writer

Royal Oak will be drop-off site for Operation Medicine Cabinet.

ROYAL OAK — Leaving outdated and unused drugs in the medicine cabinet can be a prescription for trouble.

In 2008, 15.2 million Americans age 12 and older had taken a prescription pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant or sedative for nonmedical purposes at least once in the year prior to being questioned by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The study found 2.9 percent of eighth-graders, 6.7 percent of 10th-graders, and 9.7 percent of 12th-graders had abused Vicodin; and 2.1 percent of eighth-graders, 3.6 percent of 10th-graders, and 4.7 percent of 12th-graders had abused OxyContin.

Using drugs without the supervision of a physician or for purposes other than their intended use can lead to serious consequences, including addiction and death from overdose.

It's time for south Oakland County residents to clean out their medicine cabinets and safely dispose of prescriptions no longer needed, according to Deputy Police Chief Corrigan O'Donohue.

At noon Friday, the Royal Oak Police Department is launching Operation Medicine Cabinet. Anyone can bring old prescription drugs to the lobby of the police station, 221 E. Third St., and drop them in a secure container. When the container is filled, the drugs will be turned over to the Oakland County Sheriff's Department and incinerated.

"That's the safest way to dispose of them — much better than flushing them down the toilet, which causes other problems," O'Donohue said.

Wastewater treatment plants are designed to remove conventional pollutants, not medications, which have been detected in drinking water systems and streams, lakes and rivers. The potential threats to humans and aquatic life still are being studied.

"Our main goal is to keep drugs out of the hands of people they're not prescribed for," O'Donohue said. "There's a big problem with teens getting old drugs from grandma and grandpa's medicine cabinet and abusing prescriptions."

Royal Oak is the first police department in Oakland County to become a drop-off site for the Operation Medicine Cabinet program. The sheriff's department offers the service at its headquarters in Pontiac and substations in Rochester Hills and Commerce Township.

Since the program started in 2009, more than 300 pounds of prescription drugs have been collected and destroyed.

"We wanted to expand the program and make it more convenient for people," Sheriff Michael Bouchard said of adding a site in Royal Oak. "We started the program for two reasons. We've seen an increase in the number of young people using legal prescriptions illegally and more studies show flushed prescriptions get in the water system."

Everyone who discards of prescriptions in Royal Oak on Friday will receive a free grab-and-go lunch while supplies last. Also, Royal Oak Recycling will offer free document shredding from noon to 2 p.m.

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