

Kosciusko County is a leading county in innovation and creativity. From orthopedic companies manufacturing devices for children, to a study being done on the feasibility of an orthopedic hospital – it is apparent Kosciusko County is focusing on a stable and efficient healthcare system. Part of a stable and efficient healthcare system in our county will rely on a system of operations to ensure community members are educated on services and opportunities.

Areas of concern in our community are prescription disposal and the lack of awareness in proper disposal. Implementing and educating a universal set of operations for safe prescription disposal can be achieved by providing an avenue of continuity for all those involved in the community. The success of implementing a safe prescription disposal method will enable our community to have another cultural asset not just in healthcare – but environmentally as well.

A non for profit foundation, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (later referred to as KFF), is dedicated to educating consumers on issues, media relations, and statistics in healthcare. In most of the studies, KFF breaks down avenues of healthcare into three categories: hospital care, physician and clinical services, and prescription drugs. Based off a study KFF completed from 1996-2008, prescription usage has averaged more growth almost every year over hospital care, physician and clinical services. In addition, prescription volume has increased by 1.2% in 2010 –slightly faster than the population growth rate.

The pharmaceutical industry is a 3.4 billion dollar industry, and will continue to grow. (wiki)

Due to the fact the trend in prescription dispersal is increasing, breaking down the components is important in analyzing how the community can assist in safe and accessible disposal. Teena, a team member of the group did ground work investigation on what the average consumer knew about the “how’s” and “why’s” of safe and accessible prescription disposal. The beginning of this journey begins when a consumer is prescribed a medication. As a population, we can use prescriptions for one time illnesses, and/or prescriptions for a maintenance illness which requires daily doses. Both categories of consumers who are prescribed prescriptions may experience excess– and not know “how”, “why” or “where” to dispose of the excess.

Based off statistics, the general population has been exposed to at least one prescribed medication in one’s life. Teena, the local surveyor of the group talked with 20 different people on “how,” they disposed of their unused and unwanted prescriptions. Every effort was made to discuss this question with different genders, ages, race, and education level. The findings from the local efforts are: most flush the excess down the toilet and/or to just throw them in their trash. To break it down even further, 9 of the 20 indicated they would just throw excess in the trash, 7 of the 20 indicated they would flush the excess down the toilet, and the remaining 4 indicated they do not use pharmaceuticals often – but when they do, they take until the medication is gone. Even though people are supposed to take prescriptions until they are all gone – statistics show most consumers do not finish the prescription based off their personal choices.

It is important to note, after asking the consumers how disposal is done, most of the responders were intrigued to know the “proper” way. The feedback given from the responders related to the thought that most hadn’t realized there is a “right” and “wrong”

way to dispose unwanted or unused medication. The conversation made as much of an impact that others around could have been labeled “eavesdroppers,” because they were listening in our conversations, and wanted to be included (One sped up when Teena was walking around the track to become more informed). Due to this interest in proper prescription disposal – more than 20 people were talked to, in regards to this topic – because Teena welcomed all who wanted to be involved in the discussion.

Looking at the later part of one’s journey in prescription use: examining what happens when the “right” method is not utilized is a key component to encourage consumers to understand why safe disposal of prescriptions is imperative. Improper form of disposal with society’s many different forms of pharmaceuticals can have adverse effects on many different things. “Wrong disposal,” impacts our society in these areas: wild life, humans; specifically children, elderly adults, and animals if by chance they get a hold of some of these pharmaceuticals when thrown in the trash. The greatest contributing factor to this problem is the lack of information of why we should dispose properly, how to dispose pharmaceuticals and where is a safe place to dispose. The general population does not have the knowledge of the importance of proper disposal and how best to do so and where they can be disposed of properly. In some cases, even pharmacists have recommended disposing by flushing. A few suggested the recycle center in Warsaw, but did not have the information of where the recycle center was located.

The problem with this answer is the lasting and irreversible effect on the waterways, our fish and us. The domino effect created from such an action burdens wastewater treatment centers because they aren’t set up to filter out these drugs, so they

end up in our waterways. There are multiple problems with drinking water that has been recycled with antidepressants and pharmaceuticals in it. One of the effects is animals are drinking contaminated water as our waterways; creeks, streams, lakes are showing rising levels of pharmaceuticals, wastewater chemicals, and pesticides. We want the community and society in general to be concerned with this happening to the fish in our lakes, streams, and ponds. Because those fish will no longer be able to reproduce, all other species and us will also be affected. One solution to this program is to promote the message “don’t flush,” expired or unused medication.

Did you know lakes and streams fish population are declining at an alarming rate? The community of scientists and biologist nationally and internationally are concerned, shouldn’t we be? Research is developing on the strong probability to which fish may become extinct in the near future.

These are all the effects through man’s own lack of awareness with his part in creating the problem. Yet there is still the opportunity to turn the hands of time back to support a sustainable eco environment. There still is time to take responsibility in creating what appears to be unchangeable.

Let’s change the path for our local consumers to a safe, accessible and proper prescription disposal. To assist in the proper disposal of unwanted medications in Kosciusko County, six local pharmacies were contacted. Of the six pharmacies, three referred their customers to the KC recycling center. Two pharmacies collected medications which were sent to an outside company to be disposed of, and one pharmacy gave suggestions on how to dispose of medications: simply through the trash. As this is a trigger area for consumers, Tim, our investigator requested more details on throwing

medication in the trash. The suggestion was to remove all labels and fill pill bottle with dish soap and water then throw away in the trash can. Out of the six pharmacies, none of them collect controlled substances or narcotics, nor does the KC recycling center – where majority of the pharmacies refer consumers.

Sue Studebaker, Executive Director of KC Recycling has over the years, seen an increase of collecting expired medications. Presently, KC Recycling Center collects 5-50 gallon containers of expired medication that are turned over to a company that collects hazardous waste. KC Recycling would like to see this portion of their recycling program for expired medications to be directed to a “safe and supervised environment.” The cost of a sign to be posted on the premises indicating where expired medication can be disposed of: Kosciusko County Sheriff’s drop off location.

Networking in the community to find a solution on a safe location to dispose of expired or unused medication – and at the very minimum a central and consistent location was researched. In addition to KC Recycling program, there is a program hosted by the Drug Enforcement Agency, called a “take back the drug day,” which was held October 29th, 2012. The issue with this program is that there wasn’t any marketing and not many people knew about it.

During the initial stages of this project the police department and county sheriff’s office were contacted, and at that time there was not a permanent drop off site, however it was in the works. The sheriff’s department acknowledged Kosciusko County is in need of a permanent drop off location for all unwanted prescription medications which include narcotics and controlled substances. The suggestion was to have a secured permanent

drop off location in the county to help unwanted medications including controlled substances and narcotics off the streets and disposed of in an environmentally safe way.

There were six key considerations for implementing an effective drug collection program:

1. The location must be secure, easily accessible, and if possible, video monitored.
2. The receptacle must be lockable, secure, and appropriate size to handle items to be dropped off.
3. A safe and efficient pick up and disposal program will need to be established.
4. Funding will need to be secured to initiate and sustain the program.
5. Partners are needed in the community to maintain and manage the project.
6. Media coverage and effective communication will be required to insure that the public is fully aware of the opportunity the program provides them, including the benefits to the environment we all enjoy.

During the final stages of the project, we can say that the Kosciusko County Sherriff's Department secured a location for a receptacle. The selected location is on the Kosciusko County Sherriff's Department Property (later referred to as KCSD) in the Parking lot. This location is continually monitored via a video monitor operated by the KCSD. It is a weather-proof, lockable storage receptacle (similar to a mailbox). The KCSD currently has the key.

Regarding funding, relative to the value it provides the community, this initiative is inexpensive and should be easily funded and sustained. The anticipated ongoing cost of the program can be up to \$6221.00 (see attached proposed spending if all funded was received). However, as funding could be limited, our group wants to emphasize the brochures, stands and sign to be spent with the \$1,000 – as a priority. This is primarily for one ongoing cost; building a culture with the message of “don’t flush,” and redirecting traffic to the drop off medication box. Entities that will likely be interested or have shown interest in sustaining this project include but are not limited too; KCSD, WPD, pharmacies in the county, civic organizations, lake associations, United Way, KCH, municipalities’, Winona Lake Preservation, Tippecanoe Watershed Foundation and individual philanthropists.

Some of our Project Partners will help run the program, while others will be valuable voices, helping keep the project present in the community. We will have cling stickers and brochures made so that each pharmacy will be able to “advertise” that there is now a responsible way to dispose of unneeded prescriptions in Kosciusko County.

The final piece of the puzzle is effectively communicating with the public about this initiative. Public service announcements, a billboard, brochures, and stickers can all be used to promote the program. In our communications we will educate the community about the detriment of improper disposal and inform them about where they can drop off their prescriptions for free, and even how they can get involved to help. A value-added benefit for KLA is that we could potentially

add the KLA logo to our signs and clings to remind the community that KLA does actively support programs that are vital to Kosciusko County and our environment.

It is important to note that while the initial receptacle has been installed in city of Warsaw, to our knowledge, no other Kosciusko County municipalities have such a program. To effectively protect our environment, Warsaw may need one or two more drop off locations and many of the smaller communities will also need their own drop off receptacles.

Our group wants to extend a hand of gratitude for all the united effort in promoting this message of “don’t flush,” and redirecting traffic to the Kosciusko County Sheriff’s Department receptacle including not limited to: Northern Indiana Lakes and Streams, Kosciusko County Recycling, Kosciusko Community Hospital, and K-Code, and Kosciusko County Sheriff’s Department.