



**PRESS RELEASE
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OPERATION MEDICINE CABINET ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AT THE FLORIDA AQUARIUM IN SEPTEMBER

(Tampa, FL August 2009) – The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office is spearheading a community service program called Operation Medicine Cabinet. This event is aimed at educating and encouraging the community to properly dispose of unwanted prescription medications. The event will be held on Friday, September 25, 2009, from 8:00 am – 12:00 pm at the Florida Aquarium, 701 Channelside Drive, Tampa, FL 33602. Individuals wanting to dispose of unwanted medications are encouraged to drive to The Florida Aquarium to dispose of the drugs.

Common sense tells us that keeping outdated and unused prescription medications is a safety hazard in any home. Proper disposal for these medications is vital to human safety and to our water supply. Flushing pills down the toilet or drain, directly deposits these unused substances into our water system, contaminating our eco system and eventually returning to us through water and food supplies.

Federal Drug Enforcement Agency prohibits the recycling of any medication. Therefore, we often forget to dispose of old prescriptions or even dated over-the-counter medications. Keeping outdated drugs leads to misuse of these substances by children, seniors or anyone with access to a home medicine cabinet.

According to the 2008 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, the past 30-day prevalence rates for abuse of depressants and prescription pain relievers are greater than for all other illegal drugs among 12th graders, excluding marijuana. But, prescription drugs aren't the only type of medicines our youth are accessing from our medicine cabinets. There are many types of cough medicines and over-the-counter sleep medications that can be a source of juvenile substance abuse.

Our seniors often pick up the wrong drug in a crowded medicine cabinet or use prescriptions incorrectly leading to possible drug addition, severe illness or worse, death. Properly disposing of unused/unwanted medications can reduce these accidents and help this population remain healthier.

Operation Medicine Cabinet provides a community based disposal program, coordinated through the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and Home Instead Senior Care. Operation Medicine Cabinet is offered periodically throughout the county to offer citizens a safe way to dispose of old, unwanted drugs and medications. After the collection is complete, Sheriff's Office personnel take collected medications to a county hazardous waste collection site for incineration.

Deputy Rob Thornton, who's been working on this program since it began in 2006, says the event has collected more than 2000 pounds of prescription drugs and medications and this effort is growing. Kristi Campbell, owner of Home Instead Senior Care, and Lea Kerr, Community Service Representative for Home Instead Senior Care, have worked with multiple community agencies to put the program together and has continued promoting this initiative throughout the community. For more information regarding this and future events, please contact Home Instead Senior Care at 813.684.1972.

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