

## Hendricks County SWMD Successfully Handles Unwanted Medicines through Community Partnerships

The Hendricks County Solid Waste Management District and the Hendricks County Substance Abuse Task Force joined forces in 2008 to begin an unwanted medicines take-back program.

Both groups recognized the environmental harm of flushing medicines and the risks that stockpiled medicines represent from a community protection and law enforcement standpoint. Collections were held at community events, and 800 pounds of medicines were collected in 2008. They heard from many very grateful residents that it was a useful service.

In 2009, the Substance Abuse Task Force began accepting unwanted medicines during Tox-Away Days. They initially only collected 323 pounds of medicines through the Tox-Away Day take-backs, but once word began to circulate through the community, residents responded. The Substance Abuse Task Force continued other collections at community events.



While the periodic take-back events were successful, there was also a desire to provide a more permanent, on-going solution. In January of 2013, through a grant from the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant and with cooperation from the Avon Police Department, the Hendricks County Solid Waste Management District and the Hendricks County Substance Abuse Task Force, an unwanted medicines drop-box was placed at the Avon Police Station. The box is available to residents during normal business hours, and the contents of the box are sorted and logged by Avon police officers. The drugs are ultimately delivered to Covanta Energy Corporation in Indianapolis for incineration, and turned into energy from waste.



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In August of 2013, the Plainfield Police Department opened a second unwanted medicines drop-box for the community. The box was purchased for the police department by the Hendricks County Solid Waste Management District and is also available for use during normal business hours. The contents of the box are handled like those from the Avon box. The Plainfield and Avon police departments are now working together to deliver the drugs to the incinerator; saving time, money and fuel for both departments. This program keeps drugs from getting introduced into the waste water system and removes stockpiled medications from homes where the drugs can easily be diverted for illicit use.



The Solid Waste Management District and the Substance Abuse Task Force plan to continue to accept unwanted medicines during the Tox-Away Day events.

- Yearly results (lbs.):
  - ◇ 2008: 800
  - ◇ 2009: 323
  - ◇ 2010: 791
  - ◇ 2011: 1,053
  - ◇ 2012: 1,743
  - ◇ 2013: 2,858

The program has only been possible through the efforts of a number of organizations working together to achieve common goals.