

Lowville hospital joining pilot program to take in unwanted drugs

By [STEVE VIRKLER](#)

SVIRKLER@LOWVILLE.COM

PUBLISHED: TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2016 AT 12:30 AM

UPDATED: TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2016 AT 12:37 AM

[PREV](#)

Item 1 of 1

[NEXT](#)



LEWIS COUNTY GENERAL HOSPITAL

Lewis County General Hospital pharmacy workers, from left to right, Krista Wenstrom, Lucy Austin, director Diane Loftus, Beth Demorest and Amy Birchenough stand next to a new drop-off box for unused pharmaceuticals in the hospital lobby.

LOWVILLE — Lewis County General Hospital is now accepting old prescription drugs for free through September as part of a drug take-back pilot program, joining a pair of local pharmacies in the effort.

“Every week, there are overdoses and accidental poisonings caused by leftover prescription drugs found in residents’ homes,” Diane Loftus, director of pharmacy at the county-owned hospital, said in a statement. “In addition, we often receive phone calls from family members who have lost loved ones and are looking for a way to dispose of medications that are no longer needed. We’re proud to provide a much-needed solution for county residents to safely and easily remove leftover drugs from their medicine cabinets.”

A blue “mailbox” has been placed in the lobby of the hospital, 7785 N. State St., for drop-off of unwanted drugs through a program being administered by the Product Stewardship Institute, Boston, Mass., and the New York Product Stewardship Council.

Prepaid mail-back envelopes are also available to take home and mail out old medications for disposal.

“Alternative in-home disposal methods — including flushing down the drain or throwing in the trash — do not render leftover drugs irretrievable or environmentally benign.

The federal Drug Enforcement Administration for the past several years has organized drug take-back days. However, those all required a law enforcement presence, and many of the drop-off locations have been at police stations.

A law signed by the governor last fall directs the state Department of Health to oversee a drug disposal program at locations like pharmacies, long-term care facilities and narcotic treatment programs.

The pilot program being funded through a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant, has been going on since March at two independent pharmacies in Lewis County — Bonaparte Pharmacy in Harrisville and Falls Pharmacy in Lyons Falls — and two others in Oneida County. Through May, those four stores collected a combined 117 pounds of unwanted pharmaceuticals, the release states.

At a meeting last week, Mrs. Loftus told the hospital Board of Managers that the facility could continue the program after the pilot program ends, assuming it is deemed a valuable service to the

community. If so, she said, community agencies could be asked to help cover the monthly cost, she said.

At the hospital's most recent single-day drug collection event in April, residents brought in 450 to 460 pounds of unused pharmaceuticals, Mrs. Loftus said.

So, even if an every-day collection system is not deemed feasible, more one-day events could be held on a regular basis, she said.

<http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/news04/lowville-hospital-joining-pilot-program-to-take-in-unwanted-drugs-20160802>