



Contact: Chloe Birnel
Telephone: (206) 352-2050
Email: cbirnel@pprc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNWANTED MEDICINES COULD BE PUTTING YOUR FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT AT RISK
Legislators, Pharmacists, Health Advocates: Something Must Be Done to Ensure Safe Disposal of Unwanted Medicines

Drug abuse.

Accidental poisonings.

Contaminated drinking water.

All three were hot topics at Washington State's **Medicine Take-Back Workshop** held Friday, April 18th in Seattle. Participants represented a wide variety of stakeholder groups including pharmaceutical manufacturers, state legislators, government hazardous and solid waste programs, pharmacists, and clean water/environmental advocates concerned about the risks resulting from improper drug disposal in households.

The workshop was put on by the coalition behind Washington's multi-county **Medicine Return Pilot Program**: the nation's largest pharmacy-based household pharmaceutical return program. Over the past year and a half this program has collected and securely disposed of over 8,000 pounds of unwanted medicines from its 26 participating pharmacy locations in King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane and Thurston counties.

As the end of the pilot program's funding draws near, supporters are keen to continue and expand the medicine return service to all of Washington's 1,300 pharmacies. A long-term statewide manufacturer-funded program is the solution.

While speaking at the workshop, State Representative Dawn Morrell of Puyallup explained her personal connection to the issues at hand: *"As a nurse and grandmother I am acutely aware of the need for safer and easier methods to dispose of unwanted medicines."*

Morrell noted that she is *"fully committed to sponsoring state legislation in 2009 to create a secure, statewide, manufacturer-funded household medicine return system."*

"It's easy to see why so many people take an interest in this issue," continued Morrell. *"No one wants their loved ones to be at risk for accidental poisonings. No one wants their unused drugs to be misused. And certainly no one wants contaminated water. Yet all three of these things can occur when household pharmaceuticals are disposed of improperly."*

Before the Medicine Return Pilot Program there was no easy answer to these concerns. Over the last year and a half the pilot program has proven to be a safe, effective, and convenient way for residents near participating pharmacies to dispose of unwanted medicines.

Rep. Morrell went on to add *“I look forward to the day when I can say this program is available at all 1,300 pharmacies in Washington State.”*

To learn more about the Medicine Return Pilot Program or to locate your nearest drop-off location, visit www.medicinereturn.com.

The household medicine return pilot program is the result of efforts by a coalition of local and state governments, businesses and non-profits known as the **PH:ARM Team** (Pharmaceuticals from Households: A Return Mechanism).

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with any of the PH:ARM Team members please contact Chloe Birnel at (206) 352-2050 or email Chloe at CBirnel@pprc.org. Additional information, including materials from the recent workshop can be found at www.medicinereturn.com.

The PH:ARM Team is a coalition of representatives and advisors from:

Bartell Drug Company
Group Health Cooperative
Interagency Resource for Achieving Cooperation (IRAC)
Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County
Northwest Product Stewardship Council
Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center (PPRC)
Public Health – Seattle & King County
Snohomish County Public Works/Solid Waste Division
Washington Board of Pharmacy
Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation
Washington State Department of Ecology
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services