



Great Lakes Clean Water Organization

www.GreatLakesCleanWater.org

NEWS RELEASE

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New Organization Works to Keep Drugs Out of Water

The mission of the Great Lakes Clean Water Organization is to:

1. Promote the importance of clean water in Michigan and the Great Lakes region.
2. To promote the importance of disposing of unused/expired drugs in a safe and approved manner that will keep harmful effects of drugs out of ground water, surface water and municipal water systems.

According to Chris Angel of Barton City who is a founding member of the group, raising awareness about the harmful effect of drugs in our water is the first step to addressing the problem.

He states “There is increasing evidence across the country that our water systems whether they be urban or rural are at risk from contamination of household drugs.”

He adds that a study conducted by the US geological survey showed 80% of the streams sampled contained detectable levels of drugs.

A contributing factor according to Angel is the long standing practice of flushing unused/unwanted household drugs down the toilet or drain.

As cited in a Michigan DEQ bulletin, pharmaceutical contamination of water has a negative impact on the aquatic ecosystem including, fish, birds and other wildlife.

Diane O'Connor, of Alpena who serves as Treasurer for Great Lakes Clean Water Organization is a Registered Nurse who got involved after being concerned about the issue for many years.

She states, “Keeping harmful drugs out of the water is good for all of us and ultimately good for the environment.

She adds, “The first step is to make more people aware of the problem then to get them to stop flushing drugs down the drain or taking to the landfill and then we need to work together to provide more collection programs for unused/expired drugs.”

According to Angel “Pharmacists, health professionals and government agencies agree that something must be done to divert drugs from going into our water and landfills but most communities in Michigan do not currently have collection programs therefore most are forced to continue the practice of flushing or sending to a landfill.

“We plan to change that” states Angel, “What is needed is a comprehensive statewide approach to collecting and disposing of unused/unwanted rugs in a safe and approved manner.”

Over the next few months in addition to raising awareness about the emerging issue Great Lakes Clean Water will be conducting a survey of area pharmacists. They hope to eventually survey all pharmacists in Michigan.

Angel states“ The local Pharmacist is a knowledgeable, helpful health care professional there to help you when you need prescriptions filled and their input is critical in regards to helping coordinate safe and approved community based collection and disposal programs for unused/expired drugs.”

Angel urges interested Pharmacists to contact the organization or to complete the survey which is at the Great Lakes Clean Water Organization website.

The organization is also looking for volunteers to get involved. Volunteers are needed to conduct surveys, provide community education, hand out information and in general to spread the word.

Melissa Frutos of Ypsilanti who is Secretary for the Great Lake Clean Water Organization states“ This issue is something we should all be concerned about .As a mother of two young children I want to do all I can to keep the water they drink and the lakes they swim in safe and free from drugs.

Future plans for the organization include a community based pilot program in Northeast Michigan and in Southeast Michigan to collect and dispose of unwanted/unused/ drugs.

For more information go to **www.greatlakescleanwater.org**