

Boiling Spring Lakes 'medicine drop' allows secure disposal of prescription drugs

By Sarah Shew Wilson, Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, October 26, 2016 1:44 pm

Tuesday morning, Boiling Spring Lakes police officers loaded a truck with 195 pounds of discarded medicines ranging from vitamins to morphine to be destroyed at the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation office in Jacksonville.

In 2013, the police department received a grant from the National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators (NADDI) for a locked drop box to accept unwanted medicines in the department lobby. The drop-off site is available during regular office hours, Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

“We used to do a medicine drop once a year, and it was such a success people complained that they couldn’t do it more often,” police department administrative assistant Alison Scouler said recently.

Police chief Brad Shirley applied for the grant when he saw the need growing along with the use of prescription drugs in the county.

“It’s nice for the large elderly population we have who have a lot of prescriptions and end up with expired medicines that they don’t know what to do with,” Lt. Rick Spencer said. “They know if they drop it here, we will properly dispose of it.”

That way, neighbors and others know they don’t have prescription drugs in the house, which keeps them from being targeted, he explained.

The first year the drop box was available the department received 66 pounds of donations, but when officials began spreading the word, participation increased. In the past six months, people have dropped off 129 pounds of medicine, Scouler said.

Scouler is the only person who touches the donations when she weighs and places them in the evidence room before they are sent to Jacksonville.

“When we feel we have enough, we start all over again,” she said. “It’s probably going to be an annual disposal.”

Spencer emphasized the need for the drop box due to the increase in prescription drug-related crimes over the past few years.

“I’ve been here 13 years, and as the population has increased, abuse of prescription drugs has grown by leaps and bounds with the population,” he said, noting the rise in reports of larceny of medication, people selling prescription drugs and even overdoses.

“It’s getting increasingly worse,” Spencer said, noting the prescription drug drop box is one of the tools the police department uses to fight the epidemic.

“We can’t arrest the problem away,” he said.

Boiling Spring Lakes police also have access to Narcan, an opioid overdose reversal drug in the event an overdose occurs, as well as used needle receptacles provided by the Harm Reduction Coalition, also available at the department. The department also works with Coastal Horizons Center to refer substance abusers to outpatient treatment.

“If doing these pill and needle drops, Narcan and providing avenues for addicts to seek treatment makes one person change their life, it’s all worth it,” Spencer said.