

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Gwen Mitchell/Laurel Anderson, Office of Public Affairs, (408) 299-5119
Zachary DeVine, Integrated Waste Management, (408) 282-3186
Sergeant Don Morrissey, Office of the Sheriff, (408) 808-4905
Joy Alexiou, Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, (408) 885-4164

County Implements Pharmaceutical Drop-Off Program

SAN JOSE, CALIF.—The County of Santa Clara is launching a year-round, countywide Pharmaceutical Drop-Off Program offering the public a convenient and environmentally-friendly alternative to flushing or throwing away pills, expired medications, medicinal liquids, controlled substances or illegal drugs. Beginning today, individuals will have 13 locations where they can safely dispose of uncontrolled substances such as cold medicines and over-the-counter medications, as well as controlled substances such as vicodin, oxycontin, and codeine, no questions asked. Drop boxes are located at three Sheriff's Office locations and at 10 pharmacies at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and Valley Health Centers.

"A pharmaceutical drop-off program is an environmentally responsible program that can have a direct impact on our community," said Supervisor Ken Yeager when he brought the issue before the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors, who has championed the drug drop-off program in Santa Clara County. "To be effective, though, we need to make it easy for residents to do the right thing. Providing residents with multiple locations to safely dispose of drugs year round will give them options they've never had before."

In 2002, the U.S. Geological Survey released a study that found pharmaceuticals, hormones and chemicals in rivers and streams across the nation. In half the waterways sampled, seven or more compounds were detected and in one stream, 38 chemicals were present in a single water sample.

Concerned about the impact of drugs on the environment and local waterways, as well as the potential for recreational pharmaceutical drug abuse by teenagers and adults when unused pills are left around the home, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors directed County departments to develop a drug drop-off program.

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"I encourage residents to take advantage of safe disposal sites rather than leaving unwanted medication in the home or putting it in the water or landfill," said Liz Kniss, President of the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors. "Doing so not only helps the environment, it will also protect against inadvertent consequences of access to medications in the home."

The County's program is a collaborative effort between the Department of Environmental Health, Sheriff's Office, and Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System that together, offer multiple locations for residents to drop off their unused medications.

"Properly disposing of unused or unwanted pharmaceutical waste is a small, but vital step we can all take to protect the environment in Santa Clara County," said Greg Van Wassenhove, Director of the County of Santa Clara Agriculture and Environmental Management Department. "These thirteen drop-off locations are a convenient mechanism for residents to legally dispose of all types of drugs."

Federal law requires that controlled substances, those that have the potential for abuse, are handled, transported, and disposed of by law enforcement officers. The Sheriff's Office has installed three disposal receptacles at its three Sheriff's Office locations in San Jose, Cupertino and San Martin, where residents can drop off pharmaceutical waste, controlled substances and illegal drugs, with no questions asked.

"The Sheriff's Office is leading the way by establishing the first three law enforcement locations in Santa Clara County and will continue to expand the County's program by working with local law enforcement agencies to establish additional drop-off locations," said Santa Clara County Sheriff Laurie Smith. "We recognize the importance of protecting our environment and are pleased to be part of this innovative approach to ensuring the health of our community members and our environment."

Once the pharmaceuticals have been collected at each location, the Sheriff's Office will ensure proper destruction of the waste, keeping these harmful substances out of landfills, the Bay, and local water ways.

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Residents can drop off controlled and uncontrolled substances in pharmaceutical receptacles, similar to standard U.S. Mail boxes, at the following Sheriff's locations:

- **Sheriff's Office headquarters facility**, 55 West Younger Ave., San Jose
Hours: 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- **West Valley Patrol sub-station**, 1601 South De Anza Blvd., Cupertino
Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **South County sub-station**, 80 West Highland in San Martin
Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A 2006 Soundstats survey indicated that 74% of respondents would be willing to return medications to a pharmacy. "Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System treats approximately one in four individuals in Santa Clara County," said Narinder Singh, Pharmacy Director for the Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System. "Providing Valley Medical Center and our health centers as pharmaceutical drop-off locations is a convenient option for the community and our patients."

County pharmacy locations with pharmaceutical drop boxes for controlled and uncontrolled substances:

- Valley Health Center (VHC) at Bascom Pharmacy, 750 S. Bascom Ave., San Jose, CA 95128
- VHC Outpatient Pharmacy, 751 S. Bascom Ave, San Jose, CA 95128
- VHC Enborg Pharmacy, 2221 Enborg Lane, San Jose, CA 95128
- VHC Moorpark Pharmacy, 2400 Moorpark Avenue, San Jose, CA 95128
- VHC East Valley Pharmacy, 1993 McKee Road, San Jose, CA 95116
- VHC Fair Oaks, 660 S. Fair Oaks, Sunnyvale, CA 94085
- VHC at Lenzen Pharmacy, 976 Lenzen Avenue, San Jose, CA 95126
- VHC Gilroy Pharmacy, 7475 Camino Arroyo, Gilroy, CA 95020
- VHC Silver Creek Pharmacy, 1620 E. Capital Expressway, San Jose, CA 95121
- VHC Tully Pharmacy, 500 Tully Road, San Jose, CA 95111

Most VHC Pharmacies are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Several have extended weekday hours and are open on Saturdays, including VHC at Bascom Pharmacy which is open Mon. –Fri. from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sat., Sun. and holidays from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

To find a local drop-off location, residents may call 408-299-7300 or go to www.hhw.org for a list of drop-off locations.

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