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Medical disposal, sharps collection event scheduled Saturday

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/24/2008 - 08:24

By: Hannah Disch

In 2006, representatives from Stoughton Hospital, the City of Stoughton and the Stoughton Area School District joined together to form the Stoughton Wellness Coalition, a group whose mission is to take a collaborative approach to personal and community wellness through health promotion, educational programming and service to the community.

In February, 2007, the coalition hosted its first big event: a Community Health Fair that offered free wellness profiles as well as free screenings for cholesterol, blood sugar, bone density and blood pressure.

This Saturday, the coalition will host its next major event: a Medication Disposal and Sharps Collection. The event will be held from 9 a.m. until noon at the new Stoughton Fire Department located next to Stoughton City Hall.

All medication (including pills, aerosols, liquids and creams) should be brought in their original containers with names and other personal information crossed off with a black marker. Sharps must be dropped off in a registered sharps container or thick plastic laundry detergent bottle.

The Wellness Coalition has contracted with the LaCrosse County Household Hazardous Materials Program to ensure that all medications and sharps collected will be securely escorted to their facilities for incineration and proper disposal.

The members of the Coalition selected this project because of the health and safety risks created by unused and unwanted medications. Keeping unused prescription or over-the-counter drugs around the house creates opportunities for them drugs to be used improperly or illegally. Getting rid of unused medications reduces the incidences of unintentional ingestion and (sometimes lethal) overdose of medicine among children, medication errors among the elderly, inappropriate use of medications, drug use, and drug diversion from the home to the streets.

Unfortunately, disposing of medication in the trash increases the chance that it will be found by children, pets, or people who will use them inappropriately or illegally. Medications that are thrown away, or the other common solution, flushed

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down the toilet, damage the environment and eventually reach our water supply.

The Associated Press reports that at least 46 million Americans are drinking water from supplies tainted with a vast array of pharmaceutical drugs.

Drug components can also harm plants and animals that depend on these water resources and can contribute to the development of antibiotic resistance.

Research conducted in Wisconsin found evidence of pharmaceutical drugs (including acetaminophen, hormones and endocrine disrupting chemicals, such as those used in drugs such as birth control pills) in water both entering and leaving sewage treatment plants, indicating that these drugs are often not inactivated in septic systems or wastewater treatment plants.

The Medication Disposal and Sharps Collection Program event will provide a safe, environmentally friendly option to dispose of these medications and sharps.

The Stoughton Wellness Coalition hopes to conduct events every year in the spring and fall, said Jane McGuire, public relations and planning manager for Stoughton Hospital and a member of the Coalition.

"Based on the results from the aggregate report from the individual wellness profiles that were conducted at the Community Health Fair we hosted last February, we hope to develop programs related to the most pressing health and wellness issues facing our community, which are weight management, nutrition and fitness," said McGuire.

"We have had discussions (about) developing walking programs for the community and developing further education materials which outline the many no cost fitness opportunities that exist in our community. We are also considering educational programming related to healthy nutrition and eating habits.

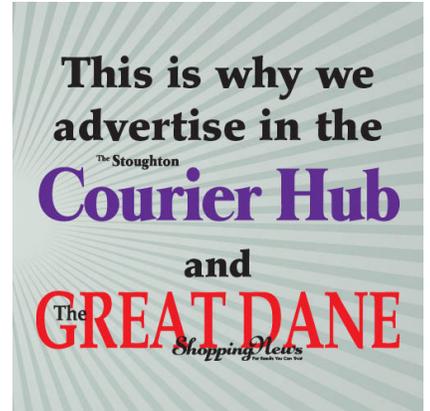
"However," added McGuire, "the Stoughton Wellness Coalition is a non-profit group and in order to continue to offer this type of programming, we will need to secure funds for projects such as these through donations from area businesses, local governments and municipalities and grants from area foundations and other resources. We have solicited funding for this event and we are grateful for the donations we have received from Wal-Mart, McGlynn Pharmacy, UW Health, Waste Management, the Town of Rutland, the Town of Pleasant Springs, the Partners of Stoughton Hospital and Dean Health System."

For additional information about Saturday's event, call Donna Olson at Stoughton City Hall (646-0422) or e-mail dolson@ci.stoughton.wi.us (<mailto:dolson@ci.stoughton.wi.us>).

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