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GUEST COLUMN

HELP STOP THE SPIRAL: “TAKE BACK” YOUR UNUSED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

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Like many Wisconsin parents, Julie never thought it could happen to her child. The mother of four from Menomonee Falls lost her 25-year-old son in early 2012 to a Heroin overdose. But Tyler’s addiction didn’t start with Heroin. His spiral started in high school with marijuana and then prescription drugs. Sadly, Tyler’s story is far too common across Wisconsin, in communities big and small. Young people experiment with prescription drugs, thinking they’re “safer” than illicit drugs but then become addicted and transition into a cheaper, more widely available alternative – heroin.

Statistics show more Americans abuse prescription drugs than the number of those using cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens and inhalants combined, and a majority of those abused medications come from family, friends, and in some cases, the household medicine cabinet. [Mandy](#), who’s incarcerated on Heroin-related charges, says she switched to Heroin after becoming addicted to the painkiller Oxycontin she stole from her grandmother’s medicine cabinet. When her “dealer” couldn’t get her “Oxy,” she tried Heroin, and her spiral began. You can view her story and others at www.theflyeffect.com.

As part of the Department of Justice’s (DOJ’s) heroin prevention public awareness campaign, “The Fly Effect,” you may hear or see radio and [TV](#) ads encouraging Wisconsinites to take part in the upcoming [National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day](#) on April 26, 2014. By dropping off your unused, unwanted or expired prescription drugs, you can help prevent prescription drug diversion and misuse. Log onto the Wisconsin DOJ’s website, www.doj.state.wi.us, and click on the “Rx Take-Back Day” tab to find a collection site near you. Then, spread the word about the dangers and help others rid their homes of unused medications.

Consider this -- more than three out of four people who misuse prescription painkillers use drugs prescribed to others, who may be unaware their drugs are missing. Julie learned her son had taken her medication when he was pulled over by police. Officers found her bottle of unused prescription drugs in his vehicle.

During the last “Take-Back” Day, Wisconsin residents dropped off 19.25 tons, or [38,506 lbs](#), worth of prescription drugs, putting Wisconsin in the top five for the total amount collected by states. Don’t let your unused bottles languish -- get rid of them April 26, and keep Wisconsin a national leader in this “Take-Back” effort. Through aggressive enforcement, education and community participation, we can prevent abuse and save lives.

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