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ALERT TOP STORY

HEALING CAYUGA

Healing Cayuga: Encouraging medication disposal in our county

Monika Salvage and DisposeRX Special to The Citizen

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Healing Cayuga Project Director Monika Salvage delivers 500 medication disposal pouches to Cayuga County Office Nutrition Program Coordinator Jenna Adams.

Provided

Monika Salvage and DisposeRX Special to The Citizen

Older adults take more prescribed and over-the-counter medications than any other age group, often leaving unused and expired pills stored in medicine cabinets, pill boxes and bathroom cabinets. Unused medications can pose risks to children, pets, young adults and even seniors who may accidentally take the wrong prescription.

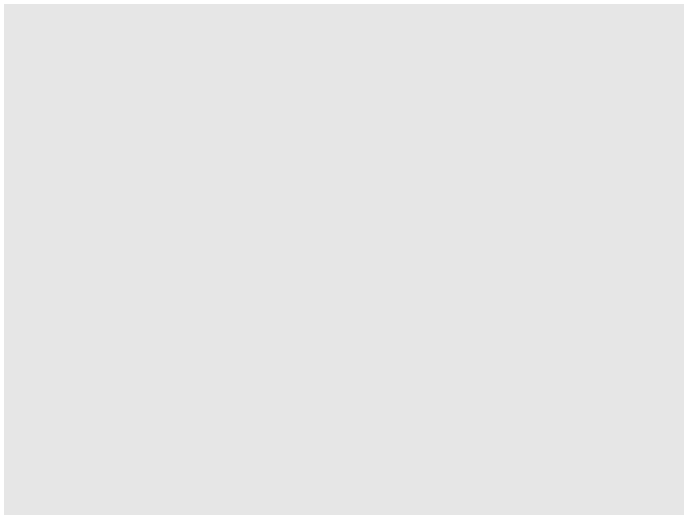
Based on local overdose surveillance data, we recognized the need to reach older adults with education and an at-home option to easily dispose of unused medications, and decided to contact the Cayuga County Office for the Aging about a collaboration.

Through this partnership of our two county departments, we reach homebound Meals on Wheels program clients to educate them on the importance of safe disposal of unused and/or expired medications. To date, 500 DisposeRx at-home medication disposal packets and educational materials have been donated by the company and provided to seniors to encourage prompt disposal of unneeded medications.

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Through this program, we were able to reach homebound seniors, many of whom live in rural areas without access to disposal locations. We've directly provided them with a product that they can use at home, which is much more effective than if we had just offered information or only created awareness.



Monika Salvage

HEALing Cayuga was part of the first wave of the HEALing Communities Study — a program of the National Institutes of Health — to test the integration of prevention, overdose treatment and medication-based treatment in select communities hard-hit by the opioid crisis. The findings will establish best practices for prevention and treatment strategies that can be replicated by communities nationwide.

Starting in 2020 and running for more than three years, HEALing Cayuga coordinated activities that include timely access to medication treatment, Narcan training and distribution, and safe drug disposal. The efforts resulted in a 22% reduction in overdose deaths in 2021 and 98 witnesses administering the first dose of Narcan during an overdose emergency, thereby potentially saving 94 lives. These outcomes were made possible through extensive collaboration among the HEALing Communities staff and partner agencies, strategic investment in expanded peer support to fill existing gaps, countywide data surveillance, and public information campaigns.

Cayuga County is now in the post-grant transition for the HEALing Communities Study; however, the work will not stop! Agencies have pledged to continue many of the initiatives, as well as take the lessons learned and the framework that was created from the opioid initiative to address other substances, such as fentanyl and stimulants.