

MMSD HELPS SPONSOR DRUG COLLECTION EVENT



Carol, Dave, Sue, & Mark at the end of a good day's haul.

On Saturday, October 13th, Mark Anderson, Carol Mielke, and Dave and Sue Taylor, along with about twenty other volunteers, set up a drug bust at the city solid waste transfer station on Olin Avenue. Well, it wasn't really a drug bust; but it was a drug collection operation. Given the name "MedDrop", this was the first attempt in Dane County to provide a means for people to dispose of unwanted medications in an environmentally friendly way. The event was sponsored by the Madison Patient Safety Collaborative, City of Madison, Dane County, several Pharmacy groups, and MMSD. From 9:00 am until 1:00 pm people drove through, dropped off their medications to a volunteer, answered a few survey

questions and received a brochure entitled, "Medication Safety for You". All kinds of medications were received, including prescription medicine (pills, liquids, powders, and creams), over-the-counter medicine, medications for pets, vitamins, nebulizer solutions, and inhalers. The medications were sorted by pharmacists and UW pharmacy students. Controlled substances were separated, taken by a police officer, and packed in designated 5 or 14 gallon drums. The uncontrolled substances were packed in larger 30 gallon drums. All the drums will be incinerated.

Why not flush the medicine down the toilet? Research has shown that many medications do not completely break down in the wastewater treatment process. Thus, there is the potential for harmful effects to the fish and other aquatic organisms living below the discharge of treatment plants. Landfilling pharmaceuticals is a better alternative than flushing, but it only delays the inevitable, since landfill leachate is generally sent to the wastewater treatment plant. Incineration has been found to be

the best method of disposal available because it completely destroys the compounds and removes them from any possibility of human or environmental exposure.

The "MedDrop" event turned out to be a huge success. The final numbers were:

Cars that came through: 566

Controlled Substances:

180 lbs (10-5 gal & 2-14 gal drums)

Uncontrolled Substances:

1,510 lbs (28-30 gal drums)

The survey results indicated expired medications as the most common reason for disposal (72%). A few people brought in meds from the 1960's. One person dropped off drugs from the 1930's and 1940's. The rest of the survey results can be found on MMSD's Intranet. The "MedDrop" committee plans to have two events a year, one in the spring and one in the fall. For further information about "MedDrop", visit their website at www.meddropdane.org.