

LOCAL EFFORT FOR NATIONAL DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY IS HUGE SUCCESS
'OPERATION MEDICINE DROP – Safe Communities/Healthy Waterways' NETS 130lbs
OF UNUSED MEDICATIONS

Berlin, MD Assateague Coastal Trust/Assateague COASTKEEPER in partnership with Berlin Police Department, Worcester County Sheriff's Office and Worcester County Health Department announced today that *OPERATION MEDICINE DROP*, a one day medication take-back effort held Saturday, April 30 was a huge success for Berlin and Worcester County, collecting 130 lbs of unwanted medications that will not be flushed into our waterways or present a danger to our communities by accidental or intentional misuse.

Kathy Phillips, Assateague COASTKEEPER, said "By providing a safe and secure way for people to get rid of unwanted medications, Operation Medicine Drop (OMD), part of a national drug-take back program sponsored by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), helps prevent accidental poisonings, drug abuse and helps protect our waters."

Phillips noted that community turn out at the five county-wide drop off locations was busy during the four hour effort, with county and municipal enforcement officers collecting the unwanted medications from residents while volunteers from Assateague Coastal Trust(ACT) assisted in recycling the plastic pill containers and answering questions about the campaign.

The Ocean Pines Food Lion drop off location was the busiest with a total of 75 lbs of pills and medications collected. The Berlin Police Department collected 21.5 lbs of meds, while the West Ocean City Food Lion location collected 21 lbs. Snow Hill and Pocomoke netted a total of 12.5 lbs.

Most participating residents commented that they thought this was an excellent program and they hoped it would expand to twice a year, exclaiming

they were relieved to get these unwanted medications out of their homes to be safely disposed of.

ACT volunteer Dimitra Cushwa noted a recurring observation, “It was much more than keeping communities safe and waterways clean. I felt it was cathartic for some people to dispose of these medicines from family members that had passed or recovered from illness.”

Others commented that prior to the OMD public awareness campaign, they did not know municipal sewage treatment plants are unable to treat pharmaceuticals and that flushing causes the medicinal compounds to go into our rivers and bays causing harm to aquatic life.

The collected medications were turned over by the local enforcement agency partners to DEA Special Agent David Rivello, who took everything to an approved hazardous material incineration facility for safe disposal. Agent Rivello commented on the day’s event, “Abuse of prescription medications and accidental ingestion is a growing danger within our communities, however if I know that at least one child was saved from harm as a result of today’s efforts I will be extremely happy.”

ACT thanks County and Municipal partners Sheriff Reggie Mason, Sgt. Nate Passwaters and officers of the Worcester County Sheriff’s Department; Police Chief Arnold Downing and Officer Jeannine Jerscheid of the Berlin Police Department; Dr. Andrea Mathias and Katherine Gunby of the Worcester County Health Department for their time and effort in making this a county wide campaign.

Coastkeeper Kathy Phillips also thanks ACT member volunteers Dr. Jean Rinaldo for her campaign coordinating efforts and Dimitra Cushwa for helping at the Berlin Police Department; and recognizes ACT Board Members

Bill Killinger, Harry Yeich, and Dick Nieman (and his wife Mary Ann) for volunteering to assist at the Ocean Pines and West Ocean City drop off locations.

Finally, ACT would like to acknowledge the cooperation of Food Lion stores #FLN0397 and #FLN2614 in helping to secure a drop off location in the Ocean Pines and West Ocean City communities.

As soon as DEA announces the next National Drug Take Back Day date, ACT and our partners will immediately begin to organize the next Operation Medicine Drop event. Thank you, again, to all Worcester County residents who participated this past Saturday. Remember, DON'T FLUSH! Continue to collect your unused medications, and keep them in a safe, secure location, for the next drop off.