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# Medication collection program aims to combat opioid crisis in Oklahoma

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Sadly, Pawnee County is one of Oklahoma's top five counties for opioid overdoses. But a new program is battling that.

Prescription drug abuse is the fastest-growing drug problem in the U.S., and Oklahoma is no exception. More than 770 Oklahoma residents died from drug overdoses in 2017. Opioids, including prescriptions, are a particular problem — on average, one Oklahoman dies every day from an opioid overdose. Palace Drug, a locally owned pharmacy in Cleveland, Oklahoma, has become the first pharmacy to join forces with Oklahoma State University's Prevention Programs (OSUPP), the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) and Covanta Environmental Solutions to collect and safely destroy leftover pharmaceuticals free of charge.

The drug take-back initiative was sponsored by OSUPP, which has won a grant from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. OSUPP partnered with PSI and Covanta to design and implement the program. Palace Drug's

new drug take-back receptacle is a secure and convenient way for area residents to dispose of unwanted and unused medications from the home. The locked collection receptacle, purchased through a partnership between the state department and local stakeholders, allows residents to dispose of both over-the-counter and prescription drugs (schedule II-V).

"This is something our pharmacy wanted to do for the community," said Jeff Moore, owner of Palace Drug. "We're proud to join this partnership. Our take-back program provides a much-needed service, raises awareness and helps keep families safe."

"The partnership we have developed has brought our efforts to reduce the risk posed by unused prescription medications to new heights," said Nicole Reed, grant coordinator at OSUPP. "Although we represent different sectors of the community, this shows we can come together to create a comprehensive strategy that increases awareness about the public and environmental health risks of unused medications."

PSI, a national nonprofit that reduces the health and environmental impacts of consumer products with a strong focus on sustainable end-of-life management, has championed safe drug disposal for over a decade.

"We know that pharmacies are the most convenient, accessible location for residents to safely dispose of unwanted medications," said Vivian Fuhrman, senior associate for policy and programs at PSI. "That's why we are working closely with organizations like OSUPP and Covanta on drug take-back programs like this one, which will be a model for other pharmacies in Oklahoma and nationwide."

Covanta Environmental Solutions custom designed a kiosk for Palace Drug and ensures that all drugs collected through the program are securely disposed.

"Covanta is pleased to work closely with our partners to help responsibly manage unwanted medications to ensure they do not end up in the wrong hands or in our environment," said Daniel Moran, senior director of operations for health care solutions at Covanta. "Palace Drug's medication take-back program is providing a vital service, and we commend them for making this a priority for a safer and healthier community."