

With Earth Day Approaching, Time to Recommit to Protecting Planet

When Earth Day began April 22 in 1970, there was no Clean Air Act, no Clean Water Act and no Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Since then many successes have been won, but some of the largest challenges still lie ahead.

This year Earth Day Network has proclaimed a campaign for environmental and climate literacy. Tackling great challenges begins with smaller local steps. On Friday, April 21, Putnam County Department of Health staff will be out in the community at lunchtime, volunteering and cleaning roadside litter along the stretch of Route 312 near the main health department office. Additionally beginning Sunday, April 16, the department will be tweeting and posting information daily to spread the word and improve environmental and climate literacy.

"Roadside litter is more than an eyesore," explains Vicki DiLonardo, the health department's recycling coordinator. "It can harm wildlife and damage the water supply, and the quantity of roadside litter

is staggering. Last year, the litter patrol operated by the PARC organization collected more than 26,000 pounds from 493 miles of Putnam County roadside."

To reduce roadside litter, the health department runs a program that lends community members clean-up kits, complete with litter bags, litter "grabbers," roadside safety instructions, safety vests and highway flags. Roadside cleanups are a great activity for community groups and neighborhood associations. Park and school campus cleanups are great community service projects for girl scouts, boy scouts and other youth organizations. For more information or to borrow a "clean-up kit," contact the health department at 808-1390.

The litter clean-up program is one of a number of environmental improvement initiatives the health department spearheads. Last September the department launched a campaign to increase plastic film recycling in the county. Unlike bottles and cans, plastic film must be dropped off at a store that

collects it. Currently 25 drop-off spots in the county are required to collect plastic film, which includes store "carry-out" bags, shrink-wrap plastic (e.g. beverage cases, paper towels packs) and newspaper delivery bags.

Other environmental initiatives and events in Putnam County include a push for more residential composting, an easy and convenient way to reduce solid waste, and the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days sponsored by the health department and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. These events provide a way for residents to safely dispose of environmentally hazardous materials (e.g. cleaners, pesticides, oil-based paint, automotive solvents, mothballs, gasoline, small propane tanks). The next one is scheduled for Saturday, May 6, in Fahnestock State Park. Electronic waste is not accepted at Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day. To get rid of "e-waste," residents should call their local town for disposal instructions.

To register for Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, or for information on any other of these programs, call the department at 808-1390 or visit the website below.

For more information on the Earth Day Network, which brings together 55 environmental organizations and government agencies including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, visit www.earthday.org.

The Department of Health's mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth, and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

Medication Take Back Day Coming Up

If you have a medicine cabinet full of old medication, you will want to mark your calendar for an upcoming medication take-back day on Saturday, April 29.

The Putnam Communities That Care Coalition, in collaboration with the Putnam County Health Department and Putnam County Sheriff's Department, will be holding the "Spring Medication Take Back" event at the Putnam Hospital Center from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Medication Take Back Day is safe, good for the environment and can save lives. By bringing in expired or unwanted medications to a take back day, you insure that it will be disposed of in a safe manner, according to the Sheriff's Department.

Members of the Sheriff's Department will be present to secure and dispose of the medications. By doing so, you also insure that there are no "accidental" poisonings/overdoses by leaving unwanted prescriptions in your home.

When you participate in Medication Take Back Day, you don't have to worry about causing harm to the environment by flushing medications down the toilet or disposing of them in your trash. Medicines that are flushed down the drain or that leach from landfills eventually end up in our waterways. Pharmaceuticals have become a significant water pollutant nationwide.

In addition, prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the U.S. today. Home medicine cabinets can be now be seen as the "new" drug dealer. Every year, prescription painkillers cause more than 16,000 deaths and 475,000 emergency room visits.

To take part, please enter through the Putnam Hospital Center Cancer Pavilion entrance. Signage will be posted leading to the disposal area. Individuals can dispose of prescription medication, over the counter medication, and pet medication.

Syringes will not be accepted. Please keep all medications in their original packaging and remove personal patient information.

For additional information, contact: Robert Morris of the Putnam County Health Department at 845-808-1390 ext. 43166 or Bruce Kelly of the Putnam CTC Coalition at 845-225-4646.

For those people who cannot make the event, there are MedReturn boxes in the following locations: Carmel Police Department, Kent Police Department, Putnam County Sheriff's Office in Carmel, Philipstown Town Hall, Putnam Valley Town Hall, Patterson Town Hall and the Kern Building in Brewster. The boxes in the police departments are open 24/7. In Philipstown and the Kern Bldg., the box is open Monday - Friday 8:30am to 4pm, in Putnam Valley, the box is open Monday-Friday 8am to 4pm and in Patterson, the box is open 9am to

4pm. Those boxes can take all unused or expired prescription medications, OTC medicines, prescription ointments, pet medications & vitamins. They will not accept any needles, hydrogen peroxide, aerosol cans, lotions, liquids or IV bags.



~ ~ Fun programs for students 12-15 years old ~ ~
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