

DRUG COLLECTION PROGRAM **'Big Red Barrel'**
Drug collection program to roll out across Lenawee County
By Daily Telegram staff

ADRIAN — A permanent program to help Lenawee County residents get drugs off the street is to start May 1. The program, called Big Red Barrel Drop Boxes, was organized by the Lenawee Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition and law enforcement agencies. It is putting red drop boxes at the Lenawee County Sheriff's Department and the offices of the Adrian, Tecumseh and Hudson police departments. Anyone will be able to drop off unwanted prescription medications and other drugs during normal business hours. "The service is free and anonymous, no questions asked," said an announcement from the coalition. Law enforcement and community partners began organizing a permanent program after participation grew during six drug take-back events in the county in the past two years. Another one-day event is planned for Saturday, April 27, at ProMedica Bixby Hospital. At the six prior events, Lenawee County residents turned in 346 pounds of drugs. The last event in September collected more than twice the number of pills as an event six months earlier. More community agencies partnered to advertise the last Drug Enforcement Agency take-back event, and a location was added at the Tecumseh Police Department.



Joe Carney, left, of the Livingston County Community Alliance delivers red barrel drop boxes last month to Michael Sanborn of Hudson Pharmacy, a member of the Lenawee Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition at the Community Action Agency office in Adrian. The barrels are to be set up May 1 to receive unwanted drugs at the Lenawee County Sheriff's Department and the Adrian, Tecumseh and Hudson police departments. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sheriff Jack Welsh worked with the Lenawee Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition and the Livingston County Community Alliance to design the permanent drug take back program. Periodic take-back events are not enough, Welsh said. Prescription drugs can fall into the hands of young people and others after a death in a family or when prescriptions are changed or left over. "The cost to our community is high and the Big Red Barrel Drop Boxes are one way we can make drugs less available for abuse, addiction and overdose deaths," Welsh stated in the press release. Medicines that languish in home cabinets create a public health and safety concern because they are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse and abuse, said the coalition press release. More Americans currently abuse prescription drugs than use cocaine, hallucinogens and heroin combined, according to the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Studies show a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including home medicine cabinets. In 2011, the Lenawee Health Network surveyed local youth and discovered that 15 percent of ninth through 12th-graders reported having used medications not prescribed for them in order to get high or feel good. Ten percent of those youth said they got them from a friend. Five percent answered "a parent gave them to me," and 22 percent said they got them from another family member. Two percent said they took the drugs from a friend or family member, three percent said they bought them from a friend and four percent said they bought them from someone else.

By the numbers

Statistics about Lenawee County high school students and prescription drug abuse:

15

Percentage of local high school students who reported using medications not prescribed for them in order to get high

5

Percentage who said they get the drugs from a parent

22

Percentage who said they get the drugs from another family member

10

Percentage who said they get the drugs from a friend