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Network Calls Attention To Continuing Problem Of Prescription Drug Abuse

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By Rashmi Thapaliya

Wichita Mountains Prevention Network observed Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness Day Wednesday as a part of this year's National Prevention Week.

Mayor Pro Tem Doug Wells started the program by signing a proclamation. He thanked the Lawton/Fort Sill Community Coalition (LFSCC) Prescription Drug Committee and Wichita Mountains Prevention network for the work they are doing.

The network also delivered 24 medicine lock boxes to Philip Sharp, director of Southern Oklahoma Treatment Services, that will be given to clients at no charge to store their prescription medications. Namon Melvin, LFSCC committee chairman, said storing the prescription drugs in a safe place can help save lives.

"It is important to be aware of the proper storage and proper use of prescription drugs so that they do not get into the wrong hands," Melvin said. "Saturday is the Trash Off event when people can take their unused and out-of-date prescription medicines to the drop box for safe disposal."

There will be a drop-off box at McMahon Auditorium's parking lot, 801 NW Ferris, Saturday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Anton Wohlers, LFSCC committee vice chairman, pointed out the importance of family members and friends in helping raise awareness about prescription drug abuse.

"People usually get hold of prescription drugs from their friends and families," Wohlers said. "We need ambassadors in the community to spread the word. If it is a friend or a family member that spreads the word then it will have more impact on people."

Lisa Barnes, the network's executive director, said the group has applied for funds to remain as regional prevention coordinator in Region 11, and area of seven counties: Cotton, Comanche, Tillman, Jefferson, Jackson, Harmon and Stephens.

"Since we have started working in Comanche County, the statistics have shown that the death rate from prescription drug abuse has lowered," Barnes said. "We have applied for the Regional Prevention Coordination Grant for Region 10 and 11 and we have 50 letters of support from partners with application."



From left, Namon Melvin, Lawton/Fort Sill Community Coalition (LFSCC) Prescription Drug Committee chairman; Philip Sharp, Southern Oklahoma Treatment Services direction; and Anton Wohlers, LFSCC Prescription Drug Committee vice chairman hold medicine lock boxes during a program organized by Wichita Mountains Prevention Network as apart of National Prevention Week.