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OP-ED: Lock Your Meds

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When Americans think of the war on drugs, they are likely to think of the anti-drug campaigns from 1980's. We can see and hear the commercials in our mind – this is your brain on drugs with the sound of the egg sizzling in the background. At the time, no one thought that fighting the war on drugs would begin in your own medicine cabinet. Unfortunately, that's exactly where we are today because it is too easy for prescribed prescription drugs to fall into our kid's hands.

The statistics speak for themselves. More than three million teens in the United States abuse prescription drugs. The problem of drug use without a medical purpose among our youth is only growing worse: prescription drug abuse has risen in prevalence even as the abuse of illicit drugs has declined.

Abuse of prescription drugs can be just as dangerous as illegal drugs – the big difference is that kids tend to think they are safe and are easier to get. There is a direct link between perception of harm and use of a substance or drug.

Children don't have to go to the streets or to a dealer to find prescription drugs; the biggest threat is an unsecured medicine cabinet in our own homes. Gaining access to its contents typically calls for nothing more difficult than sliding open a mirrored door.

Seventy percent of children who abuse prescription drugs admit to getting them from friends and family, often taken from the home medicine cabinet without that person's knowledge. A recent study from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) said that teens find it easier to get their hands on prescription drugs than it is to get their hands on beer.

In Ohio, the availability of prescribed drugs like OxyContin, Vicodin and Percocet is increasing as more people seek prescription remedies for pain relief. As reported in the Partnership for a Drug Free America's annual tracking study, in 2006: 1 in 5 teens has abused a prescription pain medication and 1 in 5 report abusing prescription stimulants and tranquilizers.

We can all do more to prevent prescription drug abuse. The first step is to become educated about the problem. The second step is to get the community involved by inviting all to join us in spreading the word.

The National Family Partnership, together with Alpharma Pharmaceuticals, it has designated October 27 as "Lock Your Meds" Day, to raise awareness and provide parents with action steps to prevent children's prescription drug abuse.

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Red Ribbon Celebration

College Initiative to Reduce
High Risk Drinking

Ohio Resource Network
Clearinghouse

Statewide Prevention
Coalition Association

Parents Who Host, Lose The Most:
Don't be a party to teenage drinking

Ohio Center for
Coalition Excellence

Know!

Youth Philanthropy
Council

www.DrugFreeActionAlliance.org

“Lock Your Meds Day” urges parents to take a five-part pledge: promising to talk to your children about prescription drugs, set clear rules for behavior, lock up your medicines, take inventory and keep track of your medicines, and encourage others to follow the exact same guidelines.

To help parents, the campaign website www.nfp.org/lockyourmeds includes easy-to-use resources such as a home medicine inventory card, the online pledge, and downloadable guidelines on how to properly dispose of old and unused prescription medicines.

Sincerely,

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