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2015 Operation Medicine Drop a Success for North Carolina

Insurance Commissioner Wayne Goodwin is pleased to announce that the 2015 Operation Medicine Drop was the most successful medication take-back campaign held in North Carolina since coordinated take-back efforts began in 2010. From March 15 through March 21, people turned in more than 15.4 million doses of unused or expired medications for safe disposal at more than 220 events across the state.

"Approximately 17,000 pounds of medicines and prescription drugs will not end up in the wrong hands because of this year's Operation Medicine Drop," Goodwin said. "I applaud the agencies running this year's events, and I thank the public for helping prevent poisonings, drug abuse and water contamination by turning in medications for safe disposal."

Medications are the leading cause of child poisoning, with more than 67,000 children going to an emergency room for medicine poisoning each year, according to a study by Safe Kids Worldwide.

During Operation Medicine Drop events, people drop off over-the-counter drugs, prescriptions, samples and pet medications, and law enforcement partners help dispose of the medications in the same secure way they dispose of other drug items. Drugs should not be flushed or thrown away in the garbage because they may contaminate water sources.

A partnership of the N.C. Department of Insurance, Safe Kids North Carolina, the State Bureau of Investigation, Riverkeepers Alliance and other agencies, Operation Medicine Drop events have retrieved and destroyed approximately 90 million doses of medications at 2,000 events since 2010.

To help prevent poisonings when taking care of children, follow these tips:

- Store and lock all medicines and household cleaning products in cabinets out of the reach and sight of children.
- Keep children where you can see them at all times, even when you go to answer the door or telephone. Never leave young children alone.
- Do not leave poisons on a counter or in an unlocked cabinet.
- Never carry something that can be poisonous, such as a medicine, in a purse where children may find it.
- Place safety latches on drawers or cabinets, and child-resistant caps on bottles, to keep poisons out of the hands of children.
- Clean out your medicine cabinets of all unused and expired medications, and bring them to an Operation Medicine Drop event or permanent drop box near you for proper disposal.

To learn more about Operation Medicine Drop or find a permanent medication drop box near you, go to www.ncsafekids.org.

SBA Announces Strategic Partnership with North Carolina Veteran's Business Association

The U.S. Small Business Administration North Carolina District signed a Strategic Alliance Memorandum (SAM) with the North Carolina Veteran's Business Association (NCVetBiz) on March 11, 2015. The purpose of this agreement is to develop and foster mutual understanding and a working relationship between the SBA and NCVetBiz in order to strengthen and expand small business development for veterans in North Carolina.

"North Carolina is home to over 84,000 veteran-owned businesses. SBA is committed to helping veterans and the military community. SBA has a Veteran's Business Outreach Center, and special financing and government contracting programs," said North Carolina District Director Lynn Douthett. "This partnership will further support those who have served their country and choose an entrepreneurial path."

"NCVetBiz is excited about this strategic partnership," said CJ Scarlet, President. "As the leading organization dedicated to serving all veterans in commerce in North Carolina, we appreciate the leverage this partnership brings. This relationship enables us to advance our mission, which, in turn, positively impacts the economy of our state."

The mission of the North Carolina Veteran's Business Association is to support, educate, and connect all Veterans in commerce in North Carolina with resources to become successful in business.

SBA North Carolina District and its resource partners provide capital, counseling services and contracting opportunities to entrepreneurs and small business owners to start and expand small businesses that create new jobs.

The SAM will remain in effect for two years.

Better Business Bureau Releases 2014 Year-end Report

Consumer inquiries soar by 34%; complaints decrease by 3%

The Better Business Bureau has released its annual report for 2014 for consumer activity related to businesses located in the BBB's 20 county service area in the Southern Piedmont of N.C. and S.C. This report includes statistics on consumer requests for business reviews, consumer complaints, settlement rate for complaints filed, and the top five types of businesses that generated the most complaints.

Consumer requests for business reviews (inquiries): In 2014, consumers requested 3,027,301 reviews on local businesses, compared to 2,253,263 consumer requests in 2013, a 34 percent increase. "The good news is that consumers are checking out businesses in record numbers," said BBB President Tom Bartholomy. "They have gotten the message about how important it is to do their homework before they sign a contract and that will make them less likely to be ripped off."

Consumer complaints: In 2014, consumers filed 13,642 complaints against area businesses, down from 13,993 complaints filed in 2013, a three percent decrease. "BBB is pleased to see a decrease in consumer complaints filed against businesses," said Bartholomy. "When consumers check out companies before hiring them, they are more likely to do business with a company that provides quality service and has a proven track record for resolving customer disputes."

Complaint settlement rate: The overall settlement rate for all complaints filed by consumers in 2014 reached a record high of 91 percent, up from 90 percent in 2013.

The top five types of businesses with the most complaints were:

- 2014
 - 1) Auto dealers – new cars
 - 2) Collection agencies
 - 3) Television – cable and satellite
 - 4) Auto repair services
 - 5) Auto dealers – used cars
- 2013:
 - 1) Auto dealers – new cars
 - 2) Television – cable and satellite
 - 3) Collection agencies
 - 4) Auto repair services
 - 5) Auto dealers – used cars

Consumers can visit www.bbb.org to check out businesses or to file a complaint against a business.

Storytime at the Library

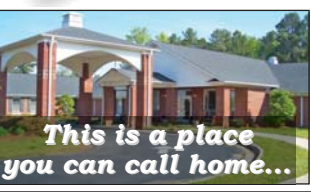
Every Tuesday the public is invited to enjoy storytime at the Hampton B. Allen Library. The program begins at 10 a.m.



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