

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition Encourages Seniors to Lock Up Their Meds**

Lock Your Meds is a national, multi-media campaign designed to reduce prescription drug abuse by making adults aware that they are the "unwitting suppliers" of prescription medications being used in unintended ways, especially by young people.

On February 28<sup>th</sup> a presentation was conducted by Dr. Sharon Harris, SAFE Glen Cove Coalition Co-Chair on Lock Up Your Meds campaign to members of the Glen Cove Senior Center. Annually, Dr. Harris collaborates with Christine Rice, Executive Director of the Senior Center and Eric Shuman, the Activity Coordinator of the Senior Center to continue educating its' members on keeping their medications safe from unwanted use.

The abuse of prescription medication by youth and teens has been on the rise for the past decade as teens are under the misperception that prescription medications provide a legal and "medically safe high." However, what teens don't realize is that doctors prescribe certain medications based on their patient's age, weight, and condition. Thus, when those medications are consumed by someone other than the patient it can present a serious health hazard.

The following facts about youth prescription drug abuse were discussed:

- One in four teens abuse prescription drugs.
- Prescription drugs are the #1 choice among 12–13-year-olds.
- One in seven boys and one in five girls has shared or borrowed a prescription drug.
- More teens have been offered prescription drugs than other illegal ones, except marijuana.
- Four out of 10 teens believe prescription medicines are less addictive and dangerous than street drugs.
- 7.3 million young people believe there's "nothing wrong" with using non-prescribed medicines periodically and that parents "don't care as much if you get caught."
- More than one-third say they feel peer pressure to take prescription drugs.
- Almost half of teens (47%) say it is easy to get prescription drugs from a parent or grandparent's medicine cabinet.

Dr. Harris went on to discuss "Generation RX" and the reasons why young people take prescription medication. Some reasons are psychological- Pleasure seeking; Wanting to fit in with groups of friends

and are in search of acceptance and bonding; Youth do not realize the risks of taking medicines that have not been prescribed specifically for them or the danger of not following a prescription's directions; Prescription medication is easier to obtain than illegal drugs. Other reasons are misperceptions about the drug and its negative health consequences- Lack of information and a carefree attitude toward the risks involved in using prescription medicines properly ; Belief that prescription medicines are much safer to use than illegal drugs; Prescription pain relievers cannot be addictive; There is nothing wrong with using prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription.

These impacts can be particularly harmful to a developing adolescent brain and body. The human brain continues to develop into early- to mid-twenties. During adolescence, the pre-frontal cortex further develops to enable people to set priorities, formulate strategies, allocate attention, and control impulses. The outer mantle of the brain also experiences a burst of development, helping us to become more sophisticated at processing abstract information and understanding rules, laws, and codes of social conduct. Drug use impacts perception—a skill adolescent brains are actively trying to cultivate—and can fracture developing neural pathways. Additionally, as brains are becoming hardwired during adolescence, the pathways being reinforced are the ones that stick. If those pathways include addiction, the impact may lead to life-long challenges.

As with any type of mind-altering drug, prescription drug misuse and abuse can affect judgment and inhibition, putting adolescents at heightened risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, misusing other kinds of drugs, and engaging in additional risky behaviors.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), research shows that kids who continue to learn about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs than those who are not taught about the dangers. Only 22 percent of teens report discussing the risks of abusing any prescription drug without a doctor's prescription with their parents.

Seniors were encouraged to speak with their grandchildren about this important issue. They were advised to keep their medications out of site like kitchen counters and bedside tables and to be aware of what is in their medicine cabinets in case something goes missing.

Members of the Senior Center, and all Glen Cove residents are encouraged to dispose of unwanted prescription medications at the Police Department year-round or attend the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition's annual Shed Your Med's event on May 20<sup>th</sup> at the Police Department to properly dispose of prescription medications and medical supplies that are no longer needed or have expired. This safe disposal of unused and expired drugs supports the need to eliminate the risk of these drugs getting into the hands of young people.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a United States federal-government research institute whose mission is to "lead the Nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction". For more information please visit [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov).

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," to educate and update the community regarding prescription drug use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about prescription drug use and the Opioid Epidemic at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).

For more information about the Lock Up Your Meds campaign please visit [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov). or [www.lockyourmeds.org](http://www.lockyourmeds.org).