



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Shed Your Meds Safely

ELAINE PHILLIPS May 2, 2017

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Protecting our water has been a topic of much discussion lately, and for good reason. Clean water is essential to our survival, both physically and economically.

We've taken some important steps forward in the recent State Budget to ensure clean water, including a record \$2.5 billion investment to help repair and improve existing water infrastructure, expand use of clean water technology and install sewers to help reduce nitrogen pollution.

But you don't need to be a public policy maker, a scientist or an engineer to protect the water. There are simple steps everyone can take to help.

Safely disposing of your old medications is a quick, easy and effective way to keep our water clean. Unfortunately, many people aren't sure how.

For decades, proper disposal meant simply flushing your old pills down the toilet. However, that's no longer the case; scientists discovered that traces of those substances were making their way into the waterways, in part because our wastewater treatment facilities were not designed to handle pharmaceutical waste.

As a result, “safe disposal” now means bringing unused medications to take-back programs so that they can be incinerated.

On Earth Day, my office held a ‘Shed the Meds’ program with the Nassau County Police Department and the Manhasset Community Coalition Against Substance Abuse to help people get rid of their old, unwanted drugs. In just three hours, over 200 people came and safely disposed of thousands of pain pills, antibiotics and other types of medications, all of which were taken by the police for safe disposal. In total, we kept over 700 pounds of drugs from polluting the water or falling into the wrong hands.

We will definitely be holding similar programs again in the future. But you don’t need to wait until then; there are a number of places you can go to get rid of your old prescriptions right now.

Many local police precincts have secure drop boxes where you can safely dispose of old medications. The Nassau County Police stations in Williston Park, Manhasset and Elmont each have disposal boxes where you can drop off medications 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Village police departments in Port Washington, Old Westbury and Floral Park also collect unwanted drugs for safe disposal.

Like so many things in life, little things make a big difference. When you clean out your medicine cabinet, don’t just flush them down the toilet or throw them in the garbage. Dispose of them safely. It will go a long way to keep our water clean and our communities safe.