



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## **RITCHIE, GOUVERNEUR HOSPITAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TEAM UP TO HELP LOCAL RESIDENTS “SHED THE MEDS”**

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In an effort to protect the environment and eliminate the potential for abuse of unwanted prescription medications, State Senator Patty Ritchie is teaming up with Gouverneur Hospital, the Gouverneur Police Department and the St. Lawrence County Sheriff's Department to host a "Shed the Meds" drug take-back event on Wednesday, May 11th at Gouverneur Hospital.

"Medications—including opioids and narcotics—that are sitting in the cabinets of people throughout our region, if they end up in the wrong hands, have the potential to be gateway drugs to the abuse of illegal substances, namely heroin," said Senator Ritchie.

"In addition, improper disposal of these substances pollutes our waterways and often times can be accidentally ingested by children, pets or the elderly. This event is a great opportunity for anyone with unused or expired prescription drugs to get rid of them, and help protect the public health at the same time."

The drug take-back event is one of many activities scheduled throughout National Hospital Week (May 8 - 14). On Wednesday, May 11, local residents will be able to drop off unwanted or expired prescription medications at the new hospital lobby at Gouverneur Hospital from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

"Our Hospital has one goal—and that's to keep people healthy," said Marlinda LaValley, CEO. "We all know that abusing prescription drugs, and disposing of them irresponsibly isn't just unhealthy, it's dangerous. As we celebrate National Hospital Week, I can think of no better time to invite the public to be part of our effort to promote a healthy lifestyle."

It's estimated that 52 million people in the United States, over the age of 12 have used prescription drugs non-medically in their lifetime. Those who abuse prescription drugs are nearly 20 times more likely to become addicted to heroin.

"Right here in St. Lawrence County, as well as across the country, drug abuse is on the rise," said St. Lawrence County Sheriff Kevin Wells. "Not only can prescription drugs lead abusers to use other dangerous substances—like heroin—those who leave pills lingering in their medicine cabinets put themselves at risk for theft and other related crimes. We are proud to take part in this effort to curtail prescription drug abuse, as well as protect the public health."

“Far too often, we encounter situations where a person is battling an addiction to heroin that started with the abuse of prescription drugs,” said Village of Gouverneur Police Chief Laurina Greenhill. “If we’re going to win the fight against this deadly drug, we need to get to the root of the problem—and this event will help with that effort.”

In past years, Senator Ritchie has hosted other drug take-back events throughout the region she represents. As a result, nearly 400 pounds of unused and expired medications have been disposed of.

St. Lawrence County residents unable to attend the May 11th drug take-back event can dispose of medications seven days a week at the Public Safety Building, located at 48 Court Street in Canton.