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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release - June 8, 2009

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DON'T FLUSH YOUR DRUGS

The State of New York has announced a new awareness campaign called "Don't Flush Your Drugs", which focuses on keeping pharmaceuticals out of New York's waterways. The Niagara County Department of Health is concerned about the health of the community and supports this effort to reduce and eliminate disposal of drugs in wastewater by raising public awareness about proper management of unused prescription and over-the-counter medications.

Pharmaceutical contamination of our waterways is now emerging as a potentially significant environmental problem. Pharmaceuticals can reach our waterways from a variety of sources, including the flushing of unused drugs by households and institutions, discharge from drug manufacturing facilities, and from drugs that pass through our bodies relatively unchanged and are flushed into sanitary sewer systems. Typical wastewater treatment is not designed to remove pharmaceuticals. Residual (left-over) pharmaceuticals could pose a potential risk of contamination to our public drinking water supplies.

Our drinking water in Niagara County is of high quality, but keeping unused drugs out of our waters will help to maintain or improve that quality. The federal government, via the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is currently studying this issue vigorously, and has found no evidence to date of a public health concern with drinking water. However, because of the potential risk, studies continue, and we need to be proactive and do our part in keeping pharmaceuticals out of our waterways.

The New York State Departments of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), Health (NYSDOH) and Education (NYSED) are all working on addressing the proper disposal of drugs. Last year, a group of stakeholders under the leadership of the Niagara County Refuse Disposal District sponsored a pharmaceutical drop off day on September 22, 2008. **The next drop-off event is scheduled for September 26, 2009 at Mt. St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.** For information about bringing medications to the drop-off site, contact the Niagara County Refuse Disposal District Office at 434-6568. Details on this event will be forthcoming throughout the summer.

While waiting for any Pharmaceutical collection event, keep all medications in a safe, secure place in your home out of reach of children and young people to prevent accidental ingestion or illicit recreational drug use. Proper storage and disposal of drugs can prevent accidental overdose and death in young people for whom the drugs were not intended.

Currently, state and federal initiatives are underway to provide a permanent and convenient means to collect and dispose of unused drugs. For the time being everyone can do their part by joining the "Don't Flush Your Drugs" campaign.

To learn more, log on to the NYSDEC website at: <http://www.dontflushyourdrugs.net>

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