

LOCALNEWS

Abuse prevention event set for Friday

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

With prescription drug abuse on the rise locally, an alumni group of Borderland Substance Abuse Court will host an event highlighting the dangers of the abuse and what can be done to prevent the problem.

A two-part event is scheduled for Friday beginning with an unused and/or outdated prescription drop off from 1-6 p.m. at Rainy Lake Medical Center hospital campus followed by a community presentation and picnic from 4-6 p.m. at Smokey Bear Park. Both events are free to the public.

The events are part of the alumni group's effort to give back to the community. Lisa Santee, problem solving court coordinator, told The Journal that since its beginning in Koochich-

ing County in February 2005, more than 100 people have taken part in the Borderland Substance Abuse Court, commonly referred to as drug court.

"The alumni group is a great group of people who really want to give back to the community," Santee said.

Friday's event will welcome anyone who has unused and/or outdated prescription drugs at the hospital where law enforcement officers will be present. Later on, a family-oriented picnic meal and face painting for the kids will feature a presentation from District Court Judge Charles LeDuc and personal testimonies from others.

Santee said prescription drug abuse continues to grow not only nationally, but right here in Borderland, too.

"We are seeing more and more (prescription drug) cases come through the court system," she said.

Santee said the easy access to prescription drugs is what can make this issue so alarming.

"People are getting it out of their medicine cabinets and their friends, family and neighbor's medicine cabinets," she said. "Surveys from students at the school tell us kids are easily getting drugs from their cabinets at home."

Local police reports often include thefts of prescription drugs from homes, which can be a real theft, or a report made by someone addicted to or selling prescription drugs in order to get more prescription drugs than a doctor would normally prescribe at once.

A Medline Plus website states prescription drug

abuse is "a serious and growing problem" and an estimated 20 percent of people in the United States have used prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons.

And, Santee said, it's people of all ages who are abusing the drugs.

"It is teens, older adults, everyone," she said. "It really is scary how fast it's growing."

According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, teens who abuse prescription drugs are twice as likely to use alcohol, five times more likely to use marijuana, and 12 to 20 times more likely to use illegal street drugs such as heroin, Ecstasy and cocaine than teens who do not abuse prescription drugs.

Friday's event will include a presentation from Kevin Evenson, director of

alcohol and drug abuse division of the Department of Human Services. Evenson will talk about the prevalence and impact prescription drug abuse can have on people and their families, Santee said.

In addition, LeDuc will discuss what is seen locally and a testimony from someone who was formerly addicted to prescription drugs will be given.

"I think it will be very educational," Santee said. "People will learn how they can safeguard themselves and their community."

Santee encouraged everyone to attend Friday's event to learn more about the problem and become educated on how they can help.

"As a whole, the community can really play a part in the prevention piece," she said. "There is something we can do about it."


Gas price limbo continues

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Average retail gasoline prices in Minnesota have fallen 3.9 cents in the past week, averaging \$3.60 per gallon Thursday, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 2,856 gas outlets in Minnesota. This compares with the national average that has decreased 2.3 cents per gallon in the last week to \$3.59 per gallon, according to gasoline price website MinnesotaGasPrices.com.

Prices in International Falls Sunday ranged from \$3.65 to \$3.74 per gallon, according to the website.

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