

THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW

...that I'm so happy and relieved to have completed the Environmental Health course that I was taking this past semester. Now that I'm actually done with it and had time to take a deep breath, I have come to realize just how interconnected everything really is in the world around us. There is a system to everything in our lives. Nothing acts in isolation without having an impact on everything else.

I'm sure it has something to do with the particular things that impact me professionally in my work here in Merrimac, but in spite of all the news things I learned about the air, the water, all forms of waste disposal and the rules and laws that govern them, I persisted in choosing to address medication disposal and its total impact on the environment as my part in our final project for the course.

This is one time that you can actually see what our final course project is by going to www.greenhealthcare.info on the internet. Our group created a website with various aspects of environmental pollution and solutions being used to correct or lessen the impact on the environment up to and including green design of health care facilities.

My section is Pharmaceuticals and talks about the problems, the concerns about medicines that have been flushed or dumped down the drain and their long-term impact upon the water resources and solid waste disposal. I located many links to activities around the country as other areas work to make where we live, healthier for all.

When you see visuals of water faucets with pills pouring out the spout, it makes you stop and think of why is this happening? Actually it's quite simple—the complex process for purifying our drinking water or waste water has nothing that recognizes or removes any medications so the medications settle in the sludge or flow freely out the tap.

And don't think having your own well water makes you safe. All those backyard dumps have decomposed into the ground water that feeds your well. I trust that you have your well water tested regularly to be sure you are not

getting unprescribed medications as a bonus!

The day before I wrote this column, I had attend a public health event in Gloucester where there was a presentation about a medication take-back program that is planning a regional event this fall that I'm sure you will all be hearing more about sometime in the coming months.

However, taking back unused or outdated medications is actually only part of the solution. This too is a *systems* thing and must bring together all parties; from the producers of the medications (*the drug companies*), those who prescribe the medications (*your health care provider*), those who distribute the medications (*the pharmacies*), and *you* (who take the medications) to develop a sensible plan that perhaps even limits the amounts dispensed for new prescriptions so that waste is not created when the medication is ineffective or causes an adverse event. This calls for a *cradle to grave* approach (*manufacturer to end-user*) for a solution. Stay tuned—there's more to come!

Watch out for those ticks—getting lots of positive Lyme disease reports back recently! ***Tick checks daily are a must for both you and your pets!!***

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