



KEN OSBURN / Staff

Greenville County residents dropped off nearly 800 pounds of drugs at St. Francis Downtown and McAlister Square as part of Project Rx last Saturday. The event aims to keep medicines out of the region's waterways.

# 400 TOSS DRUGS IN PROJECT RX

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752  
pounds  
of meds  
collected

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More than 752 pounds of expired medications recently were kept out of the region's waterways through a county-wide collection called Project Rx.

Old antibiotics, hormones and narcotics were dropped off at the drive-through event instead of being dumped down the drain where they eventually work their way into rivers and creeks, potentially affecting

wildlife and the people downstream who drink the water.

Researchers have found everything from antidepressants to hormones in the nation's waterways and are investigating their impact on the environment and human health.

"This is a growing problem, not just in Greenville or this state, but nationally," said Stacey Flax, spokeswoman for Renewable Water Resources, or ReWa, formerly the Western Carolina Regional Sewer Authority and a sponsor of the event.

"We don't want to flush this stuff because eventually it will get into our waterways," she said. "And there's only so much that waste water treatment can do to remove those (drugs) from the water."

Nearly 400 residents participated, with many saying they had been searching for such a collection or had moved from a state like New Jersey that had one, Flax said. So many turned out, in fact, that organizers were forced to buy more

See **DRUGS** on page 7B

## DRUGS

FROM PAGE 1B

buckets 30 minutes after opening, she said.

The county's first expired-drug collection last November yielded more than 400 pounds of old medications. This time, drugs were collected at two locations - McAlister Square and St. Francis Downtown - with nearly twice as many drugs dropped off.

Residents brought everything from antibiotics and birth control pills to diabe-

tes drugs and pain killers, some dating back 40 years while others were from South America and Asia, Flax said. There also were outdated vitamins, supplements and over-the-counter medications, she said.

While most were in pill form, there also were liquids, powders and creams, she said. All are incinerated by law enforcement officers.

About 60 volunteers were on hand for the event, which also keeps the drugs out of the hands of teens and others, Flax said.

"It's very important for the community to tackle this issue proactively," she said.

"A lot more has to be done to raise community awareness about the potential harms of improper disposal."

Along with ReWa, the event was sponsored by Bon Secours St. Francis Health System, Carolina Institute for Community Policing, Greenville County Sheriff's Office, Greenville Family Partnership, Greenville Hospital System, Greenville Safe Communities Drug-Free Alliance, Greenville Technical College, Upstate Forever and Whole Foods Market.

Another collection is expected this fall.