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**King City Rustler**

Residents can dispose of unwanted prescription drugs safely

SOUTH COUNTY — New bins for unwanted or expired prescription medications have been installed at the King City, Greenfield and Gonzales police departments, providing a way for residents to properly dispose of these drugs before they fall into the wrong hands.

The drug take-back bins are available weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. inside the police station lobbies at 415 Bassett St., King City; 599 El Camino Real, Greenfield; and 109 Fourth St., Gonzales.

All three bins are funded through a grant with the help from Drs. Casey Grover and Reb Close, emergency care physicians from Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula. The husband-and-wife duo are part of the Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative, which offers resources to help prevent prescription drug abuse, and partnered with Sun Street Centers and other organizations to bring these bins to South County.

“Working with Dr. Close and Dr. Grover, they brought us the ability to file for a grant for take-back bins in the South County area because there’s such a national epidemic of opioid addiction,” said Darlene Acosta, South County prevention coordinator for Sun Street Centers.

According to Acosta, 91 people die every day from opioid overdose in the United States, and nearly half of those deaths involve a prescription drug. She said more than 50 percent of juveniles who are stopped by police have prescription drugs on them as well.

“There is an overabundance of pain medications out there,” Acosta said.

Residents may use the take-back bins to safely dispose of all unwanted prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications.

The bin does not accept flammable liquid, illegal drugs, needles and medical waste or equipment.

Through a two-year grant, Salinas Valley Recycles is in charge of removing the waste. Guidelines for safe disposal were provided by the California Product Stewardship Council.

“We really want to get the word out,” Acosta said about the new bins. “People call me often wanting to know how to dispose of their drugs, and this will be a way that will always be available to them to do that — rather than flushing them or them getting back out on the street.”