

Tar Heel Footprints in Health Care

*A periodic feature that recognizes individuals whose efforts—
often unsung—enhance the health of North Carolinians*

Troy Roberson

Corporal Troy Roberson works as a community police officer for the Pittsboro Police Department and serves as chair of Chatham Drug Free, a county-wide coalition to prevent and reduce underage drinking, tobacco use, and drug use. As chair of Chatham Drug Free, Roberson learned about the epidemic of prescription drug misuse and how law enforcement agencies elsewhere have been able to assist in the safe collection and disposal of over-the-counter and prescription medications. Thus, Roberson was enthusiastic when Safe Kids North Carolina organized the first Operation Medicine Drop event in March 2010. In addition to public events that educate residents about the potential for abuse or misuse of medications in the home and the environmental impact of trashing or flushing pills, Operation Medicine Drop also offers collection sites for safe disposal of unused or expired medications.

Believing this event would benefit the residents of Chatham County, Roberson encouraged the Pittsboro Police Department to participate in Operation Medicine Drop despite procedural barriers regarding the collection, holding, and disposal of medications. Commenting on Roberson's work, Kelly Ransdell, director of Safe Kids North Carolina, says, "[Roberson is] the epitome of what we love to find in our local partners. Rather than doing the bare minimum, he reached outside the box to engage valuable partnerships."

The Operation Medicine Drop events were very successful. From 2010 to 2012, Chatham County col-



lected a total of 46,303 dosage units of medication. But Roberson also recognized the need for a permanent collection box so that residents did not need to hold onto medications between take-back events. With the support of Chatham Drug Free, Roberson raised funds and organized the effort to install a permanent collection box in the lobby of the Pittsboro Police Department building. Since the permanent collection box was put in place in June 2012, the Pittsboro Police Department has collected 128,000 dosage units of medication.

The drop boxes offered by the Pittsboro Police Department offer a safe means to remove unused or expired medications from the home and to prevent accidental poisoning or misuse, and they complement the ongoing efforts of Chatham Drug Free to educate parents and students about the dangers and legal consequences of illicit drug use. Beth Lamanna, a professor at the University of North Carolina School of Nursing, member of Chatham Drug Free, and a resident of Chatham County, says Roberson "truly understands the strong connection between community safety and the health of a community's residents. He embodies community policing at its best." **NCMJ**

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