Washington Dad Works to Keep The Lid on Prescription Drugs

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : December 22, 2011 at 5:10 am

Chewelha, WA - According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, thousands of kids are hospitalized every year, and some die, because they take medications not prescribed for them. The hectic holidays are a good time to keep an extra-close eye on prescription drugs, experts warn.

Jim Tilla of Chewelah, north of Spokane, knows this all too well. His daughter became hooked as a teenager on pills she stole from her ailing grandparents.

"Coming with the holidays, the homes are a big issue because grandmas that aren't normally seen - grandpas, and people that are sick - get to be seen. And the last thing that anybody's thinking about is someone in their own family looking through the medications."

Tilla enlisted the Chewelah police chief, school officials and counselors, pharmacists and others to help create Prescription for Life, a nonprofit group that works to keep other people's medicines out of the hands of kids and to advocate for safe disposal of unused prescription drugs in Washington. He says he has spoken to at least 1,000 young people in the last few years.

The family made a grueling five-year journey through drug addiction and recovery. Tilla's daughter is now 26, healthy and drug-free. But he says in other homes, parents sometimes don't have a clue what their teens are up to - or how easy it is for them to find and steal prescription pills.

"We found out some of the things they were taking were diet pills, liver pills, high blood pressure pills - different things that they'd just find, with no knowledge of what was going to happen when they took them."

Tilla says teens have told him they figured since doctors prescribe them, that medications are safer than illegal drugs. His advice to parents is never to take their own prescriptions in front of young children because it can inadvertently send a message that they're okay to try - even under other circumstances.

More information is available on the group's website, www.rx4lifechewelah.org.