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NEWS RELEASE

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DEA'S NATIONAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY SETS NEW RECORD

Denver Field Division Offices Take Back More Prescription Drugs Than Any Previous Event in the Region

WASHINGTON, D.C. and Denver, CO – Americans turned in more unused prescription drugs at DEA's National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day than on any of the previous ten events since it began in 2010, demonstrating the value of this service.

Last weekend the DEA and over 4,200 of its state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners collected 893,498 pounds of unwanted medicines—about 447 tons—at almost 5,400 sites spread through all 50 states, beating its previous high of 390 tons in the spring of 2014 by 57 tons, or more than 114,000 pounds.

The Denver Field Division – comprised of the states of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and Montana – also set new marks. DEA and state, local and tribal law enforcement partners in Colorado collected 24,170 pounds, in Utah collected 6,763 pounds, in Wyoming collected 1,477 pounds and in Montana collected 2,920 pounds of unwanted prescription medications. The total collected for the region is 35,330 pounds, or approximately 17.7 tons, of medicines that were prevented from being diverted for abuse, misuse, or accidental poisoning.

The majority of prescription drug abusers report in surveys that they get their drugs from friends and family. Americans understand that cleaning out old prescription drugs from medicine cabinets, kitchen drawers, and bedside tables reduces accidents, thefts, and the misuse and abuse of these medicines, including the opioid painkillers that accounted for 20,808 drug overdoses—78 a day—in 2014 (the most recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Eight out of 10 new heroin users began by abusing prescription painkillers and moved to heroin when they could no longer obtain or afford those painkillers.

“These results show that more Americans than ever are taking the important step of cleaning out their medicine cabinets and making homes safe from potential prescription drug abuse or theft,” said DEA Acting Administrator Chuck Rosenberg. “Unwanted, expired or unused prescription medications are often an unintended catalyst for addiction. Take-Back events like these raise awareness of the opioid epidemic and offer the public a safe and anonymous way to help prevent substance abuse.”