

Expand drug drop in stores to help keep water pure

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By The Editorial Board



You know that King Kullen is America's first supermarket and you've passed along that fact to someone as a source of Long Island pride. Photo Credit: Ian J. Stark

By any measure, the first year of King Kullen's program to collect unused and expired drugs was a smashing success. The supermarket chain's customers dropped off more than 2,000 pounds of pharmaceuticals at its 11 pharmacies. That's a literal ton of drugs that never will be abused or flushed down a toilet and into our drinking and surface waters — and that's without a big publicity campaign.

King Kullen — which partnered with Citizens Campaign for the Environment, the Suffolk County Water Authority and Suez North America, the company that

manages Nassau's sewage treatment system — is now accepting narcotic drugs, which required approval by the Drug Enforcement Administration so police do not have to be present. That's a great move. Now it's time to expand even further. Chains like Target, CVS, Rite Aid and Walgreens should step up, too. Permanent drop-off sites are more effective than random one-day collection programs. And convenience matters, even for people who want to do the right thing; far-flung Long Island needs more than those 11 drop-off sites.

King Kullen's program costs \$50,000 for three years funded from a \$350,000 state pot for safe drug disposal. But there's no funding in the proposed 2016 budget. A permanent funding stream is needed, perhaps by requiring pharmaceutical companies to make contributions to a state fund equal to a percentage of their sales in New York.

Pharmaceuticals have been found in 40 percent of samples of Suffolk groundwater, part of our sole source aquifer. Damage to aquatic life has been documented, which creates concerns for the effects on humans. King Kullen's program must continue and be replicated. We should get medication from doctors, not the kitchen tap. — *The editorial board*

<http://ht.ly/YrR8g>