

## **Case Study - Big Y Grocery**

**Tolland, Connecticut  
Saturday, September 29, 2007**

**Host:** Big Y Grocery. Big Y® is a family owned and family oriented retail food company with 54 stores in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Twenty-seven (27) of the stores have pharmacies.

**Management Contact:** Director of Pharmacy

**Collection Site:** Tolland, Connecticut – in front of Wellness Center adjacent to pharmacy

**Collection Hours:** 10 – 2

### **Participation**

- 15 participants
- Volume: 20 gallons non-controlled, 5 gallons controlled
- Average of 1.77 gallons per participant
- 36% of items received were controlled

### **Background**

The Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC), through a Community Pharmacy Foundation grant, worked closely with the Big Y Director of Pharmacy (Mike Semanie) to develop and implement a one-day unwanted medication collection.

Mr. Semanie was first approached by NERC in January 2007 about the possibility of Big Y holding such an event. Mr. Semanie was immediately supportive but needed to secure the permission of his supervisor. Of especial interest, of course, was the potential financial exposure for Big Y. Based on prior experience, NERC assumed a maximum budget of \$3,000 for the hazardous waste hauler and another \$500 for the police. Mr. Semanie was quickly able to secure the agreement of Big Y to host an unwanted medication collection under these terms. Mr. Semanie accepted NERC's offer to take the lead in organizing the event; this included contacting the law enforcement agencies and a hazardous waste hauler, as well as being the site supervisor/coordinator during the collection.

A Saturday was selected because it is a high-volume day for the grocery store, but a relatively low-volume day for the pharmacy. And, past unwanted medication collections had demonstrated that turn-out on Saturdays was likely to be strong. Another factor influencing the date was the desire to hold the collection before the flu clinic season began in October.

NERC's sole role was to provide organizational and administrative support. This assistance was provided through the Community Pharmacy Foundation grant. No

direct financial support for the collection was provided. Thus, all expenses were the responsibility of Big Y.

## Planning

Timeline	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9
Decision/commitment to hold collection									
Site and date selection									
Secure agreement of law enforcement to participate									
Identify hazardous waste hauler, negotiate terms, sign contract									
Site visit with pharmacist & store manager to determine equipment, supply, storage, signage									
Develop marketing plan									
Implement marketing plan									
Collection event									

## Law Enforcement

Once a date was selected, NERC contacted the police to determine if they would be willing and able to provide overtime police to provide security for the collection.<sup>1</sup> A verbal agreement with the Sergeant in charge of the police in the area was followed by a draft letter agreement prepared by NERC. The Sergeant approved the letter and then Big Y put it on its letterhead and sent it to the Sergeant. One week before the collection, NERC confirmed that a police officer would be on site.

In addition, due to Connecticut state law pertaining to controlled substances, it was necessary for the state Division of Drug Control to provide an agent to participate in the event. This person's role would be to take custody of the controlled substances and to ensure their safety and destruction according to U.S. DEA requirements.

NERC contacted the Division of Drug Control to see if the agency would be willing to commit the necessary staff resources to participating in a Big Y collection in 2007. They quickly agreed to support such an event.

## Hazardous Waste Hauler

Big Y did not have an ongoing relationship with a hazardous waste hauler, nor did the medical waste company that it uses. As a result, NERC was asked to identify a hazardous waste hauler to provide the necessary services on their behalf. Clean

---

1. The hourly rate was \$58.50. The time commitment included the actual on-site time and one additional hour for travel to and from the store and doing paperwork. The total number of hours billed, therefore, was 6, for a total of \$351.

Harbors Environmental Services was identified based on its prior participation in pharmacy hosted unwanted medication collections in Connecticut.

Pricing, a draft contract, and sample certificate of insurance was obtained by NERC. NERC edited the contract to make it more specific to the type of collection being held and Clean Harbors accepted the edits. In addition, there was some negotiation about the pricing structure, specifically ensuring that Big Y would not be charged for containers, only for the cost of disposal and transportation.

The pricing agreement was as follows:



## Medicine Collection Quote

OCTOBER 2006-OCTOBER 2007

### SERVICE AND TREATMENT COSTS:

Setup fees below include labor, travel time, drums, packaging material, labels, placards, paperwork, and safety and spill control equipment required to transport the material in accordance with Federal and State laws and regulations.

◆ SET-UP FEE:	\$0.00
◆ CREW SIZE:	1 DRIVER
◆ COST PER DRUM OF MEDICATIONS:	
	\$350.00/55DM
	\$315.00/30DM
	\$215.00/15DM
	\$115.00/05DM

### NOTES:

- ◆ *There will be a \$200 Transportation fee per pickup.*
- ◆ *A variable energy and security fee currently at 11.5% will be applied to the total of the invoice.*

Big Y signed the contract with Clean Harbors with a price cap of \$3,000 unless authorization received to exceed that amount. It was agreed that should the public response to the collection warrant exceeding that limit that on the day of the event Big Y would authorize such a cost overrun.

Ultimately, a low turnout resulted in only 20 gallons of material being shipped for hazardous waste destruction. Thus, the actual cost for the hazardous waste hauler was \$572. This averages out to approximately \$29 per gallon and \$38 per participant.

By pre-arrangement, containers were delivered the day before and stored in the storage area for the grocery store. The following containers were delivered:

- 5 – 55 gallon (fiberboard)
- 5 – 30 gallon (fiberboard)
- 5 – 20 gallon (fiberboard)
- 5 – 5 gallon (plastic)

On the morning of the event, grocery store staff brought most of the containers to the pharmacy area for use during collection. Should more containers have been needed, grocery staff would have been asked to bring the additional containers from the storage area.

The hazardous waste company was scheduled to come to pick-up the medications at 2:30 p.m. (one-half hour after the close of the event). They were punctual. No paperwork needed to be signed or reviewed because under state law, and the terms of the contract, Clean Harbors Environmental was deemed the generator of the waste. Thus, once the hazardous waste hauler had removed the container with the unwanted medication and placed it in their truck(escorted by the police officer), there was no need for additional staff time or supervision. The hazardous waste hauler also removed the unused containers.

### **Site Visit**

NERC staff met with the Tolland pharmacist and the grocery store assistant manager to look at the site and determine the floor plan for the collection. The supplies and equipment that would be needed – from tables and chairs to signs to plastic bags – was reviewed and agreement reached with the assistant manager and pharmacist for the necessary supplies and equipment to be in place. It was also agreed that grocery store staff would be available to help set up and take down the collection site, as well as to move containers during the event should that be necessary. In addition, an assessment was made about where in the storeroom the empty hazardous waste drums would be stored prior to the event.

## Marketing

NERC prepared several marketing pieces for Big Y; however, most were not used. The marketing pieces that were prepared by NERC in draft were:

- Press release
- Display advertisement (paid newspaper advertisement)
- Sign for store
- Counter-top sign
- Flier/bag stuffer
- Question and answers fact sheet

The question and answers fact sheet was for use by pharmacy staff in responding to questions about the upcoming event.

Based on previous experience, NERC had proposed the following marketing strategy:

- 1) A press release be distributed to media outlets at least two weeks before the event.
- 2) A newspaper advertisement be placed local papers, at least three times in the



- 3) Post a large color sign made at the entrance to the store.
- 4) Distribute bag stuffers for all purchases, including the pharmacy, in the Tolland store, as well as stores in the area, for at least one week before the event.
- 5) Post an 8.5 x 11 black and white desktop sign at the

pharmacy counter publicizing the event.

Big Y made the decision that because it was a multi-hour event, rather than a multi-day event for example, that it would dedicate limited resources to promotion. The only promotion was conducted a week prior to the event and consisted of :

- 1) Posting a color sign at the entrance to the store, and
- 2) Putting stacks of fliers flat on the counter for customer pick-up at the pharmacy and at the grocery check out.

The Connecticut Division of Drug Control issued its own press release, also based on a draft release provided by NERC. This press release received coverage and resulted in a CBS affiliate television station interviewing the Director of the Division and airing a piece about the event the day before it was to be held. In addition, a camera crew

came to the collection and interviewed a Big Y representative for a piece that was aired on that evening's news.

During the collection, an in-store announcement was made several times over the public address system. The intention was to make customers aware of the event and to encourage them to return to the store with unwanted medications.

“Today, from 10 – 2, Big Y is hosting a free collection for unwanted medications. Stop by the pharmacy with medications you no longer need or want and they will be safely destroyed.”

### **Site Set-up**

NERC staff arrived at the store at 8 a.m. to set-up the collection site. The pharmacist met them there, along with the store manager. Grocery store staff brought out the tables and chairs, table clothes, empty hazardous waste containers, and containers for trash and recycling. The pharmacist moved some signage around to put up an easel type sign at the collection area, and provided a sign that was posted on the door behind the collection tables.

The miscellaneous supplies that were needed were obtained that morning. The “greeter” went shopping in the store and the pharmacy department was charged for the purchases.

The collection site was in a very tight space. The intention had been to open the



Wellness Room door flat against the wall, but it would not open all the way so some of the anticipated space was not available. Empty hazardous waste containers were stored in the Wellness Room. The containers being used for recycling and garbage took up a fair amount of room, as did using a 55-gallon drum for the collection of the medications. In retrospect, we would have been wiser to have used a small container for the medications and then put them, as necessary, into a larger container that was stored in the Wellness Room.

Collecting the supplies and equipment from the store, and setting up the tables, chairs, containers, signage, etc., took four (4) people one hour.

## Collection Staffing

<b>Staff</b>	<b>Cost Paid By</b>	<b>Time On-Site</b>
Pharmacist	Big Y	8 – 2:30
Connecticut Drug Control Division Field Agent	Connecticut Drug Control Division	9:30 - 2
State Trooper	Big Y	9:30 – 2:30
Pharmacy students (3)	Volunteers	9:30 – 2
Data entry/site supervisor	Community Pharmacy Foundation grant	8 - 3
Greeter/survey taker	Community Pharmacy Foundation grant	8 - 3
Board of Pharmacy representative	Volunteer	9:30 - 3

There were two primary staffing components: NERC staff time in organizing and holding the event, and Big Y staff in supporting the project development and participating in the event. In addition, there was staff from the state Division of Drug Control, the State Police, pharmacy students from the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy, and a member of the state Board of Pharmacy. NERC staff time was covered by a grant from the Community Pharmacy Foundation. The only staffing that had an out-of-pocket cost was for the State Trooper.

In addition, on-site store management and personnel assisted with setting up the collection site.

The in-store pharmacist arranged for the student participation.

### Personal Information/Prescription Labels:

In planning for the event, Big Y determined that personal information on the unwanted medication containers would be crossed out by Big Y in two circumstances:

- If empty containers came in that were then to be put in the trash, and
- If cardboard that is removed from a medication has a prescription label on it.

Such cardboard would be shredded pre-disposal.



However, customers were provided indelible markers for use if they wanted to cross out their name on the prescription bottle prior to leaving it at the collection.

### Sharps & Thermometers

Sharps are always an issue at collection events. While certain medications brought for destruction will include sharps – such as Epi-Pens – the majority of sharps the public wants to get rid of are used. Big Y advertising stated that sharps and thermometers would not be accepted, yet preparations were necessary because

there is always the chance that some would “sneak in.”

Big Y did not have access to sharps containers and asked NERC to make arrangements for them. While many companies offer mail-back service for sharps the anticipated minimal volume that might be received made NERC wary of buying containers. Instead, they were obtained from a solid waste district that provides sharps collection containers for its residents.

During the survey process, the greeter asked each person if they had any sharps, and if they said “yes” they were instructed to take them back with them. Nevertheless, two sharps came in. Similarly, people were asked about thermometers and told they could not be accepted. Again, two came in. The solid waste district provided recycling of the sharps and thermometers as a public service.

### **Supplies Used**

- Counting tools - 3 manual counting trays. The pharmacist would have preferred to have had a “roller-type” counting tray or electronic counting device.
- Reference materials for researching unknown tablets – the pharmacy had on-line access to a pharmaceuticals database, which was used by the pharmacy students. The pharmacy computer, located inside the Wellness Room was used for this purpose.
- Tables - 2 - 6’ folding tables arranged in an “L.”
- Chairs - 6
- Hazardous waste containers –1 30-gallon fiberboard drum.
- Container for controlled substances – 1 5-gallon pail with locking lid (provided by the hazardous waste hauler).
- Containers for trash and recycling –
  - 1 30-gallon pail with plastic liner for trash.
  - 1 plastic grocery bag for recycling office paper.
  - 1 small cardboard box for recycling thin cardboard.
  - 1 small cardboard box for shredding of thin cardboard with prescription labels.
  - 1 small cardboard box for recycling plastic bags.
- Gloves, non-latex disposable - 1 box of 50, size medium.
- Ziploc® bags - 25-lunch bag sized with external slides.
- Laptop - With power cord and extension cord.
- Back-up memory - Flash card.

- Printer - Used grocery manager's printer along with the flash card.
- Pens - 5
- Indelible markers - 3 SHARPIE®s
- Surveys - 100 brought to site, used 15.
- Clipboards for surveys - 2
- Drinking water - 1 dozen bottles
- Toilet and sink
- Instant hand cleaner/sanitizer - 1
- Phone
- Sharps container - 1 pint

### Lessons Learned

1. Having upper management commitment is essential, with delegation of authority to staff that can follow through on action requirements such as promotion.
2. The event date should be planned around conflicting community activities.: On the day set for the collection an annual 5K run and major local college football game occurred during the same time period.
3. More promotion is critical for gaining participation in the events and for ultimate success. Recommendations include:
  - Bag stuffer – physically put in bags - for two weeks in advance of event at all registers (including the pharmacy) in the store, and in surrounding stores.
  - Display small countertop sign in the pharmacy.
  - Promote in nearby stores, including signage.
  - Do press releases – one at least two weeks in advance and another approximately five days before the event.
  - Paid advertising should be done at least three times in the week before the collection
  - Promote the event in the store circular.
  - Use the store Web site to announce and promote the event.
  - Putting stack of fliers flat on countertops is inadequate – people are not as likely to see or pick up.
  - Store signage needs to be in entrance of store and other promotional locations.



- Signage should be “eye catching” and include medication graphics.
- Promotion should be in the hands of the in-store/pharmacy manager/staff.

4. Having pharmacy students assisting was a great addition. They helped to count non-controlled medications and to identify unknown tablets.

5. Fill small (16-gallon for example) hazardous waste containers and then transfer to larger hazardous waste containers, as necessary, for shipment.

6. Estimating the amount of non-controlled substances per container rather than a specific count was a useful and effective strategy.

**Survey:** A survey was developed for Big Y by NERC. The greeter asked each participant the following questions and completed the survey for them. The greeter was also prepared to answer any questions about the collection that either participants or passers-by might have.

The survey asked the following questions:

1. Town you live in:
2. Are you a regular Big Y Pharmacy customer? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you a regular Big Y Grocery customer? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. How did you find out about this event?

The responses were as follows:

1. Town you live in:

Town	Distance (Miles) to Tolland	Percent of Participants
Tolland	0	67%
Willington	6.5	8%
Ellington	7.5	8%
Coventry	10.5	8%
Bloomfield	23.5	8%

2. Are you a regular Big Y Pharmacy customer?

Yes	No
60%	40%

3. If not, why not?

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Cost	50%
V.A. customer	25%
Pharmacy closed & transferred	25%

4. Are you a regular Big Y Grocery customer? Yes – 100%

5. How did you find out about this event?

<b>How Heard</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Store sign	31%
Flier	31%
TV	23%
Conversation with pharmacist	15%