



Office of the Sheriff

MONROE COUNTY
"ONE TEAM"



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Monroe County Sheriff's Office and Community Partners Introduce Project Lifesaver to Area Residents

Program Benefits Individuals with Cognitive Disorders Prone to Wander

Rochester, NY (March 4, 2019) —The Monroe County Sheriff's Office, in collaboration with AutismUp, the Alzheimer's Association, and Mary Cariola Children's Center is pleased to introduce Project Lifesaver to Monroe County residents. Project Lifesaver is a search and rescue program designed to provide a timely response, reduce possible injury, and save the lives of individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Autism, Down Syndrome, Traumatic Brain Injury, Alzheimer's, Dementia and other cognitive disorders and developmental disabilities. Additionally, the individuals must have histories of wandering, eloping or becoming disoriented as documented in a Life Plan, Individualized Education Program (IEP) or medical diagnosis. Each person is referred to as a client. Project Lifesaver's primary mission is to return "at risk" individuals inclined to wander home safely to their loved ones.



Wandering is extremely dangerous among individuals with cognitive disorders and a major cause of concern for caregivers. Even when employing the best security practices, wandering can occur. Project Lifesaver's locator technology offers an added layer of security.



How the Program Works

At risk individuals wear watch-sized transmitters that emit a unique, identifiable radio tracking signal around their wrists 24/7. Caregivers are instructed to call 911 in an instance of wandering, and trained deputies from the Sheriff's Office will be dispatched to the area with locator equipment in an attempt to locate the missing individual. Currently, MCSO has two transmitters and five search specialists. Search specialists are deputies trained in how to find the transmitter frequency and track it to locate the missing individual.

“Locating our vulnerable loved ones in those initial moments after they go missing is vital and can often mean the difference between life and death,” *said Monroe County Sheriff Todd K. Baxter*. “Project Lifesaver’s locator technology is proven to save lives, and there is no greater mission for the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office and our community partners in this initiative than saving lives. Our deputies and partnering agencies know all too well the fear and panic that sets in when we are unable to locate at risk individuals after they wander off.”

MCSO is working to expand the program, and U.S. Senator Charles Schumer has pledged to help with that effort.

“Countless families face the awful reality each and every day that their child or relative with autism may put their life in jeopardy by wandering away, risking injuries to themselves and others, or worse” *said U.S. Senator Charles Schumer*. “Law enforcement officials know that when searching for a wandering vulnerable child, minutes matter, so I applaud Monroe County Sheriff Baxter and stakeholders like Autism Up for launching this new voluntary tracking device program to help families safeguard their loved ones. Last month I was pleased to help secure \$2 million to fund a first-ever new federal grant program that law enforcement or non-profit agencies can tap to purchase tracking devices to grow and expand programs like this one. I look forward to working with the Sheriff’s office to apply for this new funding and help put parents, caretakers and law enforcement at ease while saving precious lives.”

Many of MCSO’s partnering agencies with Project Lifesaver such as the Alzheimer’s Association, AutismUp, and Mary Cariola Children’s Center, serve the special needs communities and their families by offering care, support, research, education, treatment, and prevention services.

“Our Chapter (of the Alzheimer’s Association) is dedicated to working with first responders and other local agencies and helping families in Monroe County navigate Alzheimer’s and other dementias” *said President and CEO of the Alzheimer’s Association Teresa A. Galbier*. “Wandering can happen, even for the most diligent caregivers. It is important for family caregivers to plan ahead for this type of situation and use prevention strategies and resources available in the community such as the Project Lifesaver Program and the 24/7 Helpline of the Alzheimer’s Association.”



“Approximately 40% of people with autism 'elope' or wander away from a safe setting” *said AutismUp Executive Director Sarah Milko*. “Families of children with autism are constantly worried about their child's safety, and plan for the worst case scenario every day. Project Lifesaver will be a tremendous relief for families to have in the event that those plans fail and their child is missing. AutismUp is thrilled to partner with the Monroe County Sheriff's Office to bring this important program to our community.”

“Project Lifesaver's program provides peace of mind to thousands of families who have loved ones who may wander” *said President and CEO of Mary Cariola Children's Center Karen Zandi*. “At Mary Cariola it will become one more way we support and assist the families we serve. We are proud to partner with the Monroe County Sheriff's and this program.”

Project Lifesaver Client Requirements

Clients are required to have a medically diagnosed cognitive disorder and 24/7 supervision established to qualify for Project Lifesaver. In addition, clients must have a history of, or severe risk, of wandering, eloping or becoming disoriented as documented in a Life Plan, IEP or medical diagnosis. The caregiver, parent or guardian must also have a security plan in place with adequate locks and safety devices to prevent the client from wandering or eloping. Project Lifesaver does not replace those security measures but is an addition to those measures.

Caregivers are responsible for checking the battery daily, replacing the battery every 45-60 days, maintaining the transmitter to ensure it's in proper working condition, and updating information with the program coordinator annually or on an as need basis.

The cost of the start-up kit is \$337.65 which includes the transmitter and supplies to last one year. After the first year, a battery and replacement band would need to be purchased every 45 to 60 days at a combined cost of approximately \$5.00. *Financial assistance may be available from outside organizations for those who qualify.*

Caregivers interested in enrolling qualifying clients into the program must fill out an enrollment application for the Project Lifesaver Program at www2.monroecounty.gov/sheriff, *Community Services tab*.

For more information on the Project Lifesaver program, call (585) 753-4287 or email MCSOProjectLifesaver@monroecounty.gov.

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