



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Police announce program to serve vulnerable adults who wander

Cold weather reinforces need to locate missing persons quickly

With the New Year and the coldest weather of the season, Howard County police announce a program to quickly locate vulnerable adults who wander. Project Lifesaver, which utilizes a tracking system to locate missing persons, is now accepting applications from older adults with Alzheimer's, dementia and other related cognitive impairment diagnoses. Launched in 2007, the program previously focused on serving children who wander due to autism and other diagnoses.

The recent bitterly cold winter weather underscores the dangers of wandering. If a vulnerable person with Alzheimer's or a related impairment goes missing in frigid winter temperatures, it is critical for police to be able to locate the missing person quickly to avoid serious medical complications.

Project Lifesaver operates in more than 1,000 jurisdictions across the nation. The program has a record of reducing search times from hours or days to minutes. Participants wear a personalized wristband the size of a watch that emits a tracking signal on an assigned radio frequency. When caregivers notify police that the participant is missing, a team of police officers and fire department personnel responds and uses a mobile locator to find the missing person.

"Howard County police are constantly looking at ways to better serve our aging population," Chief William McMahon said. "Project Lifesaver offers a way to shorten searches for missing persons with cognitive impairments and better ensure their safety. Project Lifesaver not only helps protect the health and well being of people who go missing. It also gives their caregivers peace of mind."

Police keep a file with information on each participant's conditions, medications and personal history, as well as a photograph, so that the missing person's information is readily available, should they go missing.

At this time, the starter kit is being offered for free for new participants. After one year of free enrollment, participants pay \$75 annually for supplies. Participants must live in Howard County, be medically diagnosed with a cognitive impairment or related diagnosis, be willing to wear the wristband transmitter at all times, have a history of wandering, have a caregiver providing constant supervision, not operate a motor vehicle and be a resident of a private home, apartment or condominium.

For more information, visit www.hcpd.org and search for Project Lifesaver.

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