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Web Site: www.projectlifesaverwny.org

Federal ID Number: 26-4045722

Date Established: August 22, 2008

Mission Statement: To provide the Western New York community with state-of-the-art technology and training to quickly locate individuals with disabling conditions who become lost or wander.

Project Lifesaver WNY – A Community Collaboration

Project Lifesaver WNY is new non-profit agency in Western New York dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities who are at risk of wandering. David S. Aston, parent of a child with autism and advocate for children with special needs, developed a partnership with WKBW TV Channel 7, Summit Educational Resources and the Erie County Sheriff's Department to launch Project Lifesaver WNY in collaboration with local law enforcements officials.

A member of the Board of Directors of Project Lifesaver International, Mr. Aston has secured financial support from local business and foundations to bring this life-saving program to our community with the introduction of Project Lifesaver WNY.

“Project Lifesaver is about people and partnerships. The focus is on communities where law enforcement, civic groups, local business and caregivers join in developing and strengthening all aspects of the program ... including rescues, education and especially fundraising; so that families in financial need can have protection and peace of mind”. –Project Lifesaver Foundation.org

Target populations to benefit:

Project Lifesaver provides technology that enables vulnerable individuals with autism, Down syndrome, mental retardation, dementia, Alzheimer's and other developmental disabilities to be located quickly, should they become lost or wander.

Critical Need for individuals with autism:

The importance of this technology for children with autism cannot be overstated:

- New figures from the Center of Disease Control indicate that 1 in 150 children are now diagnosed with autism; Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the nation, and occurs more often than conditions such as childhood cancer, Muscular Dystrophy, or Juvenile Diabetes.
- **In a recent online survey conducted by National Autism Association, an incredible 92% of the respondents said their child with autism was at risk of wandering.**
- Children and adults with autism and other severe developmental disabilities frequently wander or bolt to remove themselves from over-stimulating or uncomfortable environments. They often do not flee **to** a specific 'safe' location, but rather flee **from** a location that is causing stress or discomfort.
- The act of bolting places the individual at significant risk of injury from entering busy streets, unfamiliar neighborhoods, and crowded places.
- Children with autism often do not respond appropriately to an adult when their name is called. This makes it especially difficult to locate and remove a person with autism from a dangerous situation, especially in the case of a fire.
- Because people with autism lack obvious physical characteristics, police officers, fire and emergency personnel may expect them to react a certain way to their instruction. They may not be able to communicate important information identifying who they are and where they live.
- Other disabling conditions, such as mental retardation, and seizure disorder, often occur as a dual diagnosis for children with autism. These associated conditions may require the person to be taking medications and pose significant risks when an individual is missing for a period of time.

How it works:

Project Lifesaver utilizes proven **radio technology** in combination with **specially-trained search and rescue teams**. Individuals enrolled in the program wear a specialized wristband that emits a unique tracking signal. When a caregiver notifies their local participating Project Lifesaver law enforcement agency that a person is missing, that agency immediately deploys its specially trained search and rescue teams that begin searching with mobile locator tracking systems.

Search times have been reduced from hours and days to minutes. In more than 1900 searches, Project Lifesaver has a 100% success rate and there have been no reported serious injuries or death. Recovery times average less than 30 minutes.

In addition to training how to locate a lost individual, Project Lifesaver search and rescue teams receive training in how to approach and communicate with an adult or child who may be disoriented, anxious or untrusting.

The goal is to quickly locate and reunite this individual with family or a caregiver as quickly and safely as possible.

Economic Impact:

- Prior to Project Lifesaver, searches across the country were averaging 9 hours and costing taxpayers approximately \$1,500 per hour.
- Prior to Project Lifesaver, many searches actually took days, involved hundreds of responders, resulted in much higher costs and had tragic endings. One search in Chesapeake, VA (prior to Project Lifesaver) cost the city \$342,000 and was unsuccessful.
- The basic cost to start this program for an agency is less than \$8,000. Finding someone alive is priceless.

Outcomes we hope to accomplish:

Project Lifesaver allows wandering persons to be found within minutes, instead of the dangerous hours and/or days.

Project Lifesaver has a 100% save rate.

- Currently Project Lifesaver International supports more than 900 agencies in 45 states, the District of Columbia, Australia and Canada;
- 54 million people have Project Lifesaver coverage in their community, yet that only represents 18% of the US population.

Western New York needs Project Lifesaver.

Help us keep our most vulnerable individuals safe.

Here is a sample of organizations that endorse Project Lifesaver:

The National Sheriff's Association



The New York State Sheriff's Association



The Florida Sheriff's Association



The New Jersey Sheriff's Association



The Virginia Sheriff's Association



The Alzheimer's Foundation of America



International Society of Crime Prevention Practitioners



Commonwealth Autism Service Board



National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners



Pilot International

