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SHERIFF TO EXPAND LIFESAVER PROJECT FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Grant Will Enable Purchase of Tracking Bracelets and Receiver

The Burlington County Sheriff's Office will expand its Project Lifesaver program through a \$6,950 grant from Autism Speaks that will enable the purchase of bracelets and a tracking receiver to safeguard autistic children who may become lost.

This is the first grant funding the Sheriff's Office has received to purchase Project Lifesaver equipment for autistic residents. The bracelets, which cost \$300 each, are embedded with an individualized radio frequency to make it easier and faster for first responders to locate missing persons.

"This grant will greatly help to ease parents' fears as they struggle to protect their autistic child and will enable the Sheriff's department to expand the much-needed services we offer," said Sheriff Jean Stanfield.

"We currently have 41 Project Lifesaver clients, 18 of whom are children with autism," she noted.

In the past, the department used drug arrest forfeiture funds and asked families with autistic children who were able to buy their own bracelets to do so.

The Sheriff's Office has been participating in Project Lifesaver since 2006, primarily for senior citizens using grants from the Burlington County Office on Aging and the Alzheimer's Association. (more)

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To run the program most efficiently, local police departments assist the Sheriff's Office in responding to Project Lifesaver calls and in performing monthly maintenance checks and battery changes. The seven departments currently assisting are:

Bordentown Township, Chesterfield, Florence, Mansfield, Mount Laurel, Palmyra and Pemberton Township.

The equipment also can be quickly transported to the scene of a missing person's report to ensure coverage throughout the county.

New Jersey was the first state in the country to have full Project Lifesaver coverage, as each county sheriff in the state participates in this program. This ensures that if a client becomes missing while away from home, a Project Lifesaver responder will be readily available.

Because this program operates nationally, clients are also protected in many areas of the country when they travel.

Those interested in obtaining bracelets, or learning more about the program, should contact the Sheriff's Community Services Office at (609) 265-3788.

Other contacts:

Lisa Goring, director of Family Services
Autism Speaks (516) 439-4017

Local chapter of Autism Speaks in Westmont
Christina Carty (856) 858-5400