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New program protects cognitively impaired

Monday, January 7th, 2013 12:47 PM

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By Community Editor

Courtesy Mack Communications

A new pilot program is providing help for families struggling with loved ones at risk of wandering away from home. Care Trak is a monitoring program that allows families to track seniors with Alzheimer's or dementia, or children and young adults with developmental disabilities like autism or Down syndrome.

The Proviso Township Mental Health Commission is funding the pilot program, currently underway in Westchester and Melrose Park.

"Time is critical to survival," said Jesse D. Rosas, Executive Director of the Proviso Township Mental Health Commission. "Once someone has been missing for 24 hours, the chances of finding him or her alive drops to 50 percent."

Care Trak is a mobile tracking system that uses technology to locate lost individuals. Participants in the program are given a tracking unit, like a wristwatch, that can be placed securely on a wrist or ankle.

If an individual wearing a transmitter is reported missing, families call 911 and the local police department can activate the tracking system.

The system has proven to be highly effective. In one Illinois case, an individual wearing the Care Trak device was found within 30 minutes.

The program is affordable. Participants pay an \$8 monthly rental fee. (Units are also available for purchase.) There is financial assistance for those who qualify.

Eligibility requirements:

- You must be a resident of a participating Proviso Township village.
- Your family member must have documented diagnosis of: autism, Alzheimer's, dementia, psychotic disorder, traumatic brain injury, or developmental disability like Down syndrome.
- The individual to be monitored must have 24-hour supervision. This is not a substitute for day care.
- The individual must have a history of wandering or be considered at risk to wander.
- Your family member must have difficulty communicating.

"This program provides safety and peace of mind," said Proviso Township Mental Health Commission Board President Michael Corrigan. "It's one more service we can provide to our community to support the well-being of our most vulnerable citizens and their families."

For more information, contact Proviso Township Mental Health Commission at 708-449-5580 or go to www.ptmhc.org.

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