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## Autism Speaks Commits Grant to Project Lifesaver to Protect Individuals with Autism Prone to Wandering

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NEW YORK, N.Y. (PRWEB) January 12, 2015

Autism Speaks, the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization, today announced that it has committed \$98,000 to [Project Lifesaver International](#) towards its efforts to provide first-responder agencies with wearable locating technology and training to protect, and when necessary, locate people with autism who are prone to the life threatening behavior of wandering. Project Lifesaver is dedicated to providing timely responses to save lives and reduce potential injury for children and adults who wander.

In a [2012 study](#) by the Interactive Autism Network, funded in part by Autism Speaks, 49 percent of the more than 1,200 respondents reported that their loved one with autism had wandered from safety, and more than half of those children had gone missing as a result. Tragically, wandering-related injuries and deaths happen with alarming frequency among individuals with autism. Since partnering less than one year ago with the [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#) to respond to autism wandering incidents, Autism Speaks has worked on 145 cases.

A multi-faceted approach to prevention and response is best when combating wandering, including efforts by both families and local first responders to work together on an ongoing basis. The grant to Project Lifesaver will add another layer of steps toward preventing and responding to wandering incidents by increasing the capacity of Project Lifesaver to enroll and protect people with autism. Project Lifesaver serves approximately 18,000 individuals with autism who wear small personal transmitters that emit an individualized locating signal. If an enrolled person with autism wanders from safety, the caregiver notifies their local Project Lifesaver agency, and a trained emergency team responds in the wanderer's area.

As a result of the work of Project Lifesaver, search times have been reduced from hours and days to minutes. Recovery times for Project Lifesaver average 30 minutes -- 95 percent less time than standard operations without Project Lifesaver. To date, over 1,300 Project Lifesaver agency member locations have conducted more than 2,800 successful rescues with a 100 percent success rate.

The Project Lifesaver program is more than wearable locating technology. Certified Project Lifesaver first responders are given the necessary tools to respond to safety situations involving children and adults with autism. The program trains first responders to understand the behaviors of individuals with autism so they are able to interact with this growing population in an effective and successful manner.

Project Lifesaver also includes instruction for families and caregivers on the maintenance of their child's locating technology and reporting protocol when their loved one is missing. However, the cost of the Project Lifesaver technology and service has prevented many families affected by autism from adding this needed level of protection to their multi-faceted safety plan. The Autism Speaks grant will provide Project Lifesaver with funds to increase families' access to wearable locating technology.

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"Wandering-related incidents and tragedies are far too common among people with autism," said Lisa Goring, Autism Speaks executive vice president of programs and services. "Autism Speaks is committed to keeping those in the autism community safe from harm. We know based on the program's tremendous work to date that this funding for Project Lifesaver will have a significant impact by educating first responders and families and providing individuals with autism with locating devices."

The issue of wandering in the autism community is a priority for Autism Speaks. In addition to the Project Lifesaver grant and its partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Autism Speaks offers a [Scholarship Fund for Swimming and Water Safety](#). Autism Speaks also offers [wandering tips and safety](#) information for families and caregivers on its website, <http://www.autismspeaks.org>.

#### About Autism

Autism is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders – autism spectrum disorders – caused by a combination of genes and environmental influences. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by communication difficulties, social and behavioral challenges, and repetitive behaviors. An estimated 1 in 68 children in the U.S. is on the autism spectrum.

#### About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization. It is dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks was founded in February 2005 by Suzanne and Bob Wright, the grandparents of a child with autism. Mr. Wright is the former vice chairman of General Electric and chief executive officer of NBC and NBC Universal. Since its inception, Autism Speaks has committed more than \$500 million dollars to its mission, the majority in science and medical research. Each year Walk Now for Autism Speaks events are held in more than 100 cities across North America. On the global front, Autism Speaks has established partnerships in more than 60 countries on five continents to foster international research, services and awareness. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit [AutismSpeaks.org](http://AutismSpeaks.org). or contact:

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#### About Project Lifesaver

Project Lifesaver is a 501 (C) (3) community based, public safety, non-profit organization that provides law enforcement, fire/rescue, other first responders and caregivers with technology and training to protect, and when necessary, quickly locate individuals with cognitive disorders who are prone to the life threatening behavior of wandering. Project Lifesaver is also a subject matter expert and advisor on the wandering issue for: Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer's disease (LEAD), National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the Alzheimer's Foundation, and the National Alzheimer's Project Act (NAPA) the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners and the International Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners. The Project Lifesaver training program is recognized and approved by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Project Lifesaver was the first organization to address the issue of protecting and recovering individuals with cognitive conditions who are prone to wandering and for the past 15 years has remained the gold standard.

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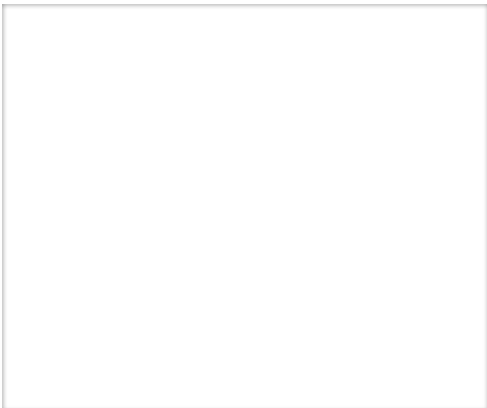
Read the full story at <http://www.prweb.com/releases/AutismSpeaksCommitsGrant/toProjectLifesaverAutism/prweb12437833.htm>

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