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## Forum in Paramus raises awareness of dementia

APRIL 23, 2015 LAST UPDATED: THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2015, 2:59 PM

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Senior Helpers of Bergen County hosted Wandering: High Risk with Dementia as part of Paramus' Alzheimer's Readiness Event.

The program, held on April 15 at Bergen Community College, was led by dementia care specialist and certified dementia practitioner Vivian Green Korner, as well as representatives from the Paramus Police Department.

The event was designed to raise public awareness and preparedness so residents with dementia are safer in their communities.



does wander, offer ways to prevent wandering, and what to do when a person does go missing," Korner said.

More than 60 percent of those with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia wander, according to Korner.

"There isn't necessarily a signal. It can happen at any point in dementia," she said.

Examples of reasons why people with dementia wander include having excess energy and



forgetfulness as to where they intend to go. People can also feel disoriented in familiar places.

"They can think they're leaving to go to work or coming home from work," Korner said.

Korner added that people can become anxious or overwhelmed when thinking they're alone, but wandering isn't a calculated action.

"They're not doing it to run away," she said.

Those who wander may not realize they're lost.

"A person who's wandering with dementia doesn't have a sense that they're wandering," Korner said. "They just have a sense that they're walking or searching for something."

Paramus Police Sgt. John Devine spoke of various reported cases where people with dementia wandered. In one situation, a woman got on a bus headed to Garden State Plaza within minutes. In another incident, a man went driving and wound up in Newark.

During the presentation, Korner referenced her own personal experience of her mother wandering to Central Park on a nice day.

"I think she kept the feeling of it and decided she wanted to go back to the park," she said.

Law enforcement officials stressed that people should call the police immediately when someone disappears. Residents should also alert their neighbors when a loved one goes missing.

"Too many times people wait to call," Devine said.

"That adds to stress and increases the difficulty in finding their loved one," added Detective James Teehan.

People should prepare to provide details to the police such as what the person was wearing, his or her favorite places, and a recent photo. Other helpful practices include labeling a person's clothing and making sure he or she carries identification.

Officer Aimee Mehnert of the Bergen County Sherriff's Office spoke about Project Lifesaver, a rapid-response program implemented throughout New Jersey for locating those who wander.

"We're here to keep your families safe," she said.

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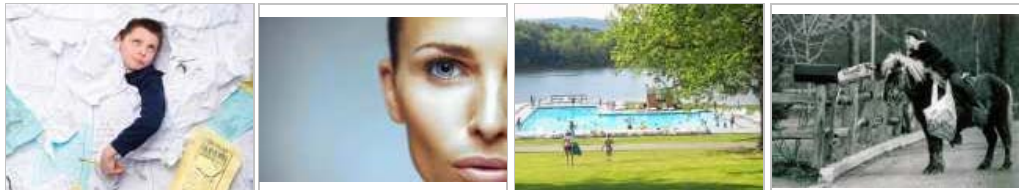
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