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## Wandering off can't be prevented, but LCSO wants to be proactive in searches

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For [clintonchronicle.com](http://clintonchronicle.com)

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Project Lifesaver International, a national award-winning program, is coming to Laurens County next month in an effort to assist law enforcement in searching for people who wander off.

The county this year had two instances where a person wandered from home and later was found dead. Sheriff Ricky Chastain said the searches for these individuals could have gotten valuable assistance from tracking bracelets provided through Project Lifesaver.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office bought 30 bracelets, and Chastain said the office wants to acquire and distribute 60 bracelets to people who need them. A small tracking device is placed inside a small plastic container on the bracelets that are similar to a hospital ID bracelet.

If a person wearing the bracelet is missing, law enforcement can activate a tracker that senses the bracelet within three miles on land and within five miles in the air.

"It's not always a senior citizen who needs a bracelet," Chastain said. "Anyone with dementia and autistic children who sometimes wander from home can qualify. We have had a couple of tragedies over the years. Of course, you can't put a pricetag on a live, but a massive search is very costly. That could be prevented if the person is wearing the bracelet."

Capt. Mickey Coats is spearheading the Project Lifesaver effort for LCSO. He said training begins the first week in December for officers on how to use the technology.

A sheriff's officer will wear one of the bracelets and, in a remote area, will "wander off" so other officers can activate tracking technology and find the officer.

"We want to get these bracelets on as many people (who might need them) as possible," Coats said.

LCSO personnel are available to talk to seniors, church and civic groups about Project Lifesaver. Coats has a promotional video from the company, and information is available on-line, [www.projectlifesaver.org](http://www.projectlifesaver.org).

Organizations and law enforcement agencies, in addition to LCSO, that have endorsed and pledged support to Project Lifesaver International are:

- National Autism Association;
- RT Autism Awareness Foundation;
- National, New York State, Virginia, Florida and New Jersey Sheriff's Associations;



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- Alzheimer's Foundation of America;
- Pilot International;
- Commonwealth Autism Service;
- International Society of Crime Prevention Practitioners; and
- National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners.

Project Lifesaver is a member of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, United Way and Leave a Legacy.

"Project Lifesaver is designed to provide comfort for the family while safely guarding the victim," said Gene Saunders, CEO and founder, Project Lifesaver International, based in Chesapeake, Va.

The company was founded in April, 1999, as an initiative of the 43rd Search and Rescue Company of the Chesapeake Sheriff's Office. Project Lifesaver International is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization headed by retire law enforcement officers, and is located in 46 states, five Canadian provinces and Australia.

Chastain said the bracelets will be provided by LCSO at no cost to the caregiver requesting a bracelet for the person(s) being cared for. If the caregiver or a family wants to make a donation to LCSO's effort to purchase more bracelets, Chastain said that will be appreciated, but is not required.

"All the equipment and bracelets have been purchased through grants and private donations, no tax money has been used," the sheriff said. "If people can't assist with the program (but need a bracelet), that's what the donations have been provided for.

"Hopefully," Chastain said, "we never have to use it, but when someone wanders off, we want to have every advantage."

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