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New Technology Could Be A Lifesaver

Transmitter helps locate the lost

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A wandering child or vulnerable adult is a real concern for families and caregivers, but new technology coming to the heartland will provide some peace of mind.



Six-year-old Will Gillen is a regular client at the Pediatric Therapy Center in Papillion. His father Dominic says a seizure disorder slows Will's development and makes him a risk to wander away.

"He's never been off on his own, off by himself, but we keep a tight reign on him, but God forbid anything should ever happen where he should get separated from us he would not have any clue what to do, how to ask for help because he doesn't talk at all."

When a child like Will or an adult with Alzheimer's wanders away, law enforcement immediately begins to search. A traditional line search that sweeps across an area takes a lot of manpower and costly overtime, but one officer armed with a new device can search an entire area much faster than what a whole group can do.

The device can help an officer locate someone wearing a special radio transmitter up to a mile away. Clay County, Iowa Sheriff Randy Krukow has used it for five years.

"Most of our searches are found within less than 30 minutes. So you can take one person, one set of equipment verses 20, 30, 50, 60 searching for a loved one and reduce that down."

The program is called Project Lifesaver and is new to Nebraska. Sarpy County is using grant money to get the program going, hopefully by the end of August.

Will Gillen could be one of the first to wear a transmitter. "For Will, every little thing that we can have to have a little more peace of mind is something that's really good for us," says Dominic. "That was one less thing to worry about for him." And one more way to keep him safe.

Wandering away is a serious concern for Alzheimer's patients. Estimates are that 60% of them are at risk to slip away. The transmitters cost about \$300 each as well as \$10 a month for an officer to come out and change the batteries.

For more information about the program, contact Lt. Kevin Griger at projectlifesaver@sarpy.com.

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