

A monthly newsletter for people caring for those affected by Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia.

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## Project Lifesaver in the Tri-Counties

Recently, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura counties began partnerships with Project Lifesaver to help return lost loved ones to their families. We're highlighting this resource here so that those in need know how to access it.



### What is Project Lifesaver?

Project Lifesaver is a nonprofit organization that provides electronic monitoring systems to people living with dementia, autism, Down Syndrome or other cognitive disorders that can put a person at risk for wandering and becoming lost. The organization was founded in 1999 in Chesapeake, Virginia, but has since become an internationally recognized program to bring loved ones home.

Each participant is fitted with a specialized device that can be worn on the wrist or ankle. The bracelets are equipped with transmitters that send out a unique radio frequency. Trained law enforcement and/or search and rescue teams are then able to locate the person using specialized receptors, usually within an hour of the person being reported missing.

Lisa Donnahoo is the Legal Clerk for the Project Lifesaver program with the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department. Here's what she has to say about the benefits of this project to her community:

"I have overseen this program for the past 6 years and have worked within the program for several years prior as a member of San Luis Obispo County Search and Rescue (SLOSAR). On any given day SLO County has just shy of 50 clients in our county who are wearing "transmitters" which have frequencies that are unique to their area and their person. Our clients' range in ages from 9 years old (and has been on the program since 2019) to their 90's. These transmitters, which are worn on either the clients' wrists or ankles, bring comfort to the families/caregivers in case their loved ones go missing.

"Without this technology, a search for a missing person can take hours, days or possibly longer, whereas a Project Lifesaver client who is reported missing could possibly be found within the hour once our searchers are on site. This is accomplished through SLOSAR with the assistance of receivers able to hear the transmitters frequency and locate the clients position."

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**How do I get a device?**

The process for getting a Project Lifesaver device depends on the county you live in, but usually requires an application and a fee to purchase the device. Each county also offers free devices to qualifying families.

**San Luis Obispo County**

Cost: \$30 per month, with first and last month's lease and a refundable deposit of \$100 (for a total of \$160) due at the beginning of service. Free battery changes for the life of the device.

Print the application at [projectlifesaverofslo.org](http://projectlifesaverofslo.org)

Complete and return it to:

Project Lifesaver

270 Scott Street

Paso Robles, CA 93446

or call (805) 544-8740 or (805) 548-0909

**Santa Barbara County**

Cost: \$400 for wristband and one year of batteries, including a \$100 refundable deposit. Subsequent years are \$125

Print the application at [sbsheriff.org](http://sbsheriff.org). Complete and return to any SB County Sheriff's office, or email it to [ProjectLifesaver@SBSheriff.org](mailto:ProjectLifesaver@SBSheriff.org). You can also call Tiffany Hampton at (805) 681-4100 for more information.

**Ventura County**

*This is a pilot program and is currently only available in Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai and Thousand Oaks.*

Cost: \$375 with free battery changes. There are free devices available to qualifying families, but there may be a waiting list.

Contact VCAAA at [LOIS@vcaaa.org](mailto:LOIS@vcaaa.org) or (805) 477-7300 to receive an application.

**Caregivers of Today****A review of our recent Caregiver's Conference**

by Carol Leish, MA

I enjoyed watching the recent Alzheimer's Association virtual "Caregiver Conference". I can appreciate the importance of what Kori Gonzales said about caregiving for her husband, Tony. She said, "I lead with love in order to maintain Tony's dignity." They both mentioned how important it is to have a support system.

David Troxel, MPH, talked about Alzheimer's being 'The Other Pandemic.' He said, "Dementia does not travel alone." He elaborated on this by saying that it is important to be aware of various aspects of life. This includes: 1) Being on appropriate medicines for your own needs; 2) Managing your blood sugar level; 3) Taking care of different sleep issues in order to be able to sleep better; 4) Being aware of depression, if you have it, in order to be treated for it; and 5) Being involved in various activities with various people to stave off loneliness.

With empathy and understanding comes acceptance of others' situations, including those with dementia. This reminds me of the story, 'Welcome to Holland,' in which the traveler is learning new things, even though they had planned a trip to somewhere else. Adjusting to changes is important when caring for

those with dementia. Meet them where they are at, give compliments and be inquisitive. Troxel said, "Lean into the 3 out of 100 'yes's,' instead of the 97 'no's.'"

I learned the importance of empathy, and meeting my father 'where he was at with his illness,' in order to help him with what I could. This is especially important in caring for people with dementia in order to maintain a sense of balance and normalcy, since that has been taken away from them. When my Dad was not able to drive anymore, I'm sure that he yearned for it in order to maintain a sense of independence. Even though I would drive him places, I'm certain that he was frustrated with having to stop driving places himself.

As a caregiver it is essential to maintain someone's dignity by realizing that they still have various feelings, even if they are 'slowing down'. Emotions are always intact, regardless of their physical and cognitive challenges.

Let's remember to be kind and empathetic as caregivers in order for the person who we are taking care of to maintain their dignity, and let's not mind asking for help. This is essential in order to maintain some normalcy, and to focus on what people can still do instead of what they can't do.

**You can watch a recording of our "Caregiver Conference" at [bit.ly/alz2023](http://bit.ly/alz2023). Use passcode: Aq0\$a\*b#**