

Caledon Meals on Wheels partnering with OPP to bring 'Project Lifesaver' to the community

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Caledon Meals on Wheels have partnered with Caledon OPP to provide members of the community with a protection service; Project Lifesaver.

Project Lifesaver Caledon is an initiative dedicated to protecting those in the community who may wander, such as those living with dementia, autism spectrum disorder, down syndrome, or other kinds of cognitive impairment that may cause them to go off on their own.

'Our participants get a one-ounce wrist transmitter, which gives a radius signal that can be tracked up to two kilometres. If a loved one goes missing they call 9-1-1, and explain that this person is missing and they're a project lifesaver participant, they can use the equipment, which can help track them,' explains Project Lifesaver Coordinator, Kim Pridham.

Project Lifesaver uses radio technology, instead of cellular or GPS, due to the reliability of service in the Caledon area.

'It's the older technology, it's the radio technology so it's a little bit more reliable in the Caledon area. GPS isn't always perfect, so the older radio technology is a really good fit for Caledon,' says Pridham.

The initiative was founded in 1999 in Chesapeake, Virginia. Project Lifesaver is run through municipality public safety agencies where all the equipment needed to function in the town is provided through the Project Lifesaver International. According to the Project Lifesaver International website, the program has saved a total of 3,630 people.

Caledon Meals on Wheels (CMOW), founded in 1984, has brought nothing but support and community involvement here in Caledon. The non-profit, volunteer-based organization runs solely on lending a hand to those in need. Project Lifesaver was a great fit for CMOW, but now it's about letting the community know about it.

'I don't really know how many people are aware that it's there, but we do have a number of participants, seniors and children,' says Pridham. 'We started administrating the program at the end of August.'

The program runs all year, all week and all the time. When authorities are notified that a person is missing, there are specially trained officers who use the proper equipment, to find them. If the individual meets the certain criteria that Project Lifesaver asks from participants, Pridham will introduce the program, and explain in detail on what it's all about.

'They just give us a shout, and then I go out and explain the program, the biggest piece is that they're willing to wear the wristbands,' says Pridham. 'There is a \$400 fee to lease the transmitter, but if people aren't able to afford it, there is a subsidy available, then there's a \$10 monthly fee for the transmitter batteries.'

Project Lifesaver Caledon requires applicants to live in the Caledon area, and those who eventually move from the area will be taken out of the program. The program is for those who have a history of wandering or who have been labelled as someone who may wander because of a cognitive impairment.

For more information about Project Lifesaver Caledon, please visit cmow.org/project-lifesaver.