

Va. Wireless Association donates \$3,000 to Fairfax's Project Lifesaver program

By **Tom Jackman**

Jan. 15, 2014 at 5:00 a.m. EST



The Virginia Wireless Association, a trade group of companies who work in the wireless communications industry, recently donated \$3,000 to the Project Lifesaver program run by the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office. The program places a bracelet on both old and young people with mental conditions that might cause them to become lost, tracks them using GPS technology, and has a 100 percent success rate. Which is good.

In Fairfax, there is a waiting list for residents to get in the Project Lifesaver program, as I found when my father went missing in October. Alex Beiro with the wireless association saw that article and convinced his colleagues to make a contribution. Ed Donohue, president of the Virginia Wireless Association, said it was sometimes hard to remind people of the positive things that cellular technology brings when concerns about privacy often dominate the media. "This project allows us to show the upside of a wireless network," Donohue said, "bringing it down to a human level."

Fairfax Sheriff Stacey Kincaid said, "I think it's wonderful that people are beginning to understand the critical importance of our Project Lifesaver program, which I'm looking to expand in terms of taking more clients on." She said that donations such as the wireless association's "allow us to purchase the technology we need so that we can add more clients." Kincaid also said she was exploring creating a full-time position to head Fairfax's chapter of the program, which is currently managed by two deputies with other full-time responsibilities. "With a dedicated position," the sheriff said, "we could train more of our staff on program protocol, focus on recruiting volunteers from the community to assist with battery changes, proactively develop partnerships with businesses and organizations and serve a greater number of clients."

Kincaid said she also wants to launch another initiative which would take DNA, in advance, from people in the program, on swabs which can be preserved for years. This would eliminate the need for a hasty search for uncontaminated DNA from a missing person when time is short.

In a related side note, when my father went missing in Reston, AT&T told the Fairfax police that his cell phone was in a neighborhood south of Lake Anne, according to cell tower calculations. The police swarmed the area and a human scent-trained dog roamed around, but the phone was not found. Then, just before Christmas, my mother found it — in their house north of Lake Anne, about 400 yards as the crow flies across the lake, or about 1 1/2 miles driving. I'm working on a longer look at this technology which should appear soon. And my dad is fine, thanks to all who've asked.
