

# Dartmouth Friends of the Elderly donate Project Lifesaver equipment

The Friends of the Elderly have a long history of looking out for their own, and the organization's latest move is a prime example of that.

The Dartmouth Friends group recently purchased search and rescue technology for town seniors and public safety officers to make it easier to locate missing persons.

"The safety of our elders is our top priority," Maria Connor, president of the Dartmouth Friends of the Elderly, said at the town Senior Center recently. "Any project that can increase and ensure the safety of seniors, we're in."

The Dartmouth Friends of the Elderly purchased Project Lifesaver bracelets and equipment for both seniors and the Dartmouth Police Department. Project Lifesaver bracelets are similar to having a GPS device on a person's wrist while public safety officers have the tracking devices that allow them to locate the bracelets. The program is administered by the Bristol County Sheriff's Office and supported by public safety officers across the county.

More than 100 people across Bristol County are currently wearing Project Lifesaver bracelets, most are seniors with dementia or children with disabilities that cause them to wander out of the house.



*From left, Bristol County Sheriff's Office Lt. Fernando Pimental, Dartmouth Police Officer Scott Affonce, Dartmouth COA Director Amy DePeitro, Friends of the Elderly President Maria Connor, Friends Board member Ellie White and Tina LePage, BCSO manager of public programs, pose with some of the new Project Lifesaver equipment donated by the Friends. [Photo courtesy of the Bristol County Sheriff's Office]*

"Every time I've received a call for a missing person, we've been able to locate them in 30 minutes," Bristol County Sheriff's Office Lt. Fernando Pimental told Connor at the Senior Center. "There are not many organizations in Bristol County that purchase these for others in town, so it just goes to show how much the Friends care about their seniors."

Every community in Bristol County has first-responders who are trained in how to use the search equipment to locate a missing person. The program is administered by Sheriff's Offices across the country, so if a person goes on vacation or on a trip with family, first-responders in that community will be able to spring to action if the person goes missing.

The tracking equipment purchased by the Friends will be kept with Dartmouth Police Officer Scott Affonce, who works closely

with seniors in town and the Sheriff's Office on Project Lifesaver. He and fellow DPD Officer Justin Fonseca are on a regional search and rescue task force team that incorporates Project Lifesaver training.

"All local police departments have the same equipment," Officer Affonce said. "I think this will definitely have a big impact on public safety for Dartmouth seniors."

The bracelets and equipment purchased by the Friends is valued at around \$4,000. Like all Project Lifesaver technology, it was purchased through the Sheriff's Office at cost. Any Dartmouth seniors interested in Project Lifesaver can contact the Council on Aging (508-999-4717) or Lt. Pimental at the Sheriff's Office (508-995-6400 ext. 2180).

"We're so fortunate in this town that our Friends of the Elderly group is 100 percent supportive of Dartmouth seniors," COA Director Amy DePeitro said.

Connor added that the Friends advisory board unanimously approved of the Project Lifesaver donation and she was thrilled to continue working with local public safety.

"We all have the same objective, the same goal, and that's the safety of all Dartmouth's seniors," she said. "The COA has been working with the Alzheimer's Association to make the town a Dementia-Friendly Community, and this is one way we can help get there."