

Caregiver Corner

Providing A Safer Return For Older Adults Who Wander

(NAPSA)—Every year, across the United States, thousands of older adults with Alzheimer's disease are reported missing. As many as 60 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia will wander, often repeatedly. If not found within 24 hours, up to half of those who wander will suffer serious injury—even death.

The Alzheimer's Association Safe Return® program has a proven 98 percent success rate in returning wanderers. To help increase enrollment in this life-saving program, MetLife Foundation recently made a major grant to the Alzheimer's Association, which seeks to find ways to promote greater public awareness of Safe Return.

"Wandering is a frightening and potentially life-threatening behavior for those with Alzheimer's," said Sibyl Jacobson, President, MetLife Foundation. "As more individuals are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, people need to be made aware of this life-saving and important program."

Originally developed in 1993, Safe Return is an identification, support and enrollment program working at the community level that provides assistance for a person with Alzheimer's disease who wanders off and becomes lost. Since its inception, Safe Return has helped facilitate over 11,000 safe returns. Last year, over 3,000 wandering incidents were reported to the program.

For a one-time enrollment fee of \$40, assistance is available 24 hours a day, every day. Enrollees receive an engraved identification bracelet or necklace, and iron-on clothing labels with the Safe Return 800 number. When an enrollee is found, Safe Return can access enrollee information and notify listed contacts.

"We've seen quite positive

Tips For Reducing Wandering Behavior:

- Encourage movement and exercise to reduce anxiety and restfulness.
- Involve the person in productive daily activities (folding laundry, preparing dinner).
- Redirect pacing or restless behavior.
- Place a mirror near doorways.
- Reassure the person if he or she feels lost or disoriented.
- Inform neighbors and local emergency responders of your loved one's condition.
- Keep your home safe and secure by installing deadbolt locks on exterior doors and limiting access to potentially dangerous areas.
- Enroll your loved one in the Safe Return program.

SOURCE: Alzheimer's Association



results with Safe Return, but feel strongly that greater outreach will allow us to make a difference in the lives of many more families," said Kathryn Kane, Senior Vice President, Alzheimer's Association. "We're proud of the success of the Safe Return program and appreciate the support that MetLife Foundation is providing to help spread the word."

According to the Association, unlike the dictionary's definition of wandering, which suggests movement without a specific purpose, a person with Alzheimer's disease actually may have a definite destination in mind. "Many times, these individuals are trying to fulfill former obligations, such as trying to go to work or get to their home," says Kane. Wandering can be caused by several factors, including stress, restlessness and fear arising from the misinterpretation of sights and sounds.

For information about MetLife Foundation's support of Alzheimer's initiatives, visit www.metlife.org. To enroll in Safe Return, or for information on senior safety issues, call 1-888-572-8566 or visit www.alz.org/safereturn.