

Alzheimer's Community Care Expands ID Locator Program to Martin County Caregivers

By Suzanne Wentley

Eight years ago, Rose Pazos started to notice changes in her husband, Ofie. He started to forget directions or the tasks he had to do for work. A doctor's diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease helped explain what was happening, but Rose - a full-time schoolteacher - was unprepared to be a caregiver.

And when he got up in the middle of the night and wandered out the front door, she became even more overwhelmed. In tears, Pazos enlisted the help of Alzheimer's Community Care. To track her husband in case of future wandering episodes, she signed up for the ID Locator program.

"You just get thrown into this role," said Rose Pazos, a St. Lucie County resident. "When I was doing it alone, it was very scary."

Now, the ID Locator program has expanded to Martin County to provide peace of mind for caregivers and patients struggling with Alzheimer's and other neurological diseases. This free service is currently available in St. Lucie County.

One of Alzheimer's Community Care's seven core series, the ID Locator program provides tracking devices that are worn like a permanent wristwatch to offer tracking via radio transmissions through the Safety Net Tracking System and in partnership with local law enforcement.

An estimated 60 percent of patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease or dementia will wander away unsupervised - 125,000 patients every year. And for those who aren't found within 72 hours, 80 percent do not survive.

With the tracking bracelets provided by Alzheimer's Community Care, patients can be found up to seven miles from their home. Often times, patients are found near water, which can add to the danger of a wandering episode.

"Alzheimer's patients are naturally drawn to water, even if they can't swim," said Paula Menigoz, the project manager at Alzheimer's Community Care. "That's one reason why this program is such a beneficial safety tool."

The ID Locator program can save tax dollars as well as lives. Law enforcement officers with receiver devices can quickly track wandering patients when 9-1-1 is called.

The program is part of the Alzheimer's Community Care comprehensive support network for caregivers and patients. Since 1996, the agency offers community-based, licensed care facilities and individualized services that include interactive adult day care facilities where patients can have their tracking devices regularly checked.

Pazos is grateful for the help of the ID Locator program.

"It's very much peace-of-mind for us, to know he's got the bracelet on his arm," she said. "You hear the horror stories of people with dementia getting lost. I told him it was to monitor his blood pressure, so he wears it all the time."

To learn more about the program and other services available to those with dementia-related diseases, contact Amy Bromhead with Alzheimer's Community Care at (772) 223-6351 or log on to www.alzcare.org.

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