

# Halton police soon to launch pilot Alzheimer GPS tracker

System would easily locate missing persons at risk

By David Lea  
METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

Halton police are preparing to launch a pilot project that, if successful, could be a major step toward improving the safety of people with Alzheimer disease, dementia and other neurological disorders.

The GPS (Global Positioning System) Bracelet Initiative, discussed at last Thursday's police service board meeting, would equip nine people who have Alzheimer's and one who has autism, with GPS units so if they went missing, the people could be easily located by a caregiver or authorities.

The year-long pilot is expected to begin in Halton this summer.

"When we consider our growing aging population and the increased likelihood of dementia and therefore our response to dementia, this program has great potential to prevent the angst a family goes through when a family member, through dementia, goes missing," said Sgt. Sue Biggs.

Biggs said the GPS unit would be concealed in either a bracelet or a pendant, depending on the person wearing it.

The devices will be programmed to send an email to the person's caregiver in the event

the person leaves a predetermined perimeter area like their house.

Insp. Jeff Corey said the 10 individuals selected to participate in the pilot project all have a history of wandering and are described by police as being at risk.

Police said all participants also have caregivers who were eager for a better way to find those they care for when they go missing.

While the initiative's cost was not provided, bracelets of this type cost approximately \$200-\$300 each.

Biggs said Halton police would be paying for the devices and maintenance costs during the pilot project, however, if the initiative is expanded this would change with police seeking to partner with the Region or other community organizations to share funding costs.

Options may also exist for members of the GPS bracelet wearer's family to pay for the service themselves.

Corey said the pilot project would be a partnership with police entering into discussions with the Alzheimer's Society and the Autism Society.

As the GPS system would notify caregivers about the whereabouts of a missing person with a condition like Alzheimer's, in some cases it would not even be necessary for people to call police to resolve the situation.

Either way, the project has the potential of greatly reducing the amount of police resources used when someone with a neurological disorder goes missing, police said.



Sgt. Sue Biggs



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