

Helping Seniors



PD Reaches out to Seniors

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The Georgetown Police Department announced this week three new programs instituted to keep local seniors safe.

The first is directly the result of a donation by the Georgetown Light Department, which has provided more than 100 "emergency beacon" light bulbs for distribution to seniors.

The bulbs are designed to start blinking steadily after having been turned on and off twice in rapid succession. The idea is to put the light outside a senior's home or apartment, or in a lamp in a window where emergency personnel could see the light from the street.

"Even if someone wasn't able to call 911 for help, but were able to turn on the beacon, one of the neighbors would be able to see the light and contact us," said Senior Relations Officer Mark Anderson.

The bulbs, a \$20 value, work as normal light bulbs with 2,000 light hours.

"We're giving them away to anyone over 60 years old," said Anderson.

The department has also instituted the "Good Morning Georgetown Wellness Check." The idea behind the wellness check is for seniors living alone to call the dispatcher each morning, between 7 and 11 a.m., to check in. (Only seniors who sign up for the program will be on the check-in list.)

If they miss the call, an officer will be sent out to the address to make sure everything is OK.

"We'll send out a uniformed officer to check," said Chief James Mulligan. "It's better to have that face there at the door to make sure the senior is all right."

Any senior citizen interested in the program may sign up.

"We'll take on as many as are interested in signing up," said Mulligan.

Finally, the department is setting up an Outreach Program for families in town with members who are dealing with Alzheimer's Disease, autism or other situations where they may have a tendency to wander and not know where they are.

According to Mulligan, the program was inspired by a senior who disappeared in his car for four days and was later found, passed away of apparent natural causes, in central New Hampshire.

Officer Anderson will spearhead the Outreach Program, which will collect photos of the participants for identification, as well as gathering eye information that might help locate someone who has disappeared.

"We ask on the form what this person's hobbies or favorite places are," said Anderson. "For example, did he work with trains his entire career? We might make it a priority to check local train yards first."

The photos will be kept on file electronically, so they can be e-mailed immediately to surrounding communities if one of the participants goes missing.

Other information that will be collected are contact names, friends or relatives in the area, vehicle information, medical information, and any cell phone or beeper numbers they might use.

All of these programs are targeted to assist a major chunk of the town's population.

"Our seniors number over a thousand," said Anderson, whose role as senior relations officer has him visiting local seniors, as well as Trestle Way. "They make up a huge percent of the population."

"Seniors, and the town's children, these are the people who are here in town all day. They're the residents who are going to call upon our services the most," said Mulligan.