



# National Silver Alert® Program Aids Senior Citizens

## People with Autism and Cognitive Disorders – Regardless of Age – Also will Benefit

In recent years the Amber Alert system has been employed more and more to provide an immediate response when a child is missing or appears to have been abducted. However, in an aging population of baby boomers and an increasing number of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, there has rarely been a comprehensive emergency response system employed for seniors who have wandered away from their homes, causing frantic searches by their relatives.

Neil Arfmann, a veteran police officer, knew all too well the concerns of an elderly parent or grandparent with Alzheimer's or dementia wandering away from home. His grandmother, a critical wanderer, suffered with vascular dementia for eight years before succumbing to the disease. He spent many hours searching and worrying when she wandered away. He saw the need and importance of developing a program that would provide peace of mind to the caregivers of those with Alzheimer's, dementia and other cognitive disorders, and assist law enforcement in the search and safe recovery of these individuals. And so Arfmann created the National Silver Alert® Program.

"I have been on many calls when a senior or individual with a cognitive disorder wandered," Arfmann said. "Time is of the essence when attempting to locate and recover these individuals. I would get frustrated when precious moments were wasted while a caregiver went looking for a current photo and vital information, when I could have been out looking for them."

The National Silver Alert® Program, [www.nationalsilveralert.org](http://www.nationalsilveralert.org), is a free, national online registration program that is open to all Senior Citizens and individuals with Alzheimer's disease, autism, dementia or other cognitive disorders, regardless of age. The program provides a safe and secure place to store vital personal, medical, health and caregiver information, which is easily accessible in the event of an emergency.

Arfmann is targeting the law enforcement community to offer them the information they need to implement emergency response measures when a call comes in that a person suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's is missing.

"We deal directly with law enforcement and emergency responders. In the event that a registered individual is injured, missing or cannot speak for themselves, we will send a link to the requesting agency with the vital information," Arfmann said. "We work with law enforcement agencies across the country, and encourage them to have individuals in their communities enroll in our program."

The program also addresses the needs of any person with cognitive disorders. Since the October 2009 launch of this program, there has been an overwhelming response from the autistic community, who seem to have fallen through the cracks, as many do not qualify for either the Amber or

Silver Alert. With the National Silver Alert Program, there is a place for them, no matter what their age or condition.

### Frauds and Scams Targeting Seniors

National Silver Alert also has an education program for seniors and their families regarding scams that specifically target them. The website has a listing of common frauds and scams perpetrated against seniors.

There are a host of resources that seniors and their families can take advantage of through Silver Alert that will protect them against people attempting to defraud them. In fact, a testimonial was recently received from a senior citizen who was able to avoid being victimized by a scam in which supposedly a "grandson" called and asked him to send money via Western Union to bail him out of jail. The senior checked the National Silver Alert website and was able to call and find out that this was indeed a scam.

"We strongly encourage law enforcement agencies to freely use all of the information we provide on the different scams to their citizens. All of the fraud and scams listed are up to date and there is no charge to print and distribute. We encourage law enforcement agencies to use the National Silver Alert

website as a teaching tool for their road officers, detectives, community service officers or anyone who handles the neighborhood watch and local educational events," Arfmann said.

The National Silver Alert system works only if seniors or their families register them on the website. The information is stored in a secure, encrypted database and will only be shared with emergency responders if the person is ever missing. Arfmann says that it's crucial that the law enforcement community start the education process with the people in their community that this resource is available.

"We encourage all law enforcement agencies and emergency responders to use our website, [www.nationalsilveralert.org](http://www.nationalsilveralert.org), for educating the people in their community," Arfmann said. "Our online brochures are free to print and distribute as needed."

**Neil Arfmann** is President and founder of the National Silver Alert® Program. In 1984, he began his career in law enforcement as a police officer in Florida. Neil was highly decorated and respected by his peers. He was honored by his department several times throughout his career and holds numerous awards. He was awarded the Officer of the Year award by the Clearwater Police Department, the Officer of the Year Award by the Fraternal Order of Police, Officer of the Year Award by the Knights of Columbus, just to name a few. He also holds the highest award and medal given by his department, the Joseph F. Cornelius award, and received the Outstanding Police Officer award, which was presented to him by State Representative John M. Marroni on behalf of the residents of Pinellas County and the State of Florida. Arfmann was injured in the line of duty and in June 2000, retired from the Clearwater Police Department.

