



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SILVER ALERT SYSTEM
- Alzheimer's Association® Statement -

There are an estimated 5.2 million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease and this number is expected to grow to as many as 16 million by 2050. Today six out of 10 people with Alzheimer's disease will wander from their homes or caregiving facilities. If not found within a 24-hour period, up to half will suffer serious injury or death. Even in one's own neighborhood or a place that is familiar, the person living with Alzheimer's may become disoriented and lost. The Alzheimer's Association supports federal legislation, including the "*Silver Alert Grant Program Act of 2008*" (H.R. 5898) and the "*National Silver Alert Act*" (H.R. 6064), that create systems that provide families a way to locate lost or missing seniors who may be endangered. States such as Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina and Texas have established state-administered notification systems, similar to the Amber Alert system, to help disseminate relevant information about missing seniors and those with dementia related illnesses to local law enforcement and community support network.

Although "Silver Alert" and "Amber Alert" have the same goal – the safe return of an individual to one's home and family, there are still distinct differences between the two programs. Amber Alert is a well established federally funded program with a strong community identity that involves searching for a minor who has not simply wandered off, but has been taken or abducted, calling for an immediate and broad response. Silver Alerts, at this point, are fairly new state programs that involve vulnerable adults who have wandered off by themselves. As 95 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease who wander are found just over a mile from their place of residence or last location seen, the search techniques that are necessary are very different from those required with an Amber Alert.

The Alzheimer's Association supports a comprehensive approach to the creation of a system that would address the needs of persons with dementia and their families. This approach would include authorizing grants for law enforcement dementia training that would not only contain a wandering prevention component but would also coordinate efforts between families, caregivers, and local authorities. The system would need to be interoperable with existing programs such as MedicAlert® +Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return Program®.

Silver Alerts can enhance existing successful programs, such as the MedicAlert + Safe Return program, a nationwide identification, support and enrollment program that provides assistance when a person with Alzheimer's or a related dementia has wandered and becomes lost either locally or far from home. In addition to helping those who have wandered, the program also provides first respondents with vital medical history that may be necessary to treat the person with Alzheimer's who may not be able to communicate the information.

As the threat of Alzheimer's disease continues to touch more and more people's lives, the safety and security of those with Alzheimer's or dementia-related illnesses will continue to be a tremendous concern to us all. In order to address this growing population, the Alzheimer's Association is committed to working with lawmakers to ensure that safety issues are raised in the context of comprehensive federal and state Alzheimer's disease planning that better acknowledges the unique needs of the cognitively impaired. The most effective system will include collaboration and cooperation between families, all levels of government, and organizations that support local communities, like the Alzheimer's Association.

The Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit www.alz.org.

MedicAlert®+Safe Return® Program

Established in 1993, the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return program is a nationwide identification, support and enrollment program that provides assistance when a person with Alzheimer's or a related dementia has wandered by notifying local law enforcement and local Alzheimer chapters to assist in locating the missing individual. For over 50 years, MedicAlert has protected and saved lives by providing identification and medical information in emergencies. In 2007, the organizations joined forces to create MedicAlert® + Safe Return®. Through this alliance, MedicAlert + Safe Return has increased its outreach and awareness efforts to proactively protect people diagnosed with dementia in case of a medical emergency or wandering incident.

- Ninety nine percent of MedicAlert + Safe Return enrollees are found within 24 hours of being reported missing.
- Eighty eight percent of MedicAlert + Safe Return enrollees are found within four hours of being reported missing.
- Currently there are 160,000 enrollees of the MedicAlert + Safe Return program and there have been over 13,000 successful reunions.