

# The Journal Times

## MAKE A CONNECTION

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### Local News

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## Officials hope ID kits will help keep aging residents safe

BY STEPHANIE BRIEN  
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Many parents create identification kits to help locate their children if they get lost or run away. But with the help of a local grant, the Volunteer Center of Racine County is turning the tables and it has already had an effect.

Instead of parents helping their children create kits, grown children can help create identification kits for their aging parents who are prone to wandering or confusion because of dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

The volunteer center has a grant to provide SafeAssured ID kits for 1,000 Racine County residents 55 and older. The kit includes fingerprints, a picture, contact information and a images of the person walking and talking.

The program came in handy April 30 when a 60-year-old Caledonia man wandered from home.

The Caledonia Police Department assigned at least six officers to the case, said Caledonia Assistant Police Chief John Barnes. Thanks to the SafeAssured program, police were able to work with the man's wife to print pictures of him almost immediately.

"I was handed (a flier) when I got in the driveway," Barnes said. In less than an hour and a half they were able to locate the man.

"It's a good resource not only for investigators, but to area residents if it goes out to the media," said Lt. Dan Klatt of the Racine County Sheriff's Department. His department has not searched for people with dementia very often, but it has happened. They have gone missing from nursing homes, care centers and personal homes, Klatt said.

The SafeAssured program started as something for children, but when the volunteer center held events people started asking about creating kits for their aging parents, said Dave Voss, outreach coordinator at the volunteer center.

The county has identified 3,000 people living in the county with dementia or Alzheimer's disease, Voss said. The center received a \$21,000 grant from the Racine Community Foundation to fund 1,000 ID kits. The grant will ensure a third of those people will have ID kits.

Dennis Voll, director of social services at Ridgewood Care Center, has welcomed the new program to his center. An alarm system is in place to protect wandering residents from leaving the building unattended. But that protective measure is not there if a resident leaves the facility to spend time with family or friends.

Voll identified 67 residents who should receive the kits, but has to wait for their guardians' permission before going ahead with it. Five residents are signed up to create kits next week, and he expects more to come.

Recently Voll was watching the news and saw a man was missing in Milwaukee, but he couldn't really identify it from the picture.

This new program will help that. The kit includes a video of the person walking and talking.

"A lot of people would go out looking for a home that doesn't exist," Voll said. "It's pretty much that they would just be at risk of physical harm or be taken advantage of."

To make an appointment, call (262) 886-9612 and ask for Dave Ross.

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