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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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## Press Release

For Immediate Release: September 26, 2014

### **Town of Dedham Joins Silver Alert Pilot Program**

The Town of Dedham is participating in the Silver Alert Pre-registration Pilot Program. The goal of the pilot program is to make critical information available to local (and neighboring) police departments through a “pre-registration” process before a senior with dementia and a tendency to wander is reported missing. We are expanding this program to include residents with any serious cognitive impairment.

According to the Alzheimer’s Association’s 2014 Facts and Figures report, an estimated 5.2 million Americans of all ages have Alzheimer’s disease. Further, 1 in 9 older Americans has Alzheimer’s disease. The Autism Society estimates that 1 % of the world population has autism spectrum disorder. In the United States, it is estimated that 1 in 68 births is affected. These are two examples of cognitive impairments which can lead to a tendency to wander.

Wandering refers to a need to keep on the move. Wandering is unpredictable. An Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders SAR Research report estimates there are 125,000 critical wandering incidents in the United States each year. A Journal of Pediatrics research study revealed that 49% of parents reporting indicated a child with autism spectrum disorder had attempted to wander or run away at least once after age 4. Wandering can expose the person to hazards such as traffic and weather conditions.

As a proactive measure to protect vulnerable residents, the Dedham Police Department and the Dedham Council on Aging are working together to pre-register those at risk by gathering and sharing information which may be helpful in locating cognitively impaired persons who have been reported missing. Up to date digital photos of such residents will be taken along with the collection of confidential information which can be used to respond to and help locate a missing person.

Residents with a family member of any age who suffers from a serious cognitive impairment are encouraged to contact Officer Richard Cawley of the Dedham Police Department at 781 751-9328 or Laura Leventhal of the Dedham Council on Aging at 781 326-1650 for more information and to register before a serious situation may arise.

*The mission of the Dedham Police Department is to protect and serve the citizens of Dedham through collaboration, preventative programs and the judicious enforcement of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the by-laws of the Town of Dedham.*