

TWIN-BORO NEWS

AUGUST 18, 2016

northjersey.com/twinboro

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

SINCE 1947 ■ BERGENFIELD ■ DUMONT ■ NEW MILFORD



Clockwise, from far right: Paul Jetter, founder and chief executive officer of Safely Back Home, speaks to an audience about the benefits of enrolling in the program at a presentation at David E. Owens Middle School in New Milford; a sample shows an imprint of contact information on a sleeve of a T-shirt; and, a full display of imprinted clothes.



PHOTOS BY BERNADETTE MARCINIAK AND KEVIN RILEY



NEW MILFORD

Peace of mind for caregivers of those who wander

BY TARA HOPFENSPIRGER
Correspondent

It was the "scariest time" of Carlos Pinzon's life, said the New Milford father of three.

Two years ago, he said his younger son, Daniel, wandered away from home.

"Three different police departments were looking for him," he went on, adding Daniel, who has special needs, eventually was found unharmed in a church in Dumont.

But, Pinzon and his family

don't worry as much now about Daniel's habit to wander.

He wears clothes that identify who he is, should he ever get lost again.

Since last fall, the New Milford Police Department has partnered with Safely Back Home, a program providing peace of mind to families and caregivers of people who tend to wander, like Daniel.

The program was created to help those with disabilities, involving getting lost or becoming easily confused.

Its founder and chief executive

Safely Back Home strongly endorsed by local police department

officer, Paul Jetter, came up with the idea for the program to be used especially by people suffering from autism, Alzheimer's or any form of dementia.

Imprints of identifying information are put on garments of the person who tends to wander.

The imprint includes the Safely Back Home logo, a unique ID number and a phone number to reach local police.

ID numbers are assigned by local police, and they connect

people wearing imprinted clothes to pertinent information in the department's database.

Jetter, of Sussex County, explained, "There's a recent photo of that child or adult, so police can positively identify them; there's contact information for the caregiver, and any other emergency contacts; and, there's special medical information."

Jetter said the program was established in Garfield, Mahwah, North Arlington and Dumont

before it made its way to New Milford.

"And, the last piece is very important," he added. "There are words, phrases or topics, given to us by the caregiver, which they know will keep the lost person calm."

Police Chief Frank Ramaci said he was looking for a program like Safely Back Home for the borough.

SEE BACK HOME, PAGE 5

■ INDEX ■

DINING OUT	23	OPINION	8
ENTERTAINMENT	22	POLICE REPORTS	17
MARKETPLACE	28	REAL ESTATE AND BUSINESS	24
OBITUARIES	16	SPORTS	19

■ THIS WEEK IN TBN ■

Fun, games, crime prevention

We have a full display of photos taken at the annual National Night Out on

Kennedy Field in New Milford on Aug. 2.

Page 3



RE/MAX INTEGRITY

75 E. Madison Ave., Dumont

201-385-8100 x10

cell (201) 233-9498

EACH OFFICE INDEPENDENTLY OWNED & OPERATED

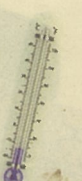


Joseph Binetti, Realtor



The Temperature May Be High...
But **MORTGAGE RATES**
Are Still Really **LOW!**

Call me for a **FREE Market Analysis 201-233-9498.**



4068677 ©NJNG

BACK HOME

FROM PAGE 1

The chief said a lost person who can't communicate or identify himself or herself most likely would stumble upon another citizen who would, in turn, alert the department.

"Responding officers then would identify that person by looking at his or her Safely Back Home shirt, or other clothing, and contact the department of origin," the chief said.

"In my department," he added, "we created a separate file for Safely Back Home persons. When another agency calls to say they have one of our residents who appears lost, we then can communicate and interact with that agency. We can forward their photo, and any of special care information, to that other agency."

The chief learned about the program at a meeting of the Bergen County Police Chiefs Association in June 2015, where he said he was impressed by Jetter's presentation.

The chief then asked Patrolman Keith Wester and two other police officers to follow up and to explore the possibility of starting the program locally.

Wester, a 13-year veteran of the department, is school resource officer for David E. Owens Middle School.

He said he invited families who may be interested in learning more about the program to a presentation by Jetter there in October. Five families attended, and he said, some signed up on the spot.

Last summer, a situation occurred that helped to convince Wester a program like Safely Back Home was a good idea to implement in New Milford.

Wester said an 8-year-old autistic child, being watched by his grandmother, ran out of the family's apartment.

"He jumped on a train in River Edge and ended up in Park Ridge," Wester said. "Thank goodness a lady who saw him on the train contacted police, and his grandmother came in for help."

"If we had Safely Back Home then," he added, "we'd have saved time and resources, and it would've been much easier to reunite the boy with his grandmother."

Pinzon and his wife, Claudia, enrolled Daniel in the program in the fall.

Pinzon said he believes the program is successful in New Milford because it's linked to law enforcement.

"I had to register my kids with the police department," Pinzon said. "I like that they know I have special-needs kids in my home. Because if a call goes to them about an incident at my house, they know who's there and what to expect. They can send someone prepared or trained to deal with it."

All agree the program would be more beneficial if other police departments participated.

Jetter said he plans to reach out to county prosecutors, so that they

may present information about the program to local departments statewide.

Inter-agency cooperation is key, Ramaci said.

"The more police departments in North Jersey that have this program, the better we can cover our bases," the chief said. "Our goal would be to enlist as many people as possible who have these problems in our Safely Back Home project."

Jetter said he believes back-to-school season is a perfect time for families to enroll in the program.

Jetter had planned to spread word of the program at National Night Out on Aug. 2; families were given opportunities to enroll and to drop off clothes for imprinting.

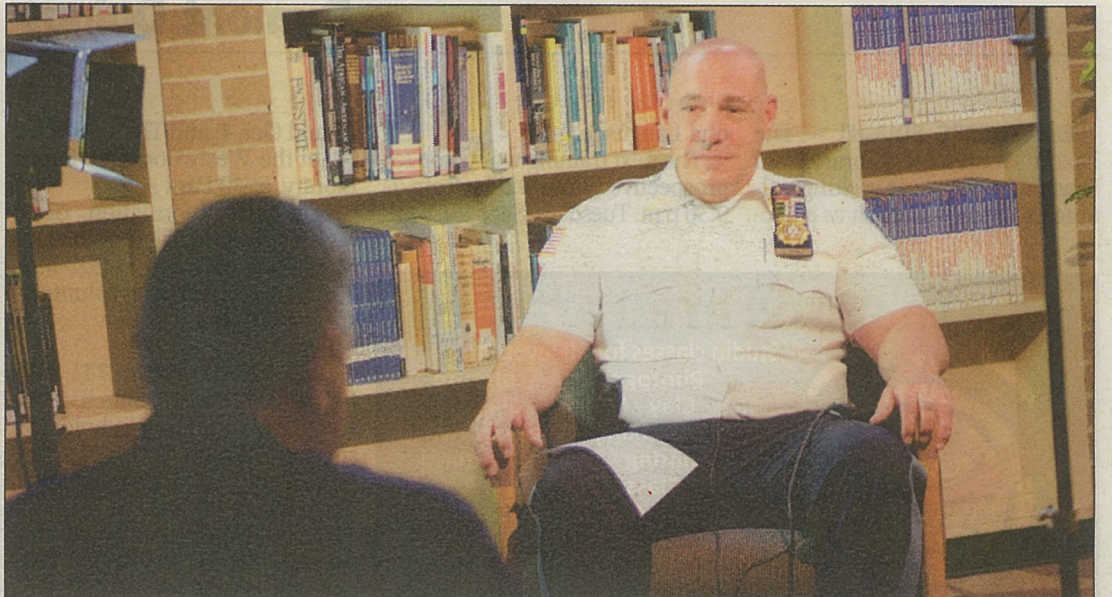
Safely Back Home offers to imprint three articles of clothing at no cost. Each additional article of clothing costs \$12, including the price of imprinting, pick up and delivery.

Families may imprint whatever type of clothing they wish – from coats in the winter, to bathing suits in the summer.

Discrete imprints can include personal contact information, rather than that of the department. They also may be done in any language.

Imprints are white on dark clothes, or royal blue on light clothes.

Jetter said he started the program by imprinting an iron-on transfer, but learned quickly that method may not be suitable for



STAFF PHOTO BY BERNADETTE MARCINIAK

New Milford Police Chief Frank Ramaci is interviewed at David E. Owens Middle School for a video being taped to promote Safely Back Home.

some people with special needs.

"The feedback I received from caregivers of people with autism was it was a great idea, but that the decal material bothered their child," Jetter said. "So, I changed it to a very soft vinyl material, equal in softness to the fabric."

Jetter said he gives families an option to order shirts with imprints already on them. And, for those without tactile issues, he said he also offers the iron-on transfers for caregivers to put on themselves.

"With our printing technique," he added, "and because of the

resulting softness, children don't notice a difference in the feel of the imprint on their clothing."

Pinzon said the only drawback he's encountered is that Daniel grows out of his imprinted clothes so rapidly.

"If we were to find something we can transfer from the old garment to a new one, that would be incredible," Pinzon said.

Safely Back Home is in the process of becoming a nonprofit.

The program has a partnership in place with Project Lifesaver International, which uses radio-tracking bracelets and search-and-

rescue teams to find lost people.

"I met with people at Project Lifesaver International," Jetter said, "and we decided Safely Back Home perfectly complements what they already do. People can sign up solely for Safely Back Home, or use it in conjunction with Project Lifesaver."

To enroll in Safely Back Home in New Milford, call Jetter at 201-874-4054, or the New Milford Police Department at 201-261-1400. Registration forms are available at police headquarters, 930 River Road.