September 18, 2023

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

Recently some members of the River Edge Police Department attended training entitled “Autism Recognition and Response”, instructed by POAC Autism Services. While at the training, members learned about how to recognize many of the signs and behaviors that children with Autism can present with. Members who attended were also given suggestions in how to communicate with and interact with Autistic children while on calls.

The River Edge Police Department is making it easier to help our citizens who may be lost, scared or have difficulty communicating with police officers and first responders. Our Autism/Special Needs registry is designed for residents who may be challenged with the developmental disabilities associated with Autism, regardless of where they fall on the spectrum. We have created this program to assist your loved ones who may be at a higher risk for wandering, getting lost, or who have difficulty communicating with others.

Interested family members and caregivers are asked to complete the registration form regarding their loved one. The form provides useful information to responding police officers and first responders. To ensure a completed registration form, we are also asking for a current digital photograph of the affected family member. This information will be stored in a database intended solely for this purpose, accessible only by law enforcement personnel, and will not be disseminated. The completed files will be accessible to our police officers during times of emergency (elopement, lost, wandering, etc…). This program is voluntary, however the information provided is extremely helpful to our officers whose purpose is to keep all members of our community safe.

 This is where we turn to you, the parent. We are asking that you voluntarily provide us with your child’s name and address so we can make a notation of it in our dispatch system. This way if Officers respond to your home, they are better prepared to deal with the call. We also want to bring your attention to the Life Saver Program, offered by the Bergen County Sheriff’s Office. The program uses radio technology to help locate missing persons. Participants wear a bracelet, equipped with a transmitter which can aid in locating the missing person once reported. For more information you can contact the Sheriff’s Office at [www.bcsd.us](http://www.bcsd.us) or by phone 201-646-3020.

 We are also rolling out our Blue Envelope Project which is a nationwide movement that is administered locally for those with Autism that drive. The primary goal of the Blue Envelope is to aid drivers with ASD with document organization and to educate them about what to do during a motor vehicle stop. Please review the Blue Envelope and the Emergency Contact Form with those under your care and create a plan customized to their needs. If you need assistance, River Edge Police Department can help you with the plan. The Blue Envelope also helps the Police Officer by identifying those with ASD and guides them on how to better interact with them.

 Should you wish to participate in either program please return the attached form to the REPD at your earliest convenience. Inquiries can be made to Detective Staron via Jstaron@riveredgepolice.org or Sergeant Zemaites via Jzemaites@riveredgepolice.org. Blue Envelopes are available for pickup at the River Edge Police Department.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Walker

Chief of Police