

Friday, November 14, 2008

New York State Senator

John A. DeFrancisco

50th Senate District

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SENATOR DEFRANCISCO SECURES FUNDING FOR NAVAC'S WILDERNESS SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

Senator John A. DeFrancisco (R-I-C, Syracuse) today announced a \$10,000 grant for the North Area Volunteer Ambulance Corps' Wilderness Search and Rescue Team. Senator DeFrancisco joined NAVAC Executive Director Christopher Bitner, Onondaga County Sheriff Kevin E. Walsh and Undersheriff Warren Darby at a press conference this morning to discuss how the funding will help to improve Onondaga County's ability to locate missing individuals. A representative from WSAR will also be in attendance.

"We must do all that we can to help ensure that missing individuals are returned safely to their loved ones," said Senator DeFrancisco. "I am very pleased that I was able to secure funding for NAVAC's Search and Rescue Team to purchase new equipment to help locate missing individuals quickly, before anything happens to them."

The Wilderness Search and Rescue Team (WSAR) is an organization made up of volunteers from in and around Onondaga County. These volunteers receive intensive training so that they have the skills necessary to assist in managing an organized search and rescue operation.

With Senator DeFrancisco's grant WSAR will be able to move forward with the Project Lifesaver Program in Central New York. Project Lifesaver assists family members and caregivers in finding those who suffer from Alzheimer's, Down Syndrome, Autism and other related Mental Dysfunction Disorders (ARMD) and have become lost. This program places personalized radio transmitters on individuals with ARMD so that caregivers and local officials can quickly locate and rescue a lost person. Two years ago, Senator DeFrancisco secured \$25,000 to assist the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department with the startup of this program.

"Senator DeFrancisco, with this funding designated to the Wilderness Search and Rescue Team, has stepped forward and embraced members of our community who are most in need," said NAVAC Executive Director Christopher Bitner. "With this funding for the Project Lifesaver Program, our Wilderness Search and Rescue Team now has the ability to locate someone who is missing and in definite need of assistance, and help them get back to safety."

"Project Lifesaver is the most up-to-date technology that allows searchers to find wandering victims in the most expeditious manner possible," said Undersheriff Warren Darby. "When people have been lost in the past, circumstances such as weather conditions in Central New York have become a major factor in their recovery. The monitoring capabilities of Project Lifesaver along with the partnership between the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department and the Wilderness Search and Rescue Team will create a program that will promote a quicker and safer recovery of a victim."

The funding Senator DeFrancisco secured will be used to purchase new equipment, including transmitters for patients and receivers, a computer to log information about missing individuals, a trailer to house and transport the equipment, and it will provide for specialized training.

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