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Premise Alert is safety tool for people with special needs
County Council recognizes Developmental Disability Awareness Month

Premise Alert, a method to alert first responders about individuals with special needs, was highlighted Tuesday, March 16, as part of Delaware County Council's program to recognize March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

The Premise Alert System is a statewide program that provides a written form for families and caregivers to complete and give to their local police department. The form alerts responders that an individual has special needs, which can include a developmental disability, Alzheimer's disease, autism, limited mobility or a mental health challenge.

By alerting local police about a person's unique needs, the police and emergency responders will be better able to address an emergency where the resident might have a medical condition, or a physical or mental limitation that would require special attention.

County Council Chairman Jack Whelan was joined by members of the Arc of Delaware County and staff from the County Office of Human Services to present information on Premise Alert. Chair

Whelan also presented a resolution declaring Developmental Disability Awareness Month in Delaware County to members of Delarc.

Delarc members were joined by Trainer Police Chief James Magaw, head of the Delaware County Police Chiefs Association, in encouraging residents to fill out a Premise Alert form for family members with special needs and to personally present it to their police department.

Premise Alert was created by a Chester County police chief and the mother of a boy with autism and mental retardation who had a tendency to wander from secure settings. The program went statewide in 2008 and is also being replicated in other states across the country.

The Premise Alert information is intended for local police, who keep it on file to help the local officers know what situation they may be going into when they respond to a particular address. Local law enforcement agencies can notify the County Emergency Operations (911) Center that it is a Premise Alert household. The full information, which is also helpful when an individual is missing, is kept at the local law enforcement agency.

“We are pleased to have members of the Arc here to recognize Developmental Disability Awareness Month and to help us inform residents about the Premise Alert program,” said Council Chairman Whelan. “This is an important safety tool that allows families to voluntarily notify their local police and other responders about their special circumstances.”

Representing Delarc at the Tuesday, March 16, Council meeting was Board President Robert Prince. He introduced Delarc staff, board members and individuals in attendance.

“Arc families appreciate the chance to spread the word about our organization, and to shine a light on our members who contribute so much to the Delaware County community,” said Mr. Prince. “It’s also important for us to make valuable safety information, such as Premise Alert, available to the community. We thank Police Chief Magaw for helping us to reach out to Delaware County’s law enforcement community.”

“We encourage families who have a person with special needs living in their home to contact our office for a Premise Alert form, or to go online at www.papremisealert.com and download one,” Mr. Prince added.

Dorothy Klein, county director of Human Services, said that county Supports Coordinators could make the Premise Alert information available when people register with the Office of Mental Retardation.

Nancy Lowry, of the OMR staff, said families will also be made aware of Premise Alert through the Everyday Lives Committee, a group of stakeholders who work to ensure that people with developmental disabilities can lead “everyday lives” in the community.

For more information about Pennsylvania Premise Alert call (610) 284-2205 or visit www.papremisealert.com

For information about the Office of Human Services, call (610) 891-713-2406.

For information about the Arc of Delaware County, call (610) 544-6600.



RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Delaware County Council Chairman Jack Whelan (center) was joined by members of the Arc of Delaware County and Trainer Police Chief James Magaw in recognizing March as Developmental Disability Awareness Month, and informing the public about the Premise Alert emergency information program. Shown at the March 16 Council meeting are, front from left, Robert Prince, president of the Arc board, Arc members Don Haffelfinger, Matt Wetherill, David DeFino, Noreen O'Connor, Chairman Whelan, Amanda Rothstein, Police Chief Magaw and John O'Malley, and back row, Council members Andy Lewis, Tom McGarrigle, Christine Fizzano Cannon and Mario Civera. For more information about the Arc or Premise Alert, call (610) 544-6600.