

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to an electronic monitoring program for  
 3           tracking lost persons; establishing a grant program to  
 4           encourage counties to implement county lifesaver programs;  
 5           describing the components of the program; designating the  
 6           Department of Law Enforcement as the administrative  
 7           agency; providing for application for state grant funds  
 8           and requiring local matching funds; providing a cap on the  
 9           amount of a grant and for prioritizing and prorating  
 10          grants; requiring the county sheriff's office or other  
 11          lead agency to use the funds for purchasing equipment and  
 12          training; requiring the solicitation of private moneys and  
 13          the achievement of financial independence for the program  
 14          within a specified time; providing an effective date.

15  
 16           WHEREAS, more than 5 million United States residents have  
 17          Alzheimer's disease and more than 50 percent of those  
 18          individuals wander and become lost, and

19           WHEREAS, autism is the fastest-growing serious  
 20          developmental disability in the United States and many autistic  
 21          individuals wander and are attracted to water, causing drowning  
 22          to be the leading cause of death for children who have autism,  
 23          and

24           WHEREAS, Project Lifesaver is a search-and-rescue program  
 25          that can quickly find wandering individuals who have Alzheimer's  
 26          disease, autism, Down syndrome, or other mental impairments, and

27           WHEREAS, Project Lifesaver was established in Virginia in  
 28          1999 and has been implemented by law enforcement agencies and

29 public safety agencies across the country, and

30 WHEREAS, agencies that sponsor local lifesaver programs  
 31 have stated that the program materially reduces the time  
 32 required to find lost persons, often to less than one-half hour  
 33 after the person is reported missing, within which period there  
 34 is a 100 percent recovery rate, and

35 WHEREAS, 16 Florida counties and 5 police departments have  
 36 implemented lifesaver programs, NOW, THEREFORE,

37

38 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

39

40 Section 1. Lifesaver program grants.--

41 (1) A state grant program is established to encourage each  
 42 county in this state to implement a lifesaver program that is  
 43 modeled after Project Lifesaver, a search-and-rescue program  
 44 designed to quickly find a lost or wandering person who is  
 45 mentally impaired due to Alzheimer's disease, autism, Down  
 46 syndrome, or other causes. The program uses small transmitters,  
 47 which are usually worn on a participant's wrist, to  
 48 electronically track lost or wandering participants. A county  
 49 sheriff's office or other lead agency is equipped with receivers  
 50 that track the transmitters.

51 (2) The Department of Law Enforcement shall administer the  
 52 grant program, manage the state moneys appropriated for the  
 53 purpose of starting county programs, and serve as a liaison to  
 54 county lifesaver programs.

55 (3) To apply for state grant moneys for implementing a  
 56 county lifesaver program, a county sheriff's office or other

57 lead agency must submit an application annually by October 1,  
58 which includes:

59 (a) An estimate of the number of people who might qualify  
60 for lifesaver assistance;

61 (b) An estimate of the startup cost;

62 (c) A statement of the number of personnel available for  
63 tracking lost individuals; and

64 (d) The source or sources and the amount of local funds  
65 available for matching state grant moneys.

66 (4) The department shall prioritize the grant moneys in  
67 accordance with the respective counties' needs for tracking  
68 services, the availability of local sources to provide matching  
69 funds, and the date the application was received by the  
70 department. The maximum grant that a county may receive for  
71 startup is \$10,000, and the amount awarded must be matched,  
72 dollar for dollar, by local funds. Grants awarded to qualifying  
73 counties must be prorated in accordance with the availability of  
74 state funds.

75 (5) The county sheriff's office or other lead agency shall  
76 use the grant money and matching funds to purchase the necessary  
77 equipment and training to implement a county lifesaver program.  
78 Through its community resource officer, the sheriff's office or  
79 other lead agency shall solicit moneys from private sources so  
80 as to ensure that within 3 years the lifesaver program is self-  
81 supporting and no longer requires state funding.

82 Section 2. The sum of \$670,000 is appropriated from the  
83 General Revenue Fund to the Department of Law Enforcement for  
84 the 2008-2009 fiscal year for the purpose of awarding grants to

HB 279

2008

85 counties that qualify under this act to start a county lifesaver  
86 program.

87 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008.