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December 3, 2024

Media Release
Special Needs Awareness and Preparation
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Marshall County Sheriff's Office

The Marshall County Sheriff's Department is proud to announce a new partnership with the Linked-Autism Safety Project, an innovative program designed to improve interactions between emergency responders and individuals in the autism and special needs communities.

The LINKED program was created by Ashley McClain, the mother of an autistic child, with the help of public safety professionals, autism experts, and parents. This voluntary registration program aims to collect vital information about individuals with autism and special needs to ensure that first responders can provide the best possible assistance during emergencies.

Caregivers of Marshall County residents with autism or other special needs are invited to register their loved ones either online through the Sheriff's Department website (link to be added) or by visiting the Sheriff's Office in person to complete a paper form. The registration provides crucial details to first responders, enabling them to prepare for emergency situations in advance and tailor their response to the individual's specific needs.

All information provided through the LINKED program will be kept secure and confidential, accessible only to the Marshall County Sheriff's Deputies and emergency responders dispatched by the MCSO (Lacon Police Dept., Henry Police Dept., and all Marshall County Fire/EMS).

As part of the program, each registered family will receive a Family Emergency Planning Packet. This packet includes personalized instructions, a guide with tips and tools for navigating emergencies, and an emergency preparedness social story. Created by experts, the social story

offers a visual and text-based learning tool that helps bridge communication between families, professionals, and individuals with special needs.

Additionally, the Marshall County Sheriff's Department will equip all patrol vehicles with sensory packs. These packs, recommended by professionals, contain various sensory products and communication tools that deputies can use when interacting with individuals who are nonverbal or have sensory processing challenges.

The department is committed to supporting the autism and special needs communities, not only by offering these services but also through ongoing participation in specialized training to better understand and serve those with intellectual, cognitive, and physical disabilities.

This program is available at no cost to all Marshall County residents. For any questions or further information, please contact the Marshall County Sheriff's Office.