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## NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: CYNTHIA SCOTT, PIO  
PHONE: 732-431-6400 ext. 1113

### **MONMOUTH COUNTY SHERIFF, PROSECUTOR & POLICE CHIEFS TO KICK OFF AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH**

**Monmouth County:** Autism Awareness Month begins April 1 and this year the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office, the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office and the Monmouth County Police Chief's Association will be commemorating the notable month by promoting awareness of this disorder and all the support available to those members of our community with autism. Throughout April law enforcement personnel will be lighting it up blue by wearing blue shirts on designated days, and police officers will proudly sport autism decals on police cruisers, donated to law enforcement agencies in Monmouth County by Autism Awareness With The Kelly Family.

The kickoff to Autism Awareness Month will be held April 5, when the **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Autism Forum and Resource Fair** gets underway at the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office, for members of law enforcement and parents/caregivers of special-needs individuals. This extremely informative forum will provide insightful topics of discussion on services and programs special-needs individuals and their family members can benefit from, as well as demonstrations. Two notable topics will include the Project Lifesaver Program, which involves wristlets using radio signals to track people with autism and Alzheimer's disease when they wander and become missing, and the Special Needs Registry, which provides vital information to first responders of an individual's special needs in the event of an emergency.

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A new and important initiative called the Blue Envelope Program will also be unveiled by the Monmouth County Police Chiefs Association at the forum to safeguard special needs individuals while driving.

“Although this annual event is held during National Autism Awareness Month, the Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office and our partners in law enforcement are committed to acknowledging Autism Spectrum Disorder all year long, through our useful programs, in an effort to maintain the safety of individuals and spare families a lot of anxiety when locating or responding to a loved one’s needs,” said Sheriff Shaun Golden. “Every individual on the autism spectrum deserves an opportunity to succeed in life. It’s our job to assist them during their journey, to teach them that first responders support them and will help bring them closer to all that they can accomplish.”

“Through initiatives such as the Special Needs Registry, Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training, this upcoming event and installation of the Blue Envelope Program, our commitment to protecting and serving community members with autism remains a key area of focus for our office as well as Monmouth County law enforcement as a whole,” Monmouth County Prosecutor Raymond S. Santiago stated. “We sincerely thank our partners with the Sheriff’s Office, under the leadership of Sheriff Golden, and the Police Chief’s Association, under the leadership of Oceanport Police Chief Michael Kelly, for jointly dedicating our resources and efforts in furtherance of this goal.”

A variety of participation options will be available to those attending the forum including demonstrations of bloodhound tracking, Project Lifesaver tracking and equipment, drone demonstrations, static displays and tours of the Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office Communications Center at which Project Lifesaver and Special Needs Registry calls are received.

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