SPECIAL REPORT - DO WE CARE?
Ne Need Your Help

This is a request for your help.

Don’t believe what I’m asking is wrong; on the contrary, it is simple, requires absolutely no money and at cost, requires less than a minute of your time.

As more fully stated by UNLV Clinical Science professor (and we’re proud to announce, new Vegas Voice columnist) Martin Sean Doolan, the odd professor outlines the purpose and reasons for a Silver Alert system in Nevada. The proposal is presently before the state legislature.

I don’t want to other you with facts and figures, nor do I want to sound like some moral goody-two-shoes attempting to pass a law at NO taxpayer cost (that is relatively easy, proper, and most importantly, the right thing to do).

Hopefully, the odds that you will ever need, or perhaps even know anyone who will be “named” under the Silver Alert system are longer than winning the lottery. And may God forbid that you (or more importantly your parent, spouse or any loved one) may ever be in need of such an alert and there is none in place.

Simply stated, a Silver Alert is the same as the current Amber Alert, but instead of missing or kidnapped children, would apply to a person over 65 suffering from a “mental impairment” — and that such disappearance presents a danger to that person’s health or safety.

Please do not misunderstand this process. The public (or the public authorities) will not drop everything, form the proverbial posse and search for the missing individual. But it will post the appropriate notice on the overhead electronic freeway signs and even a mention on TV/Radio.

Now I fully realize and appreciate that our Legislature has quite a few problems with our State budget. And I can certainly appreciate and understand the concern for the “cost” of such a program.

But here’s my answer to this legitimate question: The cost should (and would) be at most minimal. Since the Amber Alert system is already in place and operating, there is no reason why it should cost anything and if and when the federal government establishes a National Silver Alert, federal funds would go to Nevada.

As my Amy and I (and now our partners Cheryl and Lew) “play” with The Vegas Voice and meet people from all over the Valley, we are always amazed when our conversations turn to life suffering illnesses. Regrettably at this point in our lives, we do not know of a single person who has not, directly or indirectly been touched by someone suffering from dementia or Alzheimer’s.

The concerns, problems and family (as well as social) responsibilities are enormous, and don’t think for a second, that this issue is not going to explode as America’s Greatest Generation and Baby Boomers approach their senior years.

Greater minds than Yours Truly will discuss, argue and debate the vast health care issues now facing our country. The purpose of this article however, is to hopefully address one very small issue and at best, save a life or two every year.

The idea that “Mom” or “Dad” (or substitute any relative or friend) “wanderin’ away” could easily be a punch line for some joke — if it was not very real. In all probability this confused, misplaced senior was a family man, a veteran who honorably served his country, paid his taxes, took care of his wife and kids and never sought, nor requested any government aid.

Equally telling, this individual still has a support system — otherwise no one would have tried to alert authorities in the first place. How do we as a society not provide even a remote chance of saving him?

Well, that’s my sermon. Next month I’ll go back to writing about my wife and kids. Meanwhile, all I ask is that you fill out the attached petition and either fax (878-5874) or mail the page. If you don’t have a fax machin or a stamp, call me at 251-4441 and I’ll fill it out for you. You can also email your support to: silveralert@thegasvoice.net.

The Vegas Voice intends to personally deliver all petitions for a Nevada Silver Alert system to the Legislature.

As I previously said, hopefully, you will never need, nor know anyone who relies on the Silver Alert. But can you imagine the joy and satisfaction you will receive by your support which the Silver Alert saves the first person.
A Case for the Silver (Amber) Alert Initiative

When a child in the community is missing and time is of the essence, new law enforcement activates the Amber Alert. Relatively new, the Amber Alert, launched in Texas in 1996, routinely focuses immediate resources throughout the community to locate endangered children. Those initial hours are crucial. But what happens when an adult with dementia or Alzheimer’s becomes isolated or vanishes?

On February 2nd, the Nevada legislature will meet for a scant 120 days to decide many important tasks and won’t return for another two years. One of those tasks is whether the state will implement a Silver Alert system to aid those in dire need.

The Vegas Voice, along with several senior groups and elected representatives, has voiced their support for this important measure to be adopted. As part of that effort, I was asked to pen a piece introducing the Silver Alert, briefly explaining how it works and how you can personally support this effort.

The proposed Silver Alert initiative will mirror the Amber Alert, except that it will focus on seniors particularly those at risk with a dementia-related diagnosis. Typically, an adult suffering from Alzheimer’s, for example, may become disoriented and get lost shopping at a local mall or visiting a local park.

The family will likely contact the authorities once they have exhausted their immediate search. The authorities, in turn, based on set criteria—an adult is in imminent danger, as determined by law enforcement—will activate the system.

As with many emergencies, locating an adult suffering from dementia within the first few hours is vital to the individual’s safe return to their family. Electronic road signs, websites and billboards will be posted with key information, and text messages will be sent immediately to the appropriate participating agencies and voluntary recipients.

The full capability of a caring community will be brought to bear immediately, as opposed to a slow and methodical grind; an often piece-meal approach that is less likely to produce a positive outcome. As one officer was aptly quoted, “Time is my enemy.”

In Nevada, according to a 2006 UNLV Senior Survey, it’s estimated that approximately 720,000, or 28% of the 2.5 million population, are age 50 or older. It’s further estimated that nearly 40,000 people suffer from Alzheimer’s—let alone dementia—in Nevada.

The Alzheimer’s Association states that over 60 percent of those with dementia will wander at some point. Initially, there were important questions to be asked and satisfactorily answered as the first Silver Alert programs were adopted. Although the state Silver Alerts programs are new, they show promise.

For example, in Texas in its first year of operation, 27 of the 31 missing individuals reported were found immediately; due primarily to the alert program. Another question was whether the additional use of the system might desensitize alerts to the public, but that has not been the case thus far. Activation protocols are carefully written and strictly followed.

During a time of economic recession, costs of programs must also be scrutinized, but fortunately this initiative is directly modeled upon a pre-existing program. As such, it should not incur any substantive costs.

The Silver Alert currently exists in Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Georgia, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia. This alert is also pending in Louisiana, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania.

In addition, there is a federal bill, HR 6064, the ‘National Silver Alert Act’ that is pending in Congress. Passage of the federal bill will act as a granting mechanism that may assist those states in further developing or necessary additions.

In the state capital, a draft bill for this effort, BDR 38-148, was written and researched by the Legislative Counsel Bureau. It was then reintroduced and renamed as Assembly Bill 4 or AB 4 for short.

This is where your participation is key. Hearings and testimony are appropriately influenced by public participation and input. The Vegas Voice is asking for your participation in one of four very simple and easy ways.

You can complete the petition and mail it to The Vegas Voice or you can e-mail The Vegas Voice at silvertaxer@thevegasvoice.net. You can even telephone The Vegas Voice at 251-4441 and they will fill out the petition for you.

Once collected, these silver pages of support will be personally submitted to both the State Assembly and Senate. If all goes well, with your support, it will be signed into law by Nevada by the Governor.

Mahatma Gandhi is quoted as saying “A society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable.” In this endeavor, the Silver Alert initiative is promising. Your simple support in this vital effort could be significant to a person in dire need one day soon.
A Face for the Silver Alert

"Thank you for caring." That was just one short, but poignant comment we received in the mail over the past month.

As of our deadline, The Vegas Voice has received over 250 petitions from nearly 375 people who took the time to show their support for the Nevada Silver Alert System. We hope that this amount is only the beginning.

For those unaware, a Silver Alert is the same as the current Amber Alert, but instead of missing or kidnapped children, would apply to a person over 65 suffering from a "mental impairment" – and that such disappearance presents a danger to that person’s health or safety.

With their completed petitions and various telephone calls and emails, I lot of readers said some very kind and nice things about our Silver Alert campaign. What they did not know was that I was not being a humanitarian – but in actuality, quite selfish.

For you see, Grandpa Joe has been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s.

Grandpa Joe is my Army’s dad and he’s been living with us for over 9 years. Until a few months ago, his 97 year old grandfather of our 4 sons was in perfect health – both physically and mentally.

He met me when I was only 15 hanging around his house hoping to play with his then 12 year old daughter. He happily shared in our good times and was always there when family life challenged us. I couldn’t ask for a better father-in-law. Grandpa Joe puts together the house during the middle of the night. I can’t even begin to describe how a few weeks ago, he scared me half-to-death when I heard sounds around 3 am and saw a figure waving a lighted flashlight.

It would really be funny if it was not so heart-breaking. And then last month, with my Amy and me in the house, unknown to us, he walked outside and fell. While we later called it “The Great Escape,” do you have any idea what it’s like “finding” your father on the front lawn, all cut up and bleeding?

The guilt, the shame, the failure to “properly” watch and supervise our dad was and remains overwhelming. How did the parent become the child?

Who am I to tell him he can’t go outside at night, can’t have his wallet (he kept hiding it at night and couldn’t remember where he placed it in the morning – it was like playing hide and seek) and can’t have a beer with his morning breakfast?

Believe me, it is not my purpose to complain about Grandpa Joe – far from it; but how many Grandpa Joes are out there, right now, with other Vegas Voice readers going through the exact same circumstance?

As I wrote in last month’s article, we are not asking for a march on Carson City, protests around town or even a telephone/letter writing campaign. Just less than a minute of your time to fill out the petition and send it to The Vegas Voice.

Please support the Nevada Silver Alert system by either faxing (878-5874) or mailing the completed petition. If you don’t have a fax machine or a stamp, call me at 251-4441 and I’ll happily fill it out for you. You can also email your support through our Silver Alert link on our website: www.thegasvoice.net.

By the way, we fully expect Grandpa Joe to continue his Grins and Groans column. And whatever you do, for your own sake, when you see him around town, tell him you like our paper.

PETITION FOR NEVADA SILVER ALERT SYSTEM

This is my/our request for the Nevada Legislature to enact and implement a statewide Silver Alert System.

Name(s): ________________________________
Address: ________________________________

Registered Voter: □ Yes □ No
Voted in 2008 election: □ Yes □ No

Mail to: The Vegas Voice
Silver Alert Petition
2505 Anthem Village Drive
Suite E-513
Henderson, NV 89052

Or Fax to: (702) 878-5874
Or Email to: silveralert@thegasvoice.net
PETITION FOR NEVADA SILVER ALERT SYSTEM

This is my/our request for the Nevada Legislature to enact and implement a statewide Silver Alert System.

Name(s): J. Costa

Address: USA

Las Vegas [ ] Henderson [ ] North Las Vegas [ ] Zip Code: ...

Registered Voter: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Voted in 2008 election: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Mail to: The Vegas Voice
Silver Alert Petition
2505 Anthem Village Drive
Suite B-513
Henderson, NV 89052

Or Fax to: (702) 878-5874

PETITION FOR NEVADA SILVER ALERT SYSTEM

This is my/our request for the Nevada Legislature to enact and implement a statewide Silver Alert System.

Name(s): Elaine Oguinick

Address: ...

Las Vegas [ ] Henderson [ ] North Las Vegas [ ] Zip Code: ...

Registered Voter: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Voted in 2008 election: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Mail to: The Vegas Voice
Silver Alert Petition
2505 Anthem Village Drive
Suite B-513
Henderson, NV 89052

Or Fax to: (702)-878-5874

PETITION FOR NEVADA SILVER ALERT SYSTEM

This is my/our request for the Nevada Legislature to enact and implement a statewide Silver Alert System.

Name(s): Cheryl Bronich

Address: ...

Las Vegas [ ] Henderson [ ] North Las Vegas [ ] Zip Code: ...

Registered Voter: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Voted in 2008 election: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Mail to: The Vegas Voice
Silver Alert Petition
2505 Anthem Village Drive
Suite B-513
Henderson, NV 89052

Or Fax to: (702) 878-5874

PETITION FOR NEVADA SILVER ALERT SYSTEM

This is my/our request for the Nevada Legislature to enact and implement a statewide Silver Alert System.

Name(s): Lewis Desaritz

Address: ...

Las Vegas [ ] Henderson [ ] North Las Vegas [ ] Zip Code: ...

Registered Voter: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Voted in 2008 election: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Mail to: The Vegas Voice
Silver Alert Petition
2505 Anthem Village Drive
Suite B-513
Henderson, NV 89052

Or Fax to: (702) 878-5874

Or Email to: silveralert@thevegasvoice.net