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LifeLine™ Launches SNAP First Responder Training
SNAP - Special Needs Awareness Program

Chattanooga, Tennessee: LifeLine™ launched its new Special Needs Awareness Program (“SNAP”) on Monday, January 9, 2017, with the first of a planned multi week training for the Chattanooga Fire Department. For several years training and information on specific diagnoses or disability groups has been available to first responders, but this is the first time first responders will be trained with general disability information covering a multitude of different diagnoses, scenarios, and circumstances.

For co-authors Lisa Mattheiss and Skyler Phillips, this is a personal mission. In 2008, as part of National Council on Disability, Lisa listened to a gut-wrenching three day testimony from Hurricane Katrina responders and survivors. As the parent of a now 17 year old with spina bifida and multiple other disabilities, she vowed not to let that happen on her watch if she could prevent it. Skyler Phillips, a firefighter, first responder and father to a 6 year old child with autism, was looking for a way to give back to the community who helped him provide a service dog for his son. Together Lisa and Skyler began creating and building this training program in April 2016, with a goal to include information that would cover as many disabilities as possible. More than 30 diagnoses are specifically mentioned in the training, with symptoms of many more covered in the course.

SNAP is comprised of two parts:

- **First Responder Training** - It is our goal to equip police officers, fire fighters, and emergency medical services to respond with the greatest level of support and dignity when they encounter an opportunity to serve someone living with a disability and their family.
- **Family Emergency Preparedness Training** - This training (set to launch in Spring 2017) will include emergency preparedness for major community crisis or catastrophic events as well as preparation for personal emergencies that may occur at home, in a car, or in the community. Parents and caregivers will be equipped with information about how they can prepare to promote safety for themselves, the one they care for, and the first responder in a crisis situation where emergency personnel are called to their home, car wreck/breakdown, or medical emergency.

SNAP's Goals & Objectives for first responders include understanding the:

- Prevalence of disability in society and the challenges faced by families and how those impact their interaction with first responders
- Considerations for verbal exchanges and interactions with the person with a disability
- Verbal exchanges and interactions with family members and/or caregivers
- Ways to identify someone with special needs whose condition may initially be physically "invisible"
- Potential responses to someone overwhelmed by sensory stimulation, including the use of multiple de-escalation techniques
- Potential triggers for someone in an emergent situation and ways to reduce those triggers
- Understanding ways that Search & Rescue operations may change when involving a person with a disability

About LifeLine, Inc.: LifeLine, Inc. is a Christ-centered nonprofit organization serving those with special needs, their families, and the professionals who provide support for them in the community. LifeLine™ is based in the Chattanooga metropolitan area (Southeast Tennessee Development District) and also serves northwest Georgia. For more than 14 years, LifeLine's™ purpose has been to provide support, education, and resources to caregivers serving a family member living with a chronic or temporary, medical or educational, physical or emotional disability. More information about LifeLine™ and its services can be found at www.LifeLineFamilies.org. SNAP Training is already being scheduled for other fire departments in the region. To schedule a training session for first responders, contact Captain Skyler Phillips, LifeLine's SNAP Coordinator at 423-643-7121 or sphillips@chattanooga.gov

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