



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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“Choose to Click” Billboards Promoting Seat Belts Go Up April 25 “Friends of Natalie” – Bilingual Campaign Gears Up for Spring Proms

By May 1, four billboards in English and Spanish will be up in the Springfield area. The billboards launch a bilingual seat belt campaign, developed by Beatriz Fuentes, who lost her 21-year-old daughter Natalie last summer in an automobile rollover. A seat belt may have saved her daughter’s life.

“I needed to do something to make a difference – it was the only way to ease my pain,” said Fuentes, who, in conjunction with the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA), has launched a grassroots campaign that has received the support and attention of local schools, government officials, and the business community. “I knew the only way to succeed was to put a face on this tragedy.”

Billboards are located on I-91, across from the Basketball Hall of Fame, I-291, and Riverdale Road, and on Route 57, all in the Springfield area. The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts sponsored one of the billboards.

In addition to billboards, BIA-MA will be conducting prevention programs in two local high schools, Central and Commerce, to educate students about the importance of seat belts and safe driving in advance of the spring proms. Fuentes has also agreed to testify before the Massachusetts legislature regarding the importance of passing a primary seat belt law. Massachusetts has one of the lowest rates of seat belt usage in the nation.

“Beatriz has been relentless in her commitment to this cause,” said Suzanne Doswell, manager of the Brain Injury Association’s office in Western Massachusetts. “She is an amazing person who is truly making a difference.”

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts, a private, non-profit organization, provides support services to brain injury survivors and their families, offers programs to prevent brain injuries, and educates the public on the risks of irresponsible behavior and the impact of brain injury. BIA-MA is also working on a pilot project to reach out to the many veterans returning home from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars with brain injuries.

To contact the Western Massachusetts office of BIA-MA, call 1-888-554-5553 (toll free) or visit our website at www.biama.org. Please contact Pam Bush if you would like a visual of the billboard and/or a “Friends of Natalie” fact sheet.

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