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Sunset Banners Focus On Distractions, Speed

By REZA GOSTAR, *Staff Writer*

Councilman Bill Rosendahl and a group of area community members have launched an awareness campaign aimed at street safety on Sunset Boulevard.

The campaign, called Safety on Sunset (SOS), is funded by the family of Julia Cukier Siegler, who was killed in 2010 at the age of 13 while crossing Sunset to catch a school bus in Brentwood. According to Rosendahl's office, the SOS campaign was conceived by Palisadian Bruce Schwartz, who was named last week by the Community Council as one of three 2013 Golden Sparkplug winners for his SOS efforts. (See story, page 3)

"My constituents have lost one too many lives and witnessed far too many close calls on Sunset Boulevard," said Rosendahl on his blog. "This campaign takes speed-limit signs and traffic signals to the next level, and reminds motorists that more than just cars use this stretch of road."

Members of the Brentwood and Pacific Palisades community councils have agreed to support the campaign and participate in a committee of concerned citizens to address safety concerns on Sunset. The West L.A. Community-Police Advisory Board also played a role in the effort.

The banners, which hang on light poles for an 8-mile stretch of Sunset from Pacific Coast Highway to the 405 Freeway, were created by IMAX with "images designed to express the emotional impact caused by a collision," according to Rosendahl's office. Each of the LACMA-like banners displays one of four images with the words "Safety on Sunset" and "Is it worth it?"

The project cost about \$6,000 to complete, Rosendahl told the *Palisadian-Post*.

"Safety has been an ongoing issue in this area," Rosendahl said. "We had to get everyone on the same page. We have to remind people to be safe."

The SOS campaign will also include increased traffic enforcement by police; outreach by code enforcement officers to alert homeowners of visual impairments on the public right of way, such as overgrown shrubs; and urging City staff to seek increased speeding fines on Sunset.

Rosendahl said he expects the banners to stay up for at least "three months but it depends on the situation."

"This campaign is long overdue," said Barbara Kohn, president of the Pacific Palisades Community Council, on Rosendahl's blog. "Sunset Boulevard is as beautiful and scenic as it is famous and infamous. As more people drive here to see the beauty first hand, the greater the chances of more accidents. We want people to visit [the Palisades], but please drive with caution when you do."

Jody Siegler, Julia's mother, has also led an effort to better enforce regulation of school-bus-stop locations, which included legislative language (AB 2679) adopted by the California State Assembly and signed into law last September 29.

"The collisions, personal injuries and rate of fatalities on Sunset are arguably among the worst in the City," Siegler said. "This campaign tries to make a compelling case for compliance and caution so others don't have to live with the agony of loss the way we do."

The speed limit on Sunset between the 405 Freeway and PCH is 35 mph. According to data provided by L.A. Department of Transportation on Rosendahl's blog, there were a total of 1,101 crashes with three fatalities along this stretch of Sunset between March 2008 and March 2011.



A Safety on Sunset banner hangs on a light pole on Sunset Boulevard near Palisades Drive.

Photo: Reza Gostar