NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Photo of the children

Photo of the wrecked van

Thanks, Mom! Advocate's Kids Saved in Car Crash

LOS ANGELES, CA (April 16, 2011) — The Hamilton family have much to celebrate. A few weeks ago, the family — parents Anne and Jeff and daughters Emma, 6, Bridget, 4, and Maggie, 2 — were headed from Los Angeles to Phoenix AZ when they were involved in a terrifying crash. Rounding a bend on the freeway, their 2002 Honda Odyssey hit debris on the road, sending it airborne. The minivan hit a crash barrier, spun across the highway into a ditch, then hit a rock and flipped over, finally coming to rest on its roof.

Fortunately, the family was better prepared than most for what could have been a devastating scenario since mom Anne is a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician — a specialist who is passionate about keeping kids safe in cars.

"My friends will tell you that I'm car seat crazy," said Anne. "As soon as I became aware that car crashes are the biggest killer of American children, it made sense to me to learn exactly how to protect my babies properly." Despite juggling three young children, she qualified as a CPS Technician and subsequently joined the Board of SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., the national non-profit dedicated to protecting children from death and injury in motor vehicle crashes.

Anne's dedication to her children's safety paid off. Restrained in properly fitted safety seats, all three children escaped major injury despite the huge crash forces. Bridget, closest to the impact, suffered a broken leg, and Emma, some bruising. Two-year-old Maggie , buckled into a rear-facing safety seat as recommended by safety advocates for children of her age, was completely unhurt.

"We planned the trip carefully," said Anne. "We stowed heavier items of cargo deep in the cargo well, and tied it down. At six years old, Emma often rides in a booster seat, but knowing that she would likely fall asleep, I replaced her booster with a safety seat with full harness so that she could nap without falling out of position in her seat. And Jeff gave the car a once-over, checking the tire pressure and brakes."

Luck played its part, too. Anne was riding in the back, not in her usual spot in the front passenger seat. That location was destroyed by the impacts. Had she been seated there, the outcome would likely have been very different for her.

The Hamilton case has now been accepted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Special Crash Investigation unit. Analysts will conduct a detailed examination of the events of the crash, using their findings to inform recommendations for future best practice in occupant protection.

Anne's involvement with child passenger safety was sparked in 2006 after an encounter with SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. Board Member Marc Cohen. Learning that a mom with a newborn and toddler was struggling to fit her safety seats properly, Marc drove for an hour after work to meet the family at their Tujunga home. Gently but clearly explaining that Anne and Jeff (like more than 90% of parents) had unknowingly been exposing their little ones to risk by improperly using their safety seats, Marc showed Anne how to protect her precious cargo properly. He also

shared the source of his passion with her: the tragic loss of his own 22-month-old grandson Alec, along with his stepdaughter, in a crash four years earlier. Alec was one of approximately 1500 children to die in crashes that year, many of them from preventable injuries.

Thanks to Marc's intervention and Anne's diligence, the outcome for the Hamilton family is much happier. The family collected a "SafetyBeltSaved" award from SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. at their annual Los Angeles event, Safety Seat Checkup Day on April 16. Anne is hoping that their story will help get the word out to other parents about the importance of getting their seats checked by a professional.

"I had no idea how much I was doing wrong with my kids before I met Marc. Our story is an example of how much it matters."

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. is the national non-profit organization dedicated to child passenger safety and was founded in 1980 by fifteen Los Angeles-area safety advocates. The organization is nationally recognized for technical expertise and program excellence. For more information, go to www.carseat.org or call the Safe Ride Helpline: (310) 222-6860 or (800) 745-SAFE. For Spanish: (310) 222-6862 or (800) 747-SANO.