



Stephanie Merton Tombrello
SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.

Alerted by the Julie Candler column in *Woman's Day* in 1970 and concerned for the safety of her infant daughter, Kerstin Arusha, Stephanie Merton Tombrello, LCSW, CPSTI, began the Child Safety Project of Women for Political and Social Action, which in January, 1980, became Los Angeles Area Child Passenger Safety Assn and 10 years later, as other national organizations were closing, SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. (SBS USA). From the Ford Tot Guard on, she has been engaged with issues surrounding products and their relationship to vehicles and use by the public. Recognized with the Award for Public Safety by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 1983, she has been engaged in the technical and social-norming aspects of the field, generating the 1984 U.S. law for national safety seat distribution, writing the successful petition to NHTSA mandating rear-seat safety belts in 1989, serving on the National Blue Ribbon Committee for Child Restraint & Vehicle Compatibility, and coordinating the successful 2006-2011 effort to void the "sunset provision" to eliminate the federal requirement for safety belt lockability. For NHTSA, in the 1990s, with a team of five colleagues, she provided nationwide training with safety seat checkups.

Frequent radio, TV, and Internet coverage helped to generate focus on and knowledge of the *correct, consistent* use of safety seats and belts for both the public and other professionals serving families. The Petersen Automotive Museum, Los Angeles, had two SBS USA exhibits which highlighted the history of CPS and allowed kids to experience boosters and learn the 5-Step Test. Developing tools and approaches to improving child passenger safety is a continuing focus shared through training programs, Technical Webinars, *SafetyBeltSafe* News, and workshops at national, regional, and state conferences and in 2018, certification training in Malaysia. Among her most appreciated recognitions were the 1999 Annemarie Shelness Award for Lifetime Achievement in Child Passenger Safety, the 1997 Diamond Mike Award from Mitsubishi Motors for leading the national Miles for Child Passenger Safety campaign, Siegel SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. Child Restraint Award of Excellence in 2015, and the 2016 recognition by California Office of Traffic Safety for 35 Years of Excellence. Today, she is focused on the plight of children riding with impaired drivers, bringing it to both state

and national attention, the need to upgrade state laws in the field, and the continuing effort to reduce incorrect use of safety seats and belts. She was also a founder of two other non-profits still functioning, namely Wellmet Project, Inc. in Massachusetts in 1960 and Caltech Children's Center in California in 1972. In all of these endeavors, essential support has come from her family.

