

Guardrail on Wantagh Parkway Dedicated During 'Miles for Matt' Bike Ride

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Honors 19-Year-Old Killed by Drunk Driver

By Rachel Shapiro

It was a bittersweet moment on June 6 as the ribbon was cut to dedicate a new guardrail on Wantagh State Parkway. The guardrail will hopefully save lives but the family of Matthew Scarpati won't forget that their son and brother was killed there before the guardrail was put in place.

Scarpati, of Dix Hills, was 19 years old when a drunk driver veered off the northbound Wantagh State Parkway, and struck him while he was changing a bicycle tire on the bike path.

In memory of Scarpati and in somber celebration of the new guardrail, Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano met with the Scarpati Family for the first "Miles for Matt" Charity Bike Ride on June 6.

The Scarpati family fought to have a guardrail, which could have saved Matthew's life, installed along the bike path.

"This guardrail will help protect everyone who rides their bike and enjoys this beautiful trail, and I thank the Scarpati family, their friends and members of our local community for their hard

work in seeing this project to the finish," Mangano said.

The guardrail will reinforce the separation between the pathway used by bicyclists and pedestrians and vehicular traffic on the roadway.

The NY State Department of Transportation said a cable guardrail was selected for the parkway because it is known to reduce fatal crashes by 44 percent and injury crashes by 47 percent. The DOT said the cable system was also judged to be most consistent with the historic character of the parkway.

In summer 2009, to increase safety and calm traffic, the DOT converted the right travel lane into a shoulder, installed a rumble strip to alert motorists who might stray from the road and worked with New York State Parks and police to increase enforcement. These measures will remain in place as well.

"The guardrail will better protect the many individuals who ride, run, and walk on the bike path every single day," Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. said in an earlier statement.



Nassau County Executive Edward P. Mangano, Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice, Lynn Scarpati, mother of Matt Scarpati, New York State Assemblyman David McDonough, Governor David Paterson, Adam Scarpati, Matt's brother, Gina Russo, a Jericho resident who spearheaded the effort to get a guardrail, Chris Scarpati, Matt's brother, State Senator Charles Fuschillo, and Nassau County Legislator David Denenberg are all smiles as they cut the ribbon for the new guardrail on Wantagh State Parkway during the first "Miles For Matt" charity bike ride on June 6.