



## Annemarie Shelness

1922 – 2017



Although many of today's CPSTs may not know the name Annemarie Shelness, we all owe her an enormous debt of gratitude. She was among the very first to recognize and act to address the unacceptable risks to children on America's roadways — efforts that spurred the field of child passenger safety. In addition to publishing landmark scholarly papers, lobbying Congress, and serving on technical committees at the highest level, Annemarie Shelness was committed to educating caregivers. She generously gave her time to nurture other advocates, many of whom are leaders in our field today.

Annemarie Shelness could fittingly be called the godmother of child passenger safety and was nationally recognized as a pioneer in injury prevention. Her impact on public awareness, industry policies, and federal government regulations is immeasurable. After founding a regional highway safety council in 1965, she went on to become executive director of the national organization: Physicians for Automotive Safety (PAS). Along with PAS president Seymour Charles, M.D., she co-authored two landmark papers on child passenger safety, both published by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): *How Safe Is Pupil Transportation?* (1970) and *Children as Passengers in Automobiles: The Neglected Minority on the Nation's Highways* (1975). These seminal papers ignited the concern of pediatricians and spurred the development of the field of child passenger safety. Ms. Shelness and PAS received awards for public service from the AAP and NHTSA. A video she produced in 1994 for the New York City Department of Transportation, *Safety Seats for City Kids*, also won an award. More recently, she received the 2016 Siegel SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. Child Restraint Award of Excellence, an award named for Arnold Siegel, a fellow pioneer in child passenger safety.

Ms. Shelness' reports in the public policy arena focused on the need for effective national product standards - on which she testified before the U.S. Congress. She served on the following professional committees: task forces of the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), the International Standards Organization (ISO) task forces on child restraint standards and air bag issues, and the NHTSA Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Restraint and Vehicle Compatibility. She appeared on radio and television programs, including an interview with Barbara Walters that aired nationally on NBC.

Ms. Shelness fostered the formation of grassroots advocacy groups, such as the New York City-based Action for Child Transportation on Safety (ACTS) and the Los Angeles Area Child Passenger Safety Association on (now SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.), and she helped to initiate the groundbreaking drive for school bus safety.

Always committed to consumer education, she produced a definitive pamphlet and video, both titled *Don't Risk Your Child's Life*, in 1978 that have helped guide parents, healthcare professionals, educators, and government agencies across the country on the issue of child passenger safety.

