

## NEWS

# Class assignment inspires Uxbridge student to address traffic concern near school



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UXBRIDGE — Delyila Elmasri said she was shaken when she learned one of her schoolmates had been injured after a collision with a car while riding her bicycle to school in the fall.

Delyila, a student at Uxbridge High School who has been friends with the injured girl since the third grade, thought of the crash when her eighth-grade civics class was asked to identify an issue or a problem that they could act on.

Delyila said she became determined to push for changes along the busy section of Route 146A, Quaker Highway, where the crash occurred. After working with state and local officials about making improvements, the road will be outfitted with new signs and flashing traffic lights by September when the new school year starts.

On Wednesday, Delyila's efforts were recognized with a brief ceremony outside the school that included her classmates and teachers, state Reps. Michael J. Soter and Joseph D. McKenna, state Sen. Ryan C. Fattman, state Department of Transportation District Traffic Engineer Lori Shattuck, Uxbridge Superintendent Patrick Dillon, Principal Michael Rubin, Chief of Police Marc Montminy, and Board of Selectmen member John Wise.

McKenna, Delyila's friend injured in the collision, is doing "really good," Delyila said, and should be back for their freshman year in September at Uxbridge High, which serves students from eighth through 12th grade.

"I've seen her around town a lot and she's still smiling, normal McKenna," Delyila said. "She has said 'Thank you' more times than I can count and she's just always been there to support me just because I'm trying to help her out and trying to help everybody else out."

## Created an action plan

Although Delyila said she is happy with the result, she initially did not know how to approach the situation or where to start.

She said she began working with two friends to help think through the process and to whom they could reach out to spur their effort.

With encouragement from her mother, a friend of Soter's for several years, Delyila reached out to Soter, who listened as she brought attention to the collision and asked questions about increasing safety, and what steps could be taken to address the problem.

On Wednesday, Soter praised Delyila, as well as her teacher, Brian Grady, and her classmates for their efforts.

"We're excited about the changes that the (Mass.)DOT is going to invest in and I think it's just the beginning of so many things that will be improved over time," Soter said. "Safety comes in all numbers. We're gonna keep the kids safe in school and we've got to keep getting the kids here safely."

## **'Exceeded expectations'**

Grady concurred, and said that Delyila and his other students far exceeded his expectations after seeing where they were able to take their project.

"After the horrible accident early on in the year, I had a few of them come up to me and just say that they wanted to make the front of the school, Quaker Highway, safer," Grady said. "I just thought it was an incredible idea, so very important, and I was very proud of them kind of latching on to that."

Added Shattuck: "There's going to be advanced warning signs that there's a school area. There'll be guide signs that will say 'Uxbridge High School Next Left,' 'Next Right.' And then there's going to be an overhead flasher."

The overhead flasher, Shattuck said, will be 23 feet high and have red and yellow flashing lights over the roadway to warn drivers about the entrance of the school.

"I had my friends help and I had them behind my back and they're always there," Delyila said. "It's just a big change that I want to make and it's not only for our grade and our school, it's for everybody in Uxbridge."