

Mary's Law studied in other states

Published: Saturday, November 01, 2008

By LISA SATAYUT
Sun Staff Writer

Just months after Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed "Mary's Law," an effort to push for the law in other states has already begun.

Mary's Law is aimed at protecting domestic violence victims from their abusers, by using GPS devices to alert the victim that the person who abused them is nearby.

Mary Babb was gunned down by her estranged husband Thomas Babb in the Morning Sun parking lot Jan. 9, 2007. She had a personal protection order, but it failed to keep her safe.

The law gives Michigan state courts the framework to require a domestic violence suspect to wear a global positioning device that will automatically send an alarm to the victim if the abuser is nearby. The person receives the alert either through a pager or cell phone
California resident Alexis Moore fled from her abusive partner. She started a non-profit organization for other survivors and said that Babb is an angel looking over her. After being tuned away from a domestic violence shelter because of the occupation her abuser held, Moore created her own safe haven.

"I was forced to create my own shelter," she said. "I hid my car at the train station, covering it with branches and sheltered in places with loved ones – they saved my life."

She said she spent too much time looking over her shoulder wondering if he would be there.

"I would leave my house always looking over my shoulder and wondering what was going to happen to me or to my family because my abuser would appear wherever I was.

"I lived the first six months of my newfound freedom in constant fear, turmoil and without sleep – the worst part was not knowing from one day or even in some moments one hour to the next if I were going to live or die, as my abuser had sworn that he would kill me and my family and my family and I believed he would if he had the opportunity."

Moore said she got a restraining order, talked to the police and over a two- year span, reported 67 incidents.

"My restraining order is a total joke – the abuser has avoided incarceration time and time again. It is always a matter of 'he said/she said.'"

Ever since "Mary's Law" was passed in Michigan Moore is doing everything in her power to see that

California adopt something similar.

“The push in California for GPS technology is huge – bigger than what I imagined it would be when I first started researching the initiative a year ago.” she said.

“Members of law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, probation departments, victims, family members of victims, educators and everyday citizens like me are helping to spread the word and to help support the proposal of the initiative – and it is long overdue,” she said.

Moore will continue to fight.

“Time and time again it has been the phone calls and the e-mails and the support from Mary Babb’s family that has helped me to continue to fight for better legislation like this, as I know it will help to save lives and encourage more victims to seek freedom from abuse.”

Moore created a non-profit crime-victims organization called Survivors in Action in 2007.

“SIA is a national non-profit crime-victims organization that I founded to help victims of crime. I created the nation’s first privacy protection program for crime victims who are seeking to go below the radar of their abusers’/stalkers’ reach and have organized volunteers to help do the same,” she said.

Moore said restraining orders are worthless to the victim.

“A restraining order is a domestic violence victim’s first and only line of protection from stalking and further abuse – it is a worthless piece of paper until now, as there is hope that the restraining order will become the powerful tool that it is supposed to be – thanks to GPS technology and to the families of slain women across the nation like Mary Babb’s family.

“These people are my inspiration. When times get tough, I think about Mary’s fight for freedom and how she did everything she could to protect herself – when I think times are tough for me or that I want to give up, I think about Mary Babb, who I believe today is one of my angels watching over me and the many other victims like me who are trying to make a difference for others so that they won’t have to suffer the way we all have,” she said.

For those interested in learning more about what they can do to help support the GPS initiative movement across the U.S. they can contact Alexis A. Moore at Alexis@survivorsinaction.com or visit Alexis’s blog at AlexisAMoore.blogspot.com. One person can make a difference!

Men are victims too

Not all victims are women. Jeffrey Gross of Colorado was shot six times point blank by a woman who had been stalking him for two years.

“I was a victim of attempted murder,” he said from his home in Colorado. At the time Gross was living in New York, but moved to Colorado after he said he was given a second lease on life.

“I was returning home from a movie – it was about eleven or eleven-thirty and she was there waiting for me,” he said, recalling the incident on May 29, 2006.

He said if Mary's Law or a similar law had been adopted in his state, then he would have known not to go home.

He was shot with an AK-47. The woman fled to Philadelphia and was later caught by America's Most Wanted. But due to technicalities the woman was acquitted and is now free.

Isabella County

Currently there is one person who is using the GPS tether in Isabella County. On Monday that person will have it taken off, according to Isabella County Court Administrator Lance Dexter.

Isabella County Prosecutor Larry Burdick said at least two others will be on the tether after posting bond. Mary's Law can be ordered to those convicted of both domestic-violence related crimes as well as stalking crimes.

Burdick said there are two ways someone can be ordered to wear a GPS tether; either as a condition of pre-trial release or post conviction sentencing.

"This is our county utilizing a new type of technology to provide additional safety measures," Burdick said. But he also said that it's important to know that the tether is not 100 percent foolproof.

"It's not an impenetrable shield, it provides additional safety," he said.

In reality, the tether could be cut off. But cutting the tether would alert authorities and the victim. With a large enough "hot zone" it should allow time for the victim to leave the area.

In Michigan the abuser has to pay for the tether and the victim must agree. The GPS tethers cost anywhere between \$400 and \$600 a month. For those who can't pay, usually their bond is increased and they sit in jail.

"They stay in jail until they are arraigned or get a preliminary," Dexter said.

The cost of one night in the Isabella County Jail is \$29. Dexter said that there have been convicted abusers on the tethers for multiple months.

"It gives the victim a little well being," Dexter said of the tracking device.

Dexter also said that the tether is not foolproof.

"I think you're going to have people who are going to abide by the law once they have the GPS tether on and you'll find people that won't" he said.

"There's always a way around the mouse trap."

"Mary's Law," was introduced by State Rep. Bill Caul, R-Mt. Pleasant and named for Babb who worked at the Morning Sun as an advertising representative. It was signed by Gov. Granholm July 11.