



CONNECTOR

Remembering Nolan Webster

(March 10th, 2009 by Amy Budge)

When people think of spring break, images of palm trees and parties often come to mind. What people rarely imagine is tragedy and heartbreak.

Such was the case of Nolan Webster, a UMass Lowell graduate. Right after graduation in January of 2007, Webster and his girlfriend went to Mexico for a vacation. One day into the vacation, and Webster was dead. He was staying at the Oasis Hotel in Cancun when tragedy struck.

It was the middle of the day when Webster was pulled from a large pool in an unconscious state. The employees did not know CPR, the hotel doctor refused to treat him, and a nurse was not allowed near him. It took thirty minutes for an ambulance to arrive, at which point they pronounced the young man dead at age twenty-two.

This tragic death was not the first at the hotel. Throughout the country travelers are becoming victims. The lack of safety and security in Mexico is astonishing, and little is being done by travel agencies to warn vacationers.

After the death of her son, it became the mission of Webster's mother Maureen to not only make known her son's story but to make other people aware of the danger Mexico holds. The website www.mexicovacationawareness.com tells the story of Nolan Webster and others.

Part of the reason Webster started the website was because she felt responsible. Webster wants to make sure that no family has to go through what her family did.

"We didn't know the truth. My travel agent didn't tell us how dangerous it was," said Webster. Very few people know what is really going on in the country.

Webster said, "We felt like we were deceived by the travel agency."

Travel agencies still claim that Cancun is a safe destination. However, what most people do not realize is that there is a state department travel alert for Mexico. Webster is trying to get a bill passed in the state legislature, in which it would be mandatory for travel agencies to inform their clients of the travel alert.

Another goal of the website is to simply inform people of the situation. Almost immediately after the site was put up, the public began to respond. Similar stories were being shared, and some even sent emails asking for help. Often times Webster is able to point people in the right direction and give them names and phone numbers of state department officials.

Webster and her other son Ryan also attend travel shows in Boston and New York. They obtain permits to be outside, set up tables, and hand out fliers.

"People thank us over and over again because of what we are doing and also because they had no idea," Webster said, "What other industry can sell you a product without a warning label?"

Webster urges college students to visit the website and educate themselves. It is not a matter of simply not going to Mexico but a matter of being able to make an informed and educated decision.