



## News Release

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### **'Thirteen Stories We'd Rather Not Tell'**

*Families of Teen Crash Victims Share Their Stories of Loss*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Too many teens are killed on Utah's roadways. In 2008, 29 families were devastated to learn that their teenager had been killed in a motor vehicle crash. Today, these families shared their stories to encourage other teens to drive safely.

“These are stories no family should have to tell,” says Kevin Condra, Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Violence and Injury Prevention Program spokesperson. “These teens could have been anyone's child, brother, sister, or friend. Each crash story represents dreams and futures that will never be realized because of a tragic and most often preventable incident.”

Thirteen stories are featured in a book that will be used by the UDOH and other state and local agencies as a prevention tool to help young drivers realize the impact their driving decisions have on others. Last year, a similar book was distributed to all high school drivers' education classes in the state.

Chris & Donna Hansen, parents of a happy and kind-spirited 13-year-old, shared the story of their son, Calvin, who was killed in a car crash. It was October 15, 2008 when the Hansen family was involved in a single vehicle car crash on their way to visit family in Las Vegas, Nevada. Calvin was ejected from the car and died immediately.

“The rest of the family was fine but Calvin wasn't wearing his seatbelt. He would still be with us if he had been wearing his seatbelt,” said Donna.

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While the majority of teens (24) killed in 2008 were drivers or passengers in a car, there were also two auto-pedestrian deaths, one motorcycle, one ATV, and one scooter-related death. Nearly half the crashes (48%) occurred between 4:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. Driving on the weekends did not appear to play a significant role in the fatal crashes. Speeding was a factor in 45% of the deaths. Only 24% of the teens killed were wearing their seatbelts properly.

“Wearing a seatbelt the right way can make the difference between life and death if you’re in a crash,” says Condra. “Many of the motor vehicle deaths this year would never have happened if everyone had made the choice to buckle up properly.”

The UDOH urges teens and all drivers to follow these safety tips while driving:

- Wear your seatbelt properly every time you get into a car.
  - Lap belts should be worn 2-4 inches below the waist, against the hips and upper thighs - *never high over the ribs and stomach.*
  - The shoulder belt should be worn snugly across the chest with the belt lying against the collarbone. *It should never be worn under the arm or behind the back.*
- Never talk on your cell phone or send text messages while driving. Three of the teens were killed last year because they or another driver was using a cell phone.

For more information on safe driving, or to download a copy of the 'Thirteen Stories We'd Rather Not Tell' booklet, visit [www.health.utah.gov/vipp](http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp).

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care and promoting healthy lifestyles.*