



## News Release

**For Immediate Release:**  
Thursday, October 20, 2011

**Media Contact:**

Jenny Johnson  
Violence & Injury Prevention Program  
(o) 801-538-9416 (m) 801-298-1569

### **“All They Left Were Memories”**

*Families of teen crash victims share their grief*

(Salt Lake City, UT). In 2010, 25 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 drivers to use caution on the road.

Johnny Reyes' 19-year-old daughter Vanessa, a young mother to a three-month-old baby, was killed on June 26, 2010. Vanessa and four of her friends were coming home from a camping trip in Ogden Canyon when the driver of their car made a bad decision in crossing a double yellow line to pass another car of friends. As they went around the corner, they were hit head-on by a heavy-duty pickup truck, killing all five teens instantly.

“The scene of the crash was like a horrible nightmare. It was quiet; no ambulance, just a tow truck. I just wanted to see my daughter, but all I saw was mangled metal,” recalled Reyes. “I can’t begin to describe the emotions one feels knowing they will never see or hear their child again. The pain of knowing a small child will never know his mother and we will never hug her again. All because of a choice someone else made.”

This is the fourth year the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has collected stories of teenagers killed in motor vehicle crashes. The book will be used by the UDOH and other state and local agencies as a prevention tool to help young drivers realize the impact their decisions have on others. For the past three years, similar books have been distributed to all high school driver education classes in the state. New to the book this year, is a map showing the location of each of the 25 deaths that occurred in 2010.

- MORE -

## Page 2 of 2 – “All They Left Were Memories”

Fourteen (56%) of the teens killed in 2010 were passengers in a car. Ten (40%) were drivers and one (4%) was a pedestrian. Sixty percent of the crashes occurred on a weekend. Surprisingly, it isn't along major freeways where the majority of these fatal crashes occurred; 14 (56%) of the deaths occurred on rural roadways.

“This book shows the ripple effect our driving decisions can have on our families, friends, and communities,” said Jenny Johnson, UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “Last year, there were three separate crashes in which nine young people died. More than one-quarter (28%) of the teens killed died in Weber County alone. The devastation these deaths have had on families and communities is just indescribable.”

Teen drivers were three times more likely to have a contributing factor, such as speeding, in a fatal crash. In addition to speeding, the most common contributing factors in fatal crashes were failing to stay in the proper lane, failing to yield right-of-way, and driving distracted. Only 35 percent of the teens killed in 2010 were wearing a seat belt.

“Let this book serve as a warning,” said Johnson. “Talk with your loved ones, friends, and classmates about these how these tragedies might have been prevented. Always wear your seat belt and set rules for your car and whenever you ride in a car.”

To download a copy of the “All They Left Were Memories” booklet in English or Spanish, visit [www.health.utah.gov/vipp](http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp) or [www.dontdrivestupid.com](http://www.dontdrivestupid.com).

###

*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.*