"You Don't Get to Say Goodbye..."

STORIES OF TEEN LIVES LOST ON UTAH'S ROADS IN 2009

DON'T DRIVE STUPID

zero Fatalities® A Goal We Can All Live With

There's no easy way to tell these stories.

They are the real thing; honest, heartbreaking stories told by the families left behind by teenagers killed in motor vehicle crashes. Young lives lost in an instant, whole families devastated and forever changed by such remarkably small things it almost doesn't seem possible: A glance at a cell phone, a patch of ice, a little too much speed. Lives lost, lives destroyed. Look at their pictures, imagine the scenes, then think of yourself and think of your family. Finally, remember that the one thing everyone in these stories has in common is that none of them, not the victims, not their families, ever thought it would happen to them. Sound familiar?

The Utah Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program would like to thank all the courageous families for sharing their stories to help prevent others from dying in motor vehicle crashes.

Blake Strebel | Age 19 | South Jordan, Utah

Submitted for Blake Strebel (July 3, 1989-April 22, 2009) by his parents – Tim and Susan Strebel

I know you have heard it said, "wrong place, wrong time." We were good, fun-loving young men. As roommates and coworkers we did all kinds of things together. We had the same interests and goals – church missions, education, marriage, families, and careers.

On Wednesday, April 22, 2009, Derek Jasper and I went to work, watched and participated in a lacrosse practice and game for which I was a coach, played pickup basketball with friends, and were on our way home by 10:00 p.m. We were in the right place at the right time doing the right things. The two young men who took our lives were the ones in the wrong.

"For every act there is a consequence. When I choose the act, I choose the consequence." They chose to be intoxicated, to run from the police, to run stop signs, and to run a red light at close to 80 miles per hour. They also chose the consequences of their actions – hospitalization and some jail time (and possibly prison). For us, we lost our lives. We lost all those dreams. Their choices also affected our families, our friends, the Weber High lacrosse team, families, and the lacrosse community. None of them will ever be the same.

Our son Blake dreamed of becoming a U.S. Marshal. While in high school, he took concurrent enrollment classes from Salt Lake Community College and criminal justice classes through the Jordan District Technology program.

He entered Weber State University two semesters short of his Associate's Degree. With another year of schooling, he would have his Bachelor's. The sting of his death will never leave us. Blake is gone. Gone for his friends is the quiet, gentle listener; for his lacrosse boys, a trusted coach; for his cousins, the caring humorist and texting talk; for his grandparents, the kisses and expressions of love; for his young widowed aunt, the weekly companionship and help; for his niece, special dates; for his nephews, the rough and tumble play; for his brother-in-law, a basketball partner; for his brothers, their best friend; for his sister, her confidant; and for his parents, the one who kept them young, whose hugs were tight, whose questions were deep, whose compassion seemed endless, and whose service was genuine.

> *"Used irresponsibly, a car is a ton-and-a-half of destructive force.*

Cars are a means of transportation to work, school, fun outings, and vacations. They give us pleasure and opportunities. Used irresponsibly, a car is a ton-and-a-half of destructive force. Blake's car was demolished. The normal width of a car is close to 60 inches. Blake's car, after a t-bone impact from the other car and subsequent impact with a light pole, was reduced to a width of less than 24 inches where the driver and passenger sit. We trust other drivers to be responsible, to obey laws, and to watch out for the safety of others. Blake and his friend were not in the wrong place at the wrong time. The two boys who hit them made wrong choices that forever changed our lives and the lives of their own families.

Bailey Corless | Age 17 | Grantsville, Utah

On March 21, 2009, Bailey "Boo" Corless and two of her friends passed away in a head-on collision on State Road 138 in Stansbury Park, Utah. They were on their way to Grantsville when an 18-year-old male fell asleep at the wheel and crossed the center line. Boo's car was hit and all three were killed instantly. Boo was her father's only biological child.

As a little girl Boo enjoyed dancing and singing with her friends and spending time with her family. Her goal was to become a teacher; however, as she grew older, she wanted to become a cosmetologist. She was a vibrant young lady who lived life to the fullest, and to her, there was no such thing as a dull moment. She was always willing to help people and loved her family and friends. Boo was a junior in high school and worked at Macey's in Tooele. At the time of her death, she was looking forward to going to the junior prom at Grantsville High School.

> *"We will never forget that Saturday when a Grantsville City police officer knocked on our door to tell us that we had lost our little girl; that was the worst day of our lives.*

We will never forget that Saturday when a Grantsville City police officer knocked on our door to tell us that we had lost our little girl; that was the worst day of our lives. We can't describe the feeling of emptiness in our hearts and in our lives. We didn't get to see her graduate from high school and won't be able to see her get married and have kids - our grandkids. It's simply heartbreaking.

The week following the crash was a blur. Not only did we have to plan our daughter's funeral, we also had to attend two other funerals. The people of the community who came out and supported all three families were amazing. It's been one year since we lost Boo, and each day is a new challenge to move forward. One thing that motivates us is to hear the success stories of her friends and to think, "What would Boo want us to do?" There isn't a day that goes by when we haven't shed a tear, not only for Boo, but for the pain and loss that we, her family and friends, have experienced.

If there is one message we could pass along to everyone who reads this book it would be, Don't take life for granted and make sure to tell your family every day how much you love and appreciate them.

We love and miss you, Boo.
Love, Your family and friends.

Derek Allen Jasper | Age 18 | Ogden, Utah

Answering the door at 2 a.m. cannot be a good thing, I was thinking as I looked out the window to see the police standing on my porch. I replay this memory over and over in my mind. April 22, 2009 was the worst night of my life. Police officers told me that my son, Derek, who was on his way home from a basketball game at a neighborhood church building around 10 p.m., was killed along with his roommate Blake Strebel, by a drunk driver who was being pursued by police.

Derek was going to receive his L.D.S. mission call in a few days. He had graduated from Bonneville High School, received his Eagle Scout award, and had been working at Domino's Pizza as an assistant manager to save money to attend college after his mission. He was a happy, loving, friendly young man who always was willing to help anyone in need. He was also a peacemaker in our home. We miss him terribly.

Derek had so many friends. I couldn't believe the number of them who came to the funeral. There were more than 800 people, many standing in the back and on the sides of the church because there were no more seats available. So many people were affected by Derek's death. So many people miss him horribly as our family still does and will forever.

I can never forget the complete sickness and anxiety that came over me when I knew I had to tell my children what had happened to their brother. I had to call my husband, who works nights, to come home from work, and my parents to come stay with me. I will never be able to get the memory of their reaction on the phone out of my head. It was so awful. I remember the pain in their voices when they understood what I was telling them. Telling my loved ones Derek had been killed was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do.

> *"I can never forget the complete sickness and anxiety that came over me when I knew I had to tell my children what had happened to their brother.*

We have been to so many court hearings, trials, cases, etc. that I can't count them anymore. Each one brings up the horrifying memories all over again. The young man who was driving drunk and fleeing police didn't have any idea the damage he would cause to so many people. He had many opportunities to stop, but ended up reaching speeds at over 70 miles-per-hour on a 35 mile-per-hour road while running a red light and hitting the car that killed Derek and Blake.

Some good things have come out of this tragedy. Derek's sister Rachel wrote and presented an hour-long presentation about drunk and distracted driving, choices, and how all of this has affected her life to several health and criminal justice classes at the high school. The way each member of our family thinks and lives has now changed for the better because of the things we have learned through this experience.

Grayson Eyring | Age 19 | Murray, Utah

Grayson was handsome and smart, but he hated to be thought of as a nerd. He enjoyed playing his guitars, video games, Z cars, sports, food, and hanging out with his family and friends. He was quick to laugh and always ready to have fun. My husband died in 2007 and Grayson, my only child, and I had held tight to each other to get through that. Two years later, we thought the bad days were behind us. He graduated high school and was taking some time off before starting college. He and his step-brother had found jobs with a sprinkler company. He was enjoying the work, his co-workers, and his customers. We were looking forward to the coming of summer, going camping, making music, and training his puppy, Jax, to do tricks.

> *"Being in the right doesn't make your tombstone any easier for your family to look at. You need to take the extra safety precautions...*

It was Tuesday, May 19th. Grayson and I were on the telephone. He was done with work for the day and heading home. He ended the call by telling me he loved me. The next time I saw my son he was lying on a gurney in the emergency room. There was a tube down his throat and blood in his beautiful, silver- blonde hair. He was dead. He had given his brother a ride home from work on his motorcycle. A woman had pulled out from the driveway of her apartment into traffic without looking. She had cut him off. His bike struck her car and he and his brother were thrown over the car and onto the road. He died in the street less than a block from his home. He was not wearing a helmet.

The woman was uninjured. She told the officers that she did not see the boys. Other witness statements, including that of the passenger in her car, reported seeing them. She offered no other excuse for her actions. One week after the woman walked out of the courtroom with a conviction for failure to yield, she posted pictures of herself at a party on Facebook. In three years, the traffic violation will no longer appear on her driving record. Her life will go on as usual. Grayson will never do all the things he had planned. I will never hear his laugh or his voice again.

My last memory of my son is when I identified his body for cremation at the mortuary. Grayson's decision to not wear a helmet did not cause the accident; the actions of a careless driver did. Grayson believed he was a good driver, but you can't just be "good." You have to anticipate what other drivers may do. Being in the right doesn't make your tombstone any easier for your family to look at. You need to take the extra safety precautions – wear a helmet, buckle your seat belt, and anticipate the actions of other drivers who will value your life much less than their own. Teens, take care of yourselves. There are people who love you and need you so much.

Porscha Marie Dzierzon | Age 16 | North Salt Lake, Utah

Porscha Marie Dzierzon was born on December 26, 1992. She was our Christmas gift. What a joy she brought to our lives. Porscha was truly beautiful inside and out. She touched a lot of people's lives and had the biggest heart for everyone. It didn't matter who you were or where you were from, she would always want to make people happy and smile. Porscha attended Woods Cross High School and was in her junior year.

On September 11, 2009, our lives changed forever. We lost our daughter Porscha, a true angel. We received a phone call that night from her boyfriend. I couldn't make out what he was saying at first but as I realized that something was really wrong. I asked him to slow down and tell me again what was going on. He said, "Jeremy, I'm really sorry but I rolled my Jeep and Porscha is hurt really bad." My heart stopped, I asked if he called 911 before us and he said yes. I asked if she was o.k. and he started crying and then paused: "She is bleeding out the back of her head really bad." Then I really got upset and told him to try and get the bleeding stopped; then the phone went dead.

That phone call will probably be the worst call I will ever receive, knowing our daughter was lying there seriously injured and there's nothing that you can do. We had seen her at our home just an hour before this happened.

The site of the crash was up Bountiful Canyon, about 30 minutes away from any medical help. When we left our house in North Salt Lake, we had to call the police dispatcher to get the exact location of the wreck. They told us it was at the top of Bountiful Canyon. On our way up, we could see the paramedics' lights and that was a very sick feeling in itself. When we arrived at the site of the crash, the officer wouldn't let us go up the canyon because they had it blocked off. We waited about an hour and the sheriff drove down to let us know the news...that our daughter Porscha had passed away. He explained to us that the Jeep she was in had been coming down the mountain fast and the driver lost control. At that point the Jeep rolled and the passenger side was crushed. Her boyfriend made several mistakes that night. He made the choice to drive recklessly and endanger not only Porscha, but her two best friends who were in the back seat as well. He also chose to drive recklessly on a very dangerous dirt road at a high speed. Perhaps the biggest mistake was that no one was wearing a seat belt.

> *"In just a few seconds she was gone. This wreck should have and could have been prevented.*

In just a few seconds she was gone. This wreck should have and could have been prevented. I can't even begin to tell you the impact this had on our family. Getting that kind of news that your child has been killed in a car crash and we didn't even get a chance to say goodbye. This has been a very devastating experience that I hope no family ever has to go through. I do hope this sends a message to other kids that you don't drive recklessly, and always make sure you are in a seat belt as well as the people with you – make it a rule in your car. We have lost a true angel whom we can never get back. I know Porscha would want us all to continue on with life and I know we will see our sweet angel again. Never take a single breath for granted as it takes just a second to lose the ones you love. Always tell one another how much you love them and cherish every day you have.

Stefani Ortiz Monrroy | Age 14 | Genola, Utah

Stefani was a fun loving girl. She would always make you laugh and smile. She absolutely loved children. She always would help out at her little brother's Head Start program and said when she was done with school she wanted to be a school director for Head Start.

On the morning of January 5, 2009, Stefani and two other friends were supposed to be going to school on the bus, but instead they got into a car with a boy who was waiting for them at the bus stop. They were driving fast and hoping their parents wouldn't catch them. They were racing in front of the school bus and, about 1/4 mile down the road, the young driver ran a stop sign at a five-way crossroad. They were hit head-on by a truck coming down the highway. The car flipped and rolled several times. None of the kids had seat belts on and the driver was killed instantly when the motor crushed him.

Stefani was also in the front seat at the time of the crash and was tossed about when the car rolled. A witness at the crash scene said she was dead, but then 'came back'. Stefani was then taken by helicopter to a hospital and went into surgery, but was declared brain dead the next day, January 6, 2009. Stefani left behind her parents Gustavo and Rosario Ortiz and four brothers, Eulisis, Gustavo, Jr., Jose Antonio, and her little sidekick, Leonel. Stefani's parents donated her good organs and because of that, three people we know of have extended lives. The other two girls in the back were severely injured but survived the accident. They will have life-long problems.

> *"Me and my older brother, Eulisis, ran up to the accident site. I didn't recognize the car. It looked like a crushed can. I didn't want to believe it. I was hoping it was all a nightmare.*

A word from Stefani's brother, Gustavo, Jr.: "I remember the call and the look on my Mom's face. Me and my older brother, Eulisis, ran up to the accident site. I didn't recognize the car. It looked like a crushed can. I didn't want to believe it. I was hoping it was all a nightmare. They wouldn't let us near the site and we told them we thought our sister was in the car. They let us through and I saw my sister in the ambulance. It didn't look like her. She was so swollen and bruised up. I remember seeing her at the hospital and we had told her everything will be o.k., even though she never regained consciousness. I felt that she wasn't going to make it but didn't want to voice my feelings to the rest of my family. The next day the doctors pronounced her dead and took her off of life support. I miss her very much, we all do, and there is not a day that goes by that we don't think about her."

Micah and Shilo Edwards | Age 21, 19 | West Bountiful, Utah

Our daughters Micah (age 21) and Shilo (age 19) were students at Snow College in Ephraim, Utah. Our family lives in West Bountiful, so each weekend they came home we would watch the weather and try to time their travels to avoid storms and bad roads. We would even go online to check road conditions using the new road cams available.

The weekend of February 13, 2009 was an important one. It was Valentine's weekend and the girls were coming home! Micah had a doctor appointment and Shilo was coming home to get engaged to the love of her life, Andrew Winegar.

There had been a small storm overnight and so, as the morning progressed, we tried to reach them to check on their progress. We talked to Shilo just as they were leaving school and told them to be careful and that we loved them. Later, when we didn't hear from them, we began to panic. Soon after we received the call no parent should ever hear. "Please go home and an officer will meet you there." We were in shock as the officer explained that not only one, but both girls were killed. As the girls were going through Indianola, we believe they were going too fast for conditions on the slick road. Micah braked and started to fishtail and went into oncoming traffic. A truck was coming in the opposite direction and could not help hitting them on the passenger side. The girls were killed instantly.

The people in the truck were severely injured. They did everything they could to avoid hitting the girls, but it just happened too fast. They are wonderful people and their lives have been full of one surgery after another and much pain. Our hearts go out to them!

Micah and Shilo have always been closer than most sisters. Even though they lived in two different apartments at school, they usually slept together at one place or the other. They felt the need to be together. They were known at school as the beautiful Edwards girls, but they were as comfortable on a four-wheeler as in a fancy prom dress. We have camped as a family all our lives. They would hold princess pageants for the little girls while on camping trips in the mountains.

> *"Who knew that a small moment could so irreparably alter the rest of our lives?*

Micah was always a rebellious spirit, but had so much compassion for others. She had gotten her C.N.A. and worked in care centers but wanted to become a nurse to work in hospitals with children. Oh, how she and Shilo loved children. They both would have made the most remarkable mothers! They were kid magnets.

Shilo graduated from beauty school and high school at the same time. She was very ambitious and loved to do hair. She wanted to go to Snow College and just prepare for life a little bit. She was one of those people who excelled at everything she attempted. She was amazing! Andrew's life has been decimated as well. He misses Shilo more than I can possibly explain. All their hopes and dreams together were shattered.

We love and miss Micah and Shilo so much. Our lives have been completely shattered and changed since this accident. Who knew that a small moment could so irreparably alter the rest of our lives? It has changed many other lives as well, within our family, and in our community. We sincerely hope that others who hear of our tragedy will drive more carefully, more safely, and be more aware. We do not want any other family to hear those fateful words or go through the grief we live with every day.

Jake Hawkes | Age 19 | Hyde Park, Utah

Jake was born on September 28, 1989 and was killed August 26, 2009 – just a month before his 20th birdhday.

I miss Jake a lot. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about him and the things he would be doing if he were still here. Jake's mom passed away when he was 9 years old and it seems the void left by her and Jake have been hard to fill in terms of those of us left behind to cope.

The crash happened on US 89/91 and Hyde Park Lane in Cache County. Jake was killed when he swerved to avoid hitting a car in front of him and rolled his truck. He wasn't wearing a seat belt and was ejected from the vehicle. He sustained massive head injuries. Jake was flown by helicopter to a trauma center where he passed away early the next morning. He never regained consciousness after the crash.

My brother (Jake's uncle) is the Police Chief in the town where the crash occurred and was the one who called me to let me know he'd been in an accident. Jake had always been such an active kid and had experienced several "accidents" on skateboards, bicycles, soccer fields and other outdoor-related injuries, but had always been a good driver. When my brother told me that the investigators at the scene had found Jake's cell phone and concluded that he had been sending and receiving text messages just prior to the crash, I refused to believe that Jake could have done something like that!

> *"Perhaps my son is no longer alive because he was paying attention more closely to his phone than the road in front of him.*

Perhaps my son was no longer alive because he was paying attention more closely to his phone than the road in front of him. My first instinct after the crash was to protect Jake and not make him into any kind of a "poster child" for not texting and driving...then it dawned on me that perhaps Jake's death could possibly help others (especially those his age) realize that it only takes a second of being distracted to change the lives of those you love and those around you FOREVER!

I am NOT anti-cell phone use...but I am pro-life. We've all driven distracted once in awhile. Jake was an amazing young man, a talented athlete, a loyal, compassionate brother to his siblings, and a loving son. Life is so much better with all of our young ones in it. PLEASE take a minute before you get in your car to turn off your cell phone and buckle up...let's prevent any more unnecessary deaths.

Kristy Lee Bateman | Age 19 | West Bountiful, Utah

On Saturday, February 7, 2009, my 19-year-old daughter, Kristy Lee, got into her car and did all of the little things that I had taught her to do. She had gone through the entire checklist we made three years earlier when she was learning to drive:

1. Check behind the car.
2. Look at your tires and fill with air if needed.
3. Click the safety belt.
4. Check mirrors.
5. Set the radio before you drive.
6. Put your cell phone away.

She did everything in her power to get to her destination safely. Then the little distractions in life got in the way. First, it was the driver of a truck that cut her off on the freeway and kept her from getting off at her intended exit. This driver's behavior ignited a chain of events that changed my life.

At about that time, somewhere in Centerville, Utah, another driver was getting ready to travel northbound on Highway 89 through the town of Farmington. This person addressed certain safety precautions and had strapped two small children into their car seats. She buckled her seat belt and proceeded onto the two-lane road. My daughter was now traveling south on Highway 89, approaching the Centerville city limits.

The driver of the other car decided to do one more little thing. She picked up her cell phone and called her voice mail to check for messages.

This little distraction was the one thing that could have – and should have – been avoided. Distracted by her cell phone, the driver crossed the center line of the highway and crashed into my daughter's vehicle head-on. Everyone at the crash scene told me my little girl did not suffer because the other car came through the front windshield and she never regained consciousness following the collision.

> *"I am sharing this experience with the hope that anyone who reads it will make sure to observe the last item on the checklist.*

The other driver made the decision for me, but I was the person who had to tell the emergency room doctors that they could stop the machines – that they were keeping my daughter from her final destination that night.

The hole that was ripped into our lives cannot be patched. Her laughter cannot be brought back. Kristy always brought laughter and music to our house and the silence is a poor substitute for our daughter. Somebody else's little distraction changed our life, and the lives of many other people forever.

I am sharing this experience with the hope that anyone who reads it will make sure to observe the last item on the checklist above every time they get in the car. Please, put your cell phones away before you drive, so no one else has to experience what we did.

Every day we are in charge of what we do in the car or at work, and all of the little things we do or not do are the things that can change our lives forever. Make sure that the little things you do each day will protect you and the ones you love.

Manuel Gutierrez | Age 19 | Orem, Utah

Manuel Gutierrez was born in California on August 30, 1990 and died in Utah on August 30, 2009. His death occurred in Spanish Fork Canyon. I do not understand why the four, Manuel and the other three young people who were in the car, went to the place where they died. One of the "friends" who was driving lost control because of the high rate of speed he was going.

Manuel was a great son, brother, and father. He was a tender person, full of love for people, very active and always happy. He liked to talk a lot and nobody could stop him from doing so. He liked to cook, organize his clothes; he always had a smile on his face, his happiness had encouraged us; his friends used to admire Manuel's happiness. He had friends from all ages and they called him "Manny Fresh." Manuel used to say that among his two brothers and two sisters, he was the most spoiled by his mom and dad. Manuel wanted to be a dentist. He used to practice soccer and ride his skateboard.

In Manuel's short life, he had an 11 month-old son, who was left to the responsibility of a mother. Manuel was a very responsible father. He was planning to celebrate his son's first birthday on September 19. Manuel used to work at a pizzeria. His boss used to say that he was a good administrator and very responsible at his work.

The tragedy came the night of August 29, 2009. Manuel arrived home around 10:00 p.m. I told him not to go out, that it was late, that he has to take care of his son. The baby was with me and he told me he was going to leave for a little while only and would return as soon as possible. Manuel's friends were waiting for him outside in a car. That was the last time we talked to him. The next morning, which was his birthday, the police arrived around 9:30 a.m. to give us the bad and worst news. They said that Manuel had been in an accident and he had lost his life along with his friends due to speeding. The police said that they had crashed into a concrete barrier. This was the worst news we had received in our life. He had left our family with great emptiness in our hearts. We remember him always with a smile on his face. We talk about him as if we have him physically with us. We trust in God that Manuel is spiritually alive, because in the past he had the opportunity to repent and pledge to give his life to God. Someday we all are going to see him again in the Glory of God but we still miss him and have a lot of pain and sadness because we did not have the opportunity to tell him Happy Birthday and son, I love you. He always said that we should take advantage of our time. I tell the youth to be conscious about speeding and to think of how their actions will affect friends they take with them. Take care of them as if they were your own brothers.

> *"The police arrived around 9:30 a.m. to give us the bad and worst news. They said that Manuel had been in an accident and he had lost his life along with his friends due to speeding.*

When you drive watch your speed, do not go too fast, take your time even if you are late to arrive to your destination. Take care of your life and the lives of others; they do not have to die. God bless you.

Yessica Hunda Vieyra | Age 18 | Heber, Utah

Yessica was driving when the accident happened. It was around 6:10 a.m. The car drifted to the other side of the freeway. I do not know if she fell asleep while driving. I still do not know what really happened. To all adolescents and adults, I implore and ask you to, please use seat belts because without them there is so much more risk of a serious accident. Also, drive carefully. Thank you.

Sincerely,
José Pedro Unda

> *To all adolescents and adults, I implore and ask you to, please use seat belts because without them there is so much more risk of a serious accident.*

Families aren't the only ones affected

It was one of those nights as a law enforcement officer I will never forget. Dispatch put the call over the radio of a two-car crash. As I arrived, I observed two vehicles that had collided into each other. I could hear young female voices screaming for help from inside one of the vehicles. As I approached the mangled vehicle, I observed two teenage girls in the back seat trapped in the wreckage and I could not get them out. One of the girls started screaming, "Where is our friend? She is not in the car." I looked around the crash scene and observed a young girl lying on the grass about 50 feet away from the vehicle off the street. As I approached her, it was obvious she was dead. She was not wearing a seat belt and was ejected and thrown from the front passenger seat. With tears running down my cheek, I placed a blanket over her lifeless body.

The other two teens in the back seat and the driver were also not wearing seat belts. Ultimately, the driver was the only one who lived. In a split second, the crash happened, killing three out of four girls who were full of life and getting ready to graduate from high school in the spring.

I also had the unfortunate task of notifying the parents of their daughters being killed. I will never forget the look one mother gave me as I stood in the front entry way of her home, telling her that her only daughter had just been killed in a car crash.

I have been on other fatal teen crashes since then in the twelve years of my law enforcement career and the one nightmare that haunts me to this day is knocking on the front door of a home and looking your parents in the face and telling them their son or daughter is not coming home. Picture your own parents in your minds right now, then ask yourself this question: Will I always wear my seat belt and make my friends in the car wear their seat belts? Will I always be a responsible driver? It's up to you!

Cpl. Eric White
Utah Highway Patrol

As a Volunteer EMT Intermediate, I have had a number of unfortunate opportunities to either attend to or hold in my arms a youth as they exit this life. As a wife, mother of 2, and a member of a very large extended family, it is my greatest fear to hear the tones of my pager requesting my response to a motor vehicle accident.

On a Saturday morning, the pager tones summon the ambulance crew to I-15 for a motor vehicle crash. The driver was pinned against the twisted seat by the steering wheel and dashboard. A quick assessment revealed he was breathing, semi-alert, had his extremities pinned and was bleeding from the femoral area. In a quiet voice he begged me to help him. As I applied a C-Collar and pressure to the bleeding area, many questions rushed through my mind. Two of which were, "How am I going to stop all this bleeding when access to the bleeding area is limited?" and "How is this teen's mother going to hear and accept the news her son was killed in an auto crash?" As the young man drifts in and out of consciousness, the fire department members work frantically to extricate the patient. As the extrication process unfolds, I tell this young man, "Almost there, hold on just a little longer." Approximately 20 minutes into the extrication, the life of my patient ends.

The emotions I feel are a jumbled mess. I feel sadness that I wasn't able to work a miracle for this person and his family, even if I wasn't the cause of the incident. As the extrication is completed and the body of my patient removed from the vehicle, I make another assessment of his injuries. I can't help but ask myself if I did everything in my power to save this young man. The assessment reveals life threatening open injuries that were hidden by the deformed vehicle. As I pull the sheet up over the body of my patient, I feel some peace knowing that I truly did do my best for this young man.

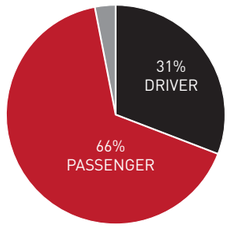
Susan Farnsworth,
Santaquin City EMS

2009 Teen Statistics

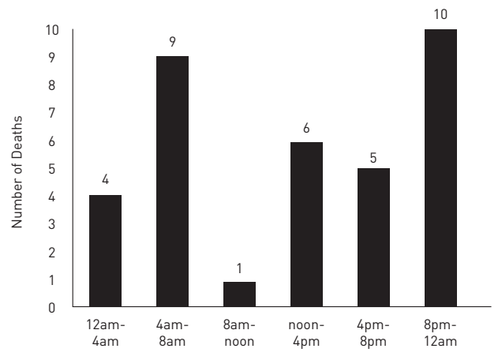
35 TEENS LOST THEIR LIVES ON UTAH ROADS.

PERSON TYPE

3% MOTORCYCLE DRIVER

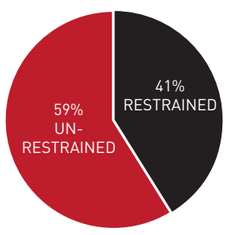


TIME of DAY

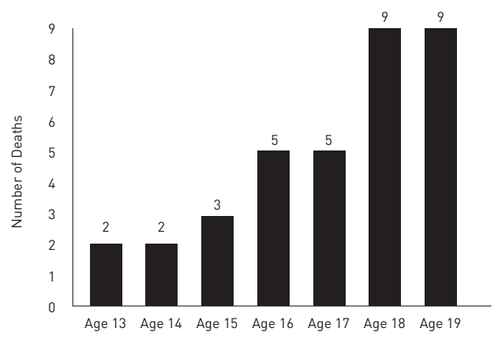


51% of all teen fatalities occurred on the weekend.

SEAT BELT USE



AGE of TEEN DEATHS



57% of teens killed were males. 54% were multi-car crashes

Teen Driver Statistics

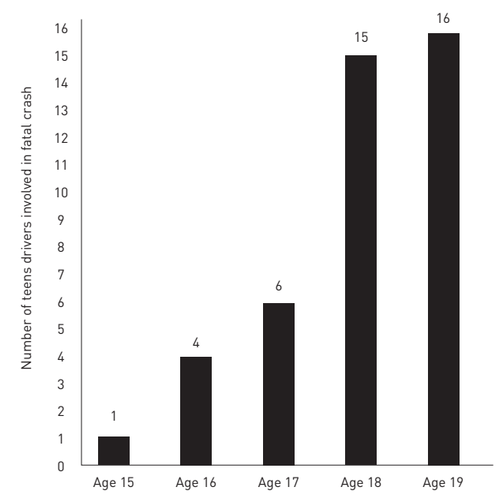
Teen drivers were 2.5 times more likely to have a contributing factor in a fatal crash than drivers of other ages.

42 teenage drivers were involved in crashes where a death occurred.

Contributing factors included: (Each crash may have more than one contributing factor.)

- 17 speeding
- 14 failed to keep in proper lane
- 12 ran off the road
- 6 failed to yield right of way
- 6 overcorrected
- 5 disregarded traffic signal/sign
- 5 drivers distracted (2 texting; 2 distracted by passengers; 1 distracted by scenery)
- 4 during inclement weather
- 4 drivers fatigue/asleep
- 4 drivers impaired
- 3 reckless/aggressive driving
- 3 wrong side/wrong way
- 2 followed too closely
- 1 improper lane change
- 1 improper passing

AGE of TEEN DRIVERS INVOLVED in FATAL CRASHES



How to use this book to save lives

For the past three years, families have courageously shared their stories on how they lost their teen on Utah's roads. Their hope in sharing these stories is that others never have to feel the pain of losing a loved one in a car crash. Please learn from these stories. Talk with your loved ones, friends, classmates, and students about these tragic stories and set rules for your car and whenever you ride in a car.

When reading these stories, please consider the following questions:

- What caused the crash?
- Could it have been prevented?
- What rules can you set while you are driving or riding in a car that can help avoid this type of car crash?

*Remember to be sensitive and not to place blame on any one person. Rather, focus on the principles that can be applied to encourage safe driving. Point out actions that are dangerous and should be avoided.

To view Teen Memoriams from previous years, visit **DontDriveStupid.com.**

The Utah Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program would like to express appreciation to the following partners:

Utah Department of Transportation

Utah Department of Public Safety

Utah Teen Traffic Task Force

DON'T DRIVE STUPID

zero Fatalities® *A Goal We Can All Live With*