

Question: How many people die a day from car accidents in the United States?

Answer: About 115.

So, why is it that while driving thirty miles over the speed limit, or texting while we drive, that this little fact seems to slip most of our minds? Sure, we've all heard the horror stories about the family friend, or that girl from another town close by that have tragically died from something we all do every day. Very little of us seem affected by these stories. My question is "Why?" Why risk your life for one text message, or from getting somewhere just a few minutes faster? Many people and drivers do not think of the consequences. We think we're invincible and that those things would never happen to us. The truth is, it could very well happen to us. Death from car accidents affects about 42,116 people every year. Luckily, many of us slip by those statistics, sometimes just merely. Of course, there are many other consequences of bad driving than just death. When anyone chooses to speed, text, or not pay attention, everyone else on the road is in severe danger. What would you do if you ever injured someone else from your mistake? Not only could you be in some serious legal trouble, but you may have just ruined the life of more than one person. People may also want to start thinking about the mental damage they could do to the families and loved one of the people they've hurt. When someone passes away, their father, mother, siblings, children, and other loved ones are greatly affected. Some may be thinking, "Why is this so important to me?" That is very simple. My life has been rather quiet. I still have two of my four grandparents living, and have only been to about five viewings in my lifetime. One in particular hit me harder than all the rest, though. My sister's friend, Emily, died in a car accident in 2008. The accident involved no other cars, and was said to be her fault. Those few days after her death are burned into my memory forever. Knowing that Emily could still be alive today if she would have just been a safer driver kills me. I now spread the word to anyone who will listen (and even to some who don't want to) about being safer drivers. It may only take one person to make a huge difference.

Ever since before I was around fifteen years old, teen driving has been a subject that I've felt very strongly about. Seeing what my older sister had to go through after losing a life-long friend at the age of 18, I knew right then that I would do everything in my power to make sure bad driving would not affect me. Three years later, being a very active student in my school, I decided to do something about bad teen driving. With the help of my S.A.D.D. Club sponsor, Ms. Emily Jones, we put together what I called "Realization Week". The whole point was to get students to realize what one mistake while behind the wheel could do. This is what we came up with in order to get the point across:

Monday: This was pledge day. Instead of just pledging your name, we had students pledge to a loved one that they would be safe behind the wheel. We then hung up all the pledge around school so students could see them.

Tuesday: This was the day of remembrance. We started the morning with a moment of silence for all those kill or seriously injured from a car accident. We then had students where a sticker with the name of a loved one who has died in a car accident. At the end of the day, students were asked to put there stick on a poster so everyone could see who all has been affected.

Wednesday: This was check day. Police officers were stationed outside the school to make sure every student had their seatbelt on. Also, a survey was sent out to any student driver, asking about how they normally drive. Statistics were read later that week.

Thursday: This was survival 101. A police officer gave a very graphic presentation to all juniors and senior about the importance of safe driving.

Friday: This was realization day. My sister and her friend, both at the age of 21, have lost multiple friends because of mistakes made behind the wheel. They both came to speak to all of the juniors and seniors, and talked about their experiences and what they have had to overcome.

Overall, I feel realization week was a success. Although not everyone took it seriously, the majority of the student body was very heart-felt about all the events going on throughout the week. I hope that even after I am gone, Realization Week because an annual event, that will overall possibly save a few lives.