

AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

Welcome to AAIM's
33rd Annual Benefit

Cover Artwork Created by Heather Fischer



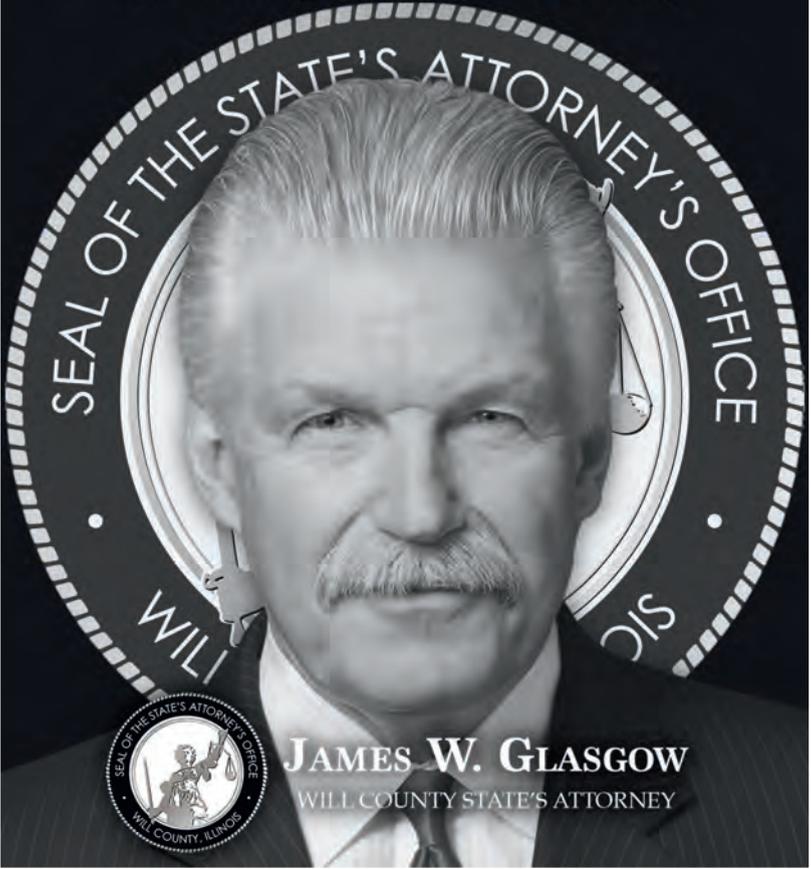
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and their efforts to
eliminate impaired and
distracted drivers from
Illinois roadways.

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Congratulations



on your extraordinary achievements in preventing deaths and injuries caused by impaired and distracted driving, while wholeheartedly supporting crash victims and their families emotionally, legally and financially!



JAMES W. GLASGOW
WILL COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

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AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

Administrative

Dear Friends,

Welcome to AAIM's Annual Benefit! We're privileged to have you join us for our 33rd annual fundraiser to support AAIM's Victim Assistance Fund!

Throughout the past year, AAIM's Victim Services team has continued providing comprehensive advocacy for families impacted by impaired and reckless driving crashes through their darkest days – while working hard to increase our efforts to ensure victims' rights are upheld. Every day, our victim advocates see the incredible Resilience of victims who've experienced unimaginable loss and or injury due to a crash.



Kristina Lawler
Director of Victim Services

This year's annual benefit honors and reflects on this Resilience. AAIM victim advocates understand how essential, ongoing, and complicated this Resilience is because of their personal experiences and continual education on trauma-informed care. Each of the families we come into contact with has faced the most unimaginable tragedies. AAIM victim advocates are there with them as they move forward and cope with this trauma. AAIM victim advocates provide patience, empathy, and encouragement while assisting families in finding their own personal roadmap to recovery and Resilience.

Through the generosity of our donors, AAIM provides financial assistance alongside this essential advocacy. Donations to AAIM's Victim Assistance Fund have helped families secure stable housing, purchase medical necessities, pay their utilities, and remove the financial stressors caused by impaired and reckless drivers. This support would not be possible without your help. Your donation will help AAIM save lives, provide financial relief to families impacted by impaired and reckless driving crashes, and aid in their recovery.

Thank you to AAIM's devoted board members, committee members, staff, donors, sponsors, volunteers, and guests for your support. You are essential to continuing AAIM's mission!

My heartfelt thanks,
Kristina Lawler
Director of Victim Services



MISSION STATEMENT

ALLIANCE AGAINST INTOXICATED MOTORISTS

The Mission of the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists (AAIM) is to prevent deaths and injuries caused by chemically impaired or distracted operators of any motor vehicle or watercraft and to assist victims of these crashes in Illinois.

TO ACHIEVE OUR PURPOSE

AAIM heightens awareness and educates the public about the devastation caused by the impaired or distracted operation of any vehicle. This includes underage drinking, the improper use of intoxicating substances before driving and distracted driving, particularly the use of handheld electronic devices while operating a vehicle, and other dangerous behaviors that impair the ability to operate a vehicle safely on both roadways and waterways.

AAIM supports impaired and distracted driving crash victims and their families emotionally, legally and financially.

AAIM encourages community involvement in its programs to make Illinois roadways and waterways safer.

AAIM supports strict enforcement of impaired operation laws and the development and enactment of appropriate legislation to ensure safe, sober and responsible driving on Illinois roadways and waterways.



AAIM PHILOSOPHY

We believe that deaths and injuries caused by impaired and distracted driving are not accidents. They are tragic results of willful conduct. The label of “accident” obscures the causative factors of alcohol/substance use/abuse, distraction and other dangerous behaviors resulting in the failure to recognize these actions as intentional and criminal.

We believe that being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or being distracted, does not absolve one of accountability for one's actions. Rather, the lack of accountability develops a climate of irresponsibility, leading to an increase in tragic outcomes.

We believe that driving is not a right, but a privilege granted by society to those members who comply with rules established for the good of all; that any benefits an individual derives from driving are secondary to the safety of others; and that the economic impact associated with the loss of driving privileges is the concern only of the individual driver, and should not outweigh the safety of others. Life, not livelihood, is the issue and should be the foremost consideration when sentencing persons guilty of impaired or distracted operation.

We believe that law enforcement agencies and the judicial system must continue to be sensitive to the trauma of the victims of impaired or distracted driving to avoid causing further emotional injury and to guard against inequity in the disposition of these prosecutions.

We know that impaired or distracted driving is a complex social problem and no simple solution exists. Rather, a multifaceted approach must include elements of education to heighten public awareness, formal education in primary and secondary schools, deterrence through law enforcement, and rehabilitation. Such an approach will require the coordination of public agencies and private organization.

AAIM
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Schaumburg, IL 60173
www.aaim1.org

GUEST SPEAKER GINA VARGAS



Gina Vargas is 39 years old. She has committed her life to being a mom. She has five children. She has worked in the dental field for 22 years. Gina's whole life has been doing whatever it takes to provide for and keep her kids safe, spending most of her life being a single mother. On November 3rd, 2016, Gina and her family experienced everyone's nightmare. A speeding drunk driver hit Gina and three of her kids as they were coming home from one of her daughter's cheerleading games. Unfortunately,

Mercediz Elanii, only five months old, did not survive the crash. With the other two girls severely injured and losing the life of their precious baby girl, Gina and her family want to share their story and spread awareness. I hope that their story will save at least ONE life so no family has to go through what they have been through.



GUEST SPEAKER JENNIFER CIFALDI

ILLINOIS TRAFFIC SAFETY RESOURCE PROSECUTOR

Jennifer Cifaldi currently serves as the Illinois Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor and is employed by the University of Illinois, Springfield, through a traffic safety grant. She is a nationally recognized expert and is regularly sought out as a speaker on alcohol and drug impairment. She has presented at various national conferences and has trained thousands of law enforcement officers, prosecutors, probation officers, victim advocates, and judges both in her state of Illinois and nationwide.



Jennifer serves on the Speaker's Bureau for the National Marijuana Initiative with the purpose of warning others of the dangers that cannabis legalization brings to the roadways. In her article published in the American Bar Association's Highway to Justice Winter 2023 Newsletter, she discussed the discrepancies between the Illinois Appellate Courts on whether or not the odor of cannabis provides officers with probable cause to search a vehicle.

As an Illinois Impaired Driving Task Force Committee member, Jennifer works with other traffic safety stakeholders to find effective methods of ensuring roadway safety. Most recently, she became an indirect Seated Standardized Field Sobriety Test Instructor for the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA). She believes these tests can be an effective tool for officers when circumstances dictate using something other than the traditional field sobriety tests.

From 1996-2016, Jennifer served as an Assistant State's Attorney in Illinois, prosecuting tens of thousands of impaired driving cases. She developed a DUI No-Refusal search warrant model that has now been adopted as the standard in Illinois. At the request of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, she traveled to Washington, DC, and contributed to the development of their manual, "Practices for Implementing Expedited Search Warrant Programs for Obtaining Evidence from Impaired Drivers." She also implemented the first ever Illinois Law Enforcement Phlebotomy Program, teaching officers how to perform venipunctures on their impaired driving subjects. She has been the recipient of numerous traffic safety awards for her efforts to combat impaired driving. As a fierce advocate for victims and as someone who has devoted her career to holding impaired drivers accountable, Jennifer dreams of the day when her services are no longer needed.

AAIM BENEFIT COMMITTEE



*Caption back row: Kathleen Fletcher, Samantha Gannon, Margaret Borcia, Carrie Kilpatrick, Marie DiMaria, Marlene Schwerzler, Barb Cutro, and Mag Garcia
Seated: Christina Potempa, Lisa Rogers, Charlie Wooley, Max Cody, and Rita Kreslin*

Master of Ceremonies

Maxwell Cody and Charlie Wooley

Silent Auction Chairpersons

Meg Garcia, Carrie Kilpatrick and Marie DiMaria

Committee

Lauren Armour	Meg Garcia
Margaret Borcia	Cindy Huerta
Maxwell Cody	Carrie Kilpatrick
Dallas Colburn	Kelly Krenzer
Tammy Colburn	Rita Kreslin
Barb Cutro	Kristina Lawler
Marie Di Maria	Christina Potempa
Kathleen Fletcher	Lisa Rogers
Samantha Gannon	Marlene Schwerzler
	Charlie Wooley

SPONSORS

We would like to thank the following people for their generosity in sponsoring a victim's story in this book:

Boone County State's Attorney Office

Sponsoring: James Day

Carmel and Alan Cottrell

Sponsoring: Aric Wooley

Sally Hoffman

Sponsoring: Mercediz Elanii Lambert

IL State Representative Maurice West

Sponsoring: Mikey Steines

Wetoska Packaging Distributors

Sponsoring: John Kreslin, Jr.

DONORS

**Our gratitude and appreciation to the following
whose generosity has made this benefit possible.**

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The YnoT Project

Diamond (\$1,000 - 4,999)

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Armella and Todd Schroder

DONORS CONT.

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Alan and Carmel Cottrell

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Katie Fischer

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Sally Hoffman

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In Memory of Troy Evers

Lee Rauner

In Memory of Daniel Rauner

Carol Russell

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Steve Wetoska

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Kathleen Pickles-Widmer

Charlie and Jerry Wooley

In Memory of Aric Wooley

DONORS CONT.

Bronze (Under \$100)

Elizabeth Baratta

In Memory of Carl Baratta

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Michael Fischer

Dan Groth

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Joanne and Albert Krueger

Wendy Muchman

Kathy and Bill Riordan

In Memory of Theresa "Peanut" Stanley

Phyllis Swartz

Our additional thanks to donations received after the printing deadline.

2023 SILENT AUCTION SPONSORS

We would like to thank the following companies and individuals who supported this event with their generous donation of goods and services.

AAIM Victim Advocates	Kathleen Fletcher
ABT Electronics	Kevin Bell
Al Larson Prairie Center for the Arts	Kramer Photography
Anne Kennelly	Kristina Lawler
Apple Canyon Lake Golf Course	Lake Geneva Cruise Line/Gage Marine Corp
Arbonne - Nicolette Drane	Let's Roam
Barb Cutro	Marie DiMaria
Beef Shack	Marlene Schwerzler
Blaum Brothers Distillery - Matt & Mike Blaum	Maws & Paws Pet Treats
Bloom Salon	Meg Garcia
Bub City	Megan Angle
Café Ba *Ba*Reeba!	Metroplis Performing Arts & Center
Capeche	Milwaukee County Zoo
Charlie and Jerry Wooley	Navy Pier
Chicago Bears	Norwex - Jeanne Bychowski-Fox
Chicago White Sox	Pampered Chef - Amy Bourgeois
Chicago Wolves	PRP Wine International
Chicago Zoological Society	Reliable of Milwaukee
Christina DiMaria	Rita Kreslin
Christina Potempa	Sally Hoffman
Cindy Kiel	Saltwater Coastal Grill
Cooper's Hawk Winery and Restaurant	Samantha Gallagher
Copper Barrel on State	Schaumburg Boomers
Crown Plaza Chicago O'Hare Conference Center	Spendthrift Charters - Nied Family
Crust Brewing	Sycamore Family Sports Center
DuEvol Jewelers - Beth Neary	Tanners Orchard
Eaglewood Resort & Spa	The Assembly Bar and Café
Elizabeth Earleywine	The Mamba Italiano
Egg Harbor Café	The Still Searching Project
Emily Rowell	Vanessa Harris Design
Fast Car Photos-Kurt Roussell	Village Links of Glen Ellyn
Fogo De Chao	Village of Rosemont
Fried Green Tomatoes - Fred Bonnet	Water Lantern Festival
Geri Gentile	Wetoska Packaging Dist.
Gobbie's Sports Pub & Eatery	Whey Jennings
Goebbert's Winter Wonderland	Wines for Humanity
Gourmet Gift Baskets	Beverly and John Wisler
Heavenly Horses	Woodman's Markets
Improv	Wyndham Garden-Galena
Jennifer Hernandez	Zanies Comedy Club
Karas Restaurant Group	

Our thanks to those contributors whose donations were received after the printing deadline

Special Thanks

- *Illinois Secretary of State Office*
- *Illinois Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, Guest Speaker*
- *Father John Clemmens, for today's invocation*
- *Gina Vargas, Guest Speaker, is a drunk driving crash victim. Thank you for sharing her personal story in the face of tragedy*
- *Charlie Wooley and Maxwell Cody for donating their time and talent to serve as benefit Master of Ceremonies*
- *Andrew Siedelmann, Kramer Photographers*
- *Meg Garcia, Carrie Kilpatrick, and Marie DiMaria for serving as silent auction chairpersons*
- *To AAIM families for all the beautiful tributes*
- *To the benefit committee and all the volunteers for making our event a success— we could never have done it without you!*

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

Since 1991, through the generosity of our donors, over \$857,077.00 has been donated to families in a financial crisis due to uninsured and underinsured impaired drivers. Below are some examples of families the AAIM's Victims Assistance Fund assisted.

- **In June 2021**, a man was walking at about 10:40 p.m. when he was struck by an impaired driver. He was taken to the hospital and was on life support for eight days until he passed away. The man lived with his sister and contributed to the household expenses for her and her children. She has been struggling with the death of her brother and suffering from depression, making it hard for her to work. She was given an eviction notice and notices that her gas would be shut off, as she's having a hard time paying rent and utilities. *The AAIM Fund* has paid for rent and utilities to keep her from being evicted and her gas from being shut off.
- **In November 2016**, an impaired driver collided with a vehicle carrying a mother and her three daughters. The mother and her two older daughters were injured, and her youngest daughter was killed. The mother and the father of the children have been on and off since losing their daughter and they are no longer together. The father has refused to pay his portion of the bills or child support. Her nephew and oldest daughter will help with rent, and she has taken a second job. She has three younger children at home to provide for also. She is behind on her rent and electric bill. *The AAIM Fund* paid for three months rent, past due electric bill and gave the victim a gift card for food.
- **In February 2018**, a 23-year-old woman and her boyfriend were struck by an impaired driver. The victim suffered a crushed pelvis, lacerated liver, and a collapsed lung from the crash's impact. She was in a wheelchair for months, then used a walker, and now walks with a severe limp. She has been told she will always have pain and not regain her ability to walk normally. She recently was told that she suffered neurological issues from the crash, causing her to have tremors in her limbs. She was also told that she suffered from an undiagnosed brain injury incurred from the crash, which caused her not to comprehend even simple instructions. Her boyfriend suffered bumps and bruises from the crash and took care of her after the crash. They are currently renting a house together. She opened a cleaning business with her sister, but the physical toll left her in constant pain, and she had a falling out with her sister. She has had a string of jobs and was feeling positive about moving forward before COVID-19. However, she has lost her daycare and waitressing jobs since the pandemic. She has a dream to get her GED, which would help her get a decent job. She has suffered from depression since the crash and needs counseling. She's struggling to pay rent, buy groceries, toiletries, simple necessities, and winter clothes, and is behind on utility bills and other expenses. *The AAIM Fund* paid past due utility bills, car insurance, GED test fees, counseling sessions, and provided gift cards for gas, groceries, toiletries, and necessities.

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK (cont.)

- **In September 2022**, a mother and her 14 year-old daughter were injured when the impaired driver blew through a red light hitting the driver's side of the victim's vehicle. This was the impaired driver's fourth DUI. The mother was severely injured with a broken femur, pelvis, collar bone and several broken vertebrae in her back. Her daughter suffered a broken collar bone and a break in her hip bone that was missed at time of crash. The mother had to go to rehabilitation after being released from the hospital before she was able to go home. She had family and friends help her with household tasks when she got home. She has had a difficult transition at home with her injuries, the pain, mental trauma and slow healing process. She has depleted her savings account, gets no child support, used all her vacation and sick time. She is behind on her bills and has no money coming in from any other sources. She's gradually getting better and has started to drive. She's in need of money for her monthly expenses for her mortgage, electric, gas, cell phone, car insurance and food. *The AAIM Fund* has paid her mortgage, gas, electric and cell phone bills for three months and give her a gift card for food.
- **In February 2017**, an impaired driver ran a red traffic signal and struck two vehicles. The 20-year-old victim was in the second vehicle. Both the victim and offender had to be extricated from their vehicles. The victim was taken to the hospital, where she later died from her injuries. The victim left behind a two-year-old daughter; whose father didn't want custody of her. The victim's mother and brother were living with the victim, who was helping to pay rent, utilities, and daily living expenses at the time of the crash. The victim's mother had just gotten married and was ready to live with her new husband and son, but the crash changed everything. She is now single and has full custody of her granddaughter. She applied for her granddaughter's social security and food stamps but was denied. Her granddaughter's father was paying for daycare but decided he didn't want to pay any longer. She is working full-time to support her family and trying to do her best. Her granddaughter can't start kindergarten this year because her birthday is in October. The government pays a portion of the daycare, but there still is a portion left unpaid. *The AAIM Fund* has paid for the portion of the daycare costs for 12 months that the government doesn't cover.
- **In January 2020**, a 40-year-old man had more than four times the legal limit of alcohol in his system when he crashed his vehicle and seriously injured his 4-year-old daughter, who was riding in the front passenger seat without restraint. Rescue crews had to use the jaws of life to remove his daughter from the vehicle and she was rushed to the hospital in critical condition and put on a ventilator. His daughter is now 8-years-old and in a wheelchair for life due to the crash. The mother is not a US citizen, so she is unable to work without a Visa or Social Security Number. Due to the special circumstances, the father is on probation and has community service hours. The daughter is on disability, but she needs to go to the doctor and physical therapy every day via public transportation. The

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK (cont.)

daughter is in need of a bed and dresser, as her current ones are broken. The mother needs a phone, as her phone was recently shut off. She also needs money for food and transportation. She is hoping to get a Visa so she can get a job and gain independence. She wants to go to school to become a nurse, but for now she's learning how to do nails. *The AAIM Fund* paid for a new dresser, bed, bedding, three months of CTA/Pace transportation on Ventra Card, one year of cell phone service and a gift card to Walmart for food, daily essentials and back to school items for her daughter.

- **In March 2019**, a 32-year-old woman was a passenger in a vehicle driven by an intoxicated driver. The driver was driving at a high rate of speed when he lost control of the vehicle. The 32-year-old-woman died at the scene and another passenger in the backseat was badly injured and had to have her leg amputated. The 32-year-old's mother was extremely depressed after losing her daughter. She was unable to work for four months and at the time of the crash her husband was on leave from work due to a broken leg. She had no money coming in and his salary was reduced to 50%, causing them to fall behind on bills. They also had to pay her daughter's funeral expenses out of pocket. *The AAIM Fund* paid for past-due utility charges.
- **In March 2018**, a 36-year-old woman was walking across the street in a crosswalk when the offender ran a red light, striking a car that had the right-of-way, then hitting her and lastly, a traffic signal pole. The victim suffered head, neck, and leg injuries and was hospitalized. The victim has been in physical therapy, but her injuries to her leg and knee weren't getting any better. She got a second opinion, and it was found that she had additional injuries to her leg that had not been seen previously. She had surgery on her knee and leg, but unfortunately, she couldn't pursue her dream. Prior to the crash she had finished nursing school and moved back to Illinois to pursue her dream of nursing. Unfortunately, she lost her nursing job shortly after her surgery, as she couldn't be on her feet for long periods of time. She got a part-time job to get caught up on her bills, but her doctor limits her to how many consecutive hours she can work. Her job hasn't accommodated her constraints, so they let her go. She moved in with her mother, but that isn't working out, and she's trying to find someplace else to stay. She is behind on her phone bill and fears it being shut off, as it is her lifeline for trying to find a place to live and a job. The crash has taken a toll on her mentally as well. She is seeing a counselor for anxiety and depression due to the crash. *The AAIM Fund* paid the past-due phone bill and provided a gas card.
- **In February 2007**, an 18-year-old woman was asleep in the backseat of her aunt's van when they were abruptly struck head-on by a wrong-way impaired driver. She survived the crash but continues to battle many health problems. She is paralyzed from the waist down as a result of the crash. She lives in her home with her daughter. Due to the crash, she has lost the ability to work. The minimal settlement she received is in trust for her long-term medical care. She is driving a

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK (cont.)

van with 100,000+ miles, and it recently needed extensive repair work. Due to the cost of the repair, she was faced with the possibility of losing her independence of being able to drive, take herself to doctor appointments or even drive her daughter to school and events. **In 2019, The AAIM Fund** assisted The Y-noT Project who donated a large amount of funding to cover the purchase of a new used handicap van for this young woman. The Y-noT Project is a non-profit organization honoring Tony Borcia who was killed by an impaired boater; the group is dedicated to stopping intoxicated boaters. www.ynotproject.com

- **In August 2019**, a 40-year-old woman was driving her cousin's vehicle and had four passengers in the vehicle; two of the passengers were children under the age of seven. A vehicle driven by an impaired driver traveling at a high rate of speed crossed the solid yellow line and struck the 40-year-old woman's vehicle head-on. One of the passengers died, the owner of the vehicle was taken into surgery, the children were taken to a trauma center, as well as the woman driver. The woman driver missed work due to the crash and lost her job. She has no health insurance and is behind on paying her tuition. She wants to attend counseling, but her situation is making it difficult. She is currently working part-time. **The AAIM Fund** has paid for counseling sessions.
- **In August 2019**, a 37-year-old woman was a passenger in her vehicle that her cousin was driving and had 3 other passengers as well in the vehicle; two of the passengers were children under the age of seven. A vehicle driven by an impaired driver traveling at a high rate of speed crossed the solid yellow line and struck the vehicle head-on. One of the passengers died, the driver of the vehicle was taken to the trauma center, as well as the children. The 37-year-old woman was taken into surgery suffering from broken bones, fractures, dislocated hand/wrist and had an operation on her abdomen. She was attending school on a visa specifically to work towards her master's degree. She was able to work part- according to the limitations of her visa prior to the crash. Since the crash, she has lost her job and is unable to find one to satisfy the work limitations of the visa. She is without a vehicle, unable to finish her current course for school and still owes her school fees for the semester. She is currently renting a room but was unable to afford groceries, a cell phone bill and the rent. She wants to attend counseling, but her situation makes it difficult. **The AAIM Fund** has paid for rent, cell phone bill and counseling.
- **In January 2019**, a 38-year-old man was sitting at a stoplight when he was rear-ended at 100mph by a drunk driver, killing him instantly. His parents assisted his grieving wife by using their savings to help with household and auto repairs while she was looking for a job. They also paid for their son's funeral expenses. They were dealing with crippling grief in addition to the financial strain. The victim's mother was unable to work due to her emotional state. The father had to have a kidney transplant and was unable to work. Unfortunately, they both contracted COVID. The father lost his job and benefits; the mother wanted to be near her

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK (cont.)

husband when he was in hospital, so working was sporadic. The mother recovered, but the father was in the hospital on a ventilator. Sadly, he passed away. She is needing help with her mortgage and utility bills. *The AAIM Fund* was able to pay her mortgage for three months and her utility bills.

- **In June 2010**, an 18-year-old woman went out with friends to celebrate her 18th birthday. She and her three friends went to see a movie. The driver of the vehicle stopped to buy a bottle of vodka after seeing the movie and headed to the beach. On the way home, he crashed into a tree, killing two passengers. The mother has struggled since her death, living on a limited income and supporting two other daughters. Her oldest daughter lost her job due to COVID and isn't able to contribute to household expenses or rent. They have been living in a hotel, which another family member is paying for weekly since they got evicted from their last apartment. She has found an apartment where the landlord is willing to work with her on the rent, let her move in early at no extra cost and even provide her with furniture. However, they need help with rent and purchasing two new beds. *The AAIM Fund* was able to pay two months rent and purchase two queen size beds.
- **In August 2006**, at 4:45 AM a young father who delivered newspapers was headed to work. He was in front of his apartment when his car stalled. He went back inside to get his dad so he could jump-start his vehicle. When a drunk driver came around the corner, he and his father were working on the car. The young father pushed his dad out of the way, but he was unable to avoid being hit. Since the crash his wife has been the sole provider for her family because his leg was crushed. He had diabetes and never completely recovered from his leg injury. His kidneys were damaged in the crash, which also caused complications in healing. Eventually, he was put on dialysis. In addition, he suffered infections in his foot that never completely healed. In 2012, they amputate part of his foot. **On May 30, 2022**, he was hospitalized and put on a ventilator; his organs failed. After a long 16-year journey of treatment, setbacks, and healing, he passed away on June 22, 2022, was 49 years old. They had two children, their daughter, now an adult, and their son who just turned 17 years old. The grandmother, who lived with them and helped pay rent, and passed away three months earlier. The ripple effect continues to plague this family.

The AAIM Fund assisted with the memorial service, paying one month rent, utilities, auto loan, insurance, and groceries.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP AAIM HELP THE VICTIMS OF DUI CRASHES?

- Ask your employer if they are willing to match funds to our organization for contributions of another sponsor or donor at an AAIM event
- Volunteer your garage for an AAIM garage sale
- Host a donated jewelry sale
- Ask your favorite merchant (spa, salon, grocery store, etc.) to sponsor a coupon day where 10% of each coupon holder's purchase goes to AAIM
- Ask a friend or colleague interested in fundraising or with public relations experience to consider joining AAIM's board or benefit committee
- Shop Amazon Smile and designate AAIM as your charity
- Organize a team to participate in a Run/Walk and designate AAIM as your charity
- Ask a teenager if they would like to earn their service hours by volunteering to help with an AAIM event

AAIM Board Members are ready to help you organize, staff, and promote these events! If you're considering helping out or have other ideas, please contact the AAIM office: 847-240-0027.

2023 AAIM BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEET THE BOARD

AAIM board members held prestigious positions on many civic and governmental boards, including the Illinois Drug Education Alliance, The Regional Prevention Group, and the Coalition for Reform of DUI Laws, the National Safety Council, the Illinois Traffic Safety Leaders, and the IDOT DUI Advisory Council. Furthermore, board members are often called upon to speak at local, state and national conferences.

AAIM Board members have been written about in People Magazine, Reader's Digest, many newspapers and have appeared on 20/20, Oprah, and various television talk shows and news reports.



Charles Nozicka
President
Physician



Patrick Finlon
Law Enforcement Office
Vice-President
AAIM Governmental
Affairs Committee



Rita Kreslin
Secretary
AAIM Executive Director



Shelly Anderson
Retired Insurance Executive



Ari Briskman
Law Enforcement Officer
AAIM Governmental
Affairs Committee



Bob Cebrzynski
Retired IRS Agent

**2023 AAIM BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEET THE BOARD**



Maxwell Cody
Sales
Treasurer



Elizabeth Earleywine
Attorney
AAIM Governmental
Affairs Committee



Kathryn Fischer
Investment Banker



Dan Groth
Attorney
AAIM Governmental
Affairs Committee



Ron Harper
Retired Law
Enforcement Officer



Glenn Kalin
Retired Teacher
AAIM Co-founder



Daniel Lopez
Law Enforcement
AAIM Governmental
Affairs Committee



Terry Vandergrift
Retired Law Enforcement



Jesse White
Retired Illinois
Secretary of State

AAIM STAFF



Executive Director

Rita Kreslin



Director of Victim Services

Kristina Lawler

Executive Assistant

Anita Huvaere

Administrative Assistant

Marlene Schwerzler

Victim Service Advocates

Lauren Armour	Cindy Huerta
Margaret Borgia	Carrie Kilpatrick
Kathleen Fletcher	Kelly Krenzer

Court Monitor Program

Lisa Rogers, *Director*

Court Monitors

Barb Cutro	Ivan Salina
Tracy Lorence	Ayanna Smith
Bonnie Marshall	Cathy Stanley
Carol Russell	Joyce Synek
Bianka Salinas	

Prevention and Education

Samantha Gallagher-Gannon

Program Support Specialist

Christina Potempa

ANGEL OF AAIM AWARD

The Angel of AAIM Award is given to someone who has made exceptional contributions to the work of AAIM.

In all areas of business and organizations, there are always some people who do much of the work without getting much of the credit. We all know who they are – they are the glue that holds us together, the organizer that helps us get where we want to go, the historian who reminds us of the battles fought in previous years and even many years ago, they provide the memory that reminds us of the issues not yet resolved, they are the ones who continue the fight despite many, many setbacks.

They are also the ones who most often stay in the background, they are the ones who oversee all the papers and reports and staff required for our success, the ones who nominate others for awards, the ones who choose others as spokespersons.

They are the ones without whom “we” other traffic safety enthusiasts and leaders would surely struggle even more. They are the ones who are most essential to our work.

Past Angel of AAIM Award Recipients

- Charlene Chapman.....2009
- Pat Larson.....2010
- Alan Krashesky2012
- Cathy Stanley2018



From left Charlene Chapman, Alan Krashesky and Pat Larson



Cathy Stanley

**SHEILA FORSNER AWARD
FOR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER SERVICE**



Sheila Forsner

**“No one is useless
in this world who
lightens the
burden of it for
anyone else.”**

– Charles Dickens



Alex Forsner

Sheila, her husband, stepson and baby were traveling to our mom’s house when they were hit by a drunk driver. Three and half month old Alex, although strapped into his car seat, was killed instantly by the impact. Sheila’s stepson remained in a coma for several days and recovered physically over the following several months. Sheila’s husband remained conscious throughout, witnessing the unimaginable destruction of his family caused by one man’s choice to drive while intoxicated and impaired by alcohol and drugs.

Sheila remained in a coma for several months and, over the next five years, faced not only the intense grief of losing her son, her independence and the life she had with her family, she also faced the myriad of challenges caused by the traumatic brain injury (TBI) she sustained in the crash. She endured countless hours of physical, occupational and speech therapies. She had to re-learn many of the things we take for granted: how to literally breathe again after being taken off of a ventilator, how to eat, how to talk and find the most effective way to be understood as a result of her speech impairment, how to use the very limited movement she fought to regain in order to be as independent as possible. This consisted mainly of using her right arm as the TBI affected all of her motor skills and left her virtually a quadriplegic. She faced so many trips to the hospital as a result of complications due to her injuries, went into kidney failure and had to go on dialysis. Sheila died before she could receive the kidney transplant that had been scheduled.

A drunk and drug impaired driver killed Alex, Sheila’s first child, our parent’s first grandchild and our first nephew (in a family of six girls!). Alex

SHEILA FORSNER AWARD

was with us for what seems like the blink of any eye but his smile and ability to make others smile and feel such overwhelming love spans the years since the crash and defies the passage of time. One man's choice decimated so many lives but ultimately did not take away Sheila's independent character, strength, humor and compassion. These are the memories we keep of Sheila and Alex. There have been many additions to our family, nieces and nephews Sheila never met and who never had the chance to know Sheila. Alex will never know his older brothers and his cousins; his cousins will never know him. We talk about Sheila and Alex so the children in our family who never met them will know their names, hear about their lives so they can have the opportunity to have a sense of who they were and to know they are an integral part of the tapestry of our family. Sheila's work with AAIM and her work with Pat Larson, which was so important to and valued by Sheila, resonate to this day and her family is so honored every year with the presentation of the Sheila Forsner Award. Sheila often told me that if, through her work with AAIM, she could prevent just one person from going through what she and her family experienced, then she would feel she had contributed something very worthwhile.

I believe she succeeded in her mission.

Patrice Heelan (Sheila's sister)



*From top left: Gerry Olmsted, Meg Garcia, Charlie Wooley
 From center left: Shelly Anderson, Lisa Lilly, Maragret Borcia
 Left from front row: Sandy Olmsted, Bob Cebrzynski, Rita Kreslin,
 and Chet Stanley*

Past Sheila Forsner Award Recipients

<i>Cathy Armstrong</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>Joel Mains</i>	<i>2010</i>
<i>Nancy Foy</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>Bob Cebrzynski</i>	<i>2011</i>
<i>Twyla Blakely</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>Claudia Corrigan</i>	<i>2012</i>
<i>Sally Hoffman</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>Randy Lounds</i>	<i>2013</i>
<i>Linda Irwin</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>Lisa Lilly</i>	<i>2014</i>
<i>Bill Crowley</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>The Olmsted Family</i>	<i>2015</i>
<i>Dave Perozzi</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>Margaret Borcia</i>	<i>2016</i>
<i>Pam Kelleher</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>Heather Lopez</i>	<i>2017</i>
<i>Shelly Anderson</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>Leeslyee Huerta</i>	<i>2018</i>
<i>Charlie Wooley</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>Doug Petit</i>	<i>2019</i>
<i>Rita Kreslin</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>Meg Garcia</i>	<i>2020</i>
<i>Chet Stanley</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>Gary "Bogie" Bogolin</i>	<i>2021</i>
<i>Lucy Romero</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>Dr. Charles Nozicka</i>	<i>2022</i>

ILLINOIS DRUG RECOGNITION EXPERT OF THE YEAR AWARD



*Officer Daniel R. Stafiej
Carol Stream Police*

The Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists proudly announces the first annual Daniel R. Stafiej Memorial Illinois Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) of the Year Award. This award is given in the name of Carol Stream Police Officer Daniel R. Stafiej in honor of his outstanding contributions to DUI-Drug-related enforcement in Illinois. Officer Stafiej was a long-time Drug Recognition Expert (DRE), DRE Instructor, and a good friend to AAIM.

A DRE is a police officer trained to recognize impairment in drivers under the influence of drugs other than, or in addition to, alcohol. The DRE uses a standardized twelve-step evaluation process that allows the officer to determine whether the suspect is under the influence of drugs and the category of drug causing the observable impairment. The procedure also allows the officer to rule in or out many medical conditions, illnesses, or injuries that may contribute to or cause impairment. While the DRE procedure's main objective is DUI enforcement, the procedures have been applied in probation and parole, drugs in the workplace issues, community outreach, and other areas where accurately identifying the drug-impaired individual is relevant. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, and several other countries worldwide participate in the program.

The Illinois DRE-of-the-Year recognition is presented to a certified DRE who has demonstrated outstanding contribution and commitment to the Illinois DRE program during the calendar year for either a single or cumulative contribution. The nominee must be an actively certified DRE in good standing with the State of Illinois DRE program (or was during the nomination period). Nominations are welcome from any people or groups with knowledge of the individual's contributions.

SERGEANT ARI BRISKMAN
RECIPIENT OF THE DRUG RECOGNITION
EXPERT OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award is in memory of Officer Daniel Stafiej Award for his outstanding contributions to DUI-Drug-related enforcement in Illinois.

Ari's dedication to impaired driving enforcement is exemplified by his service as a Drug Recognition Expert, Drug Recognition Expert Instructor, and Standardized Field Sobriety Test Instructor. Ari has been recognized many times by the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists, an organization for which he also serves on the Board of Directors, as a Top Cop for DUI enforcement.



Sergeant Ari Briskman

In furtherance of his commitment to traffic safety, Ari is a certified traffic crash reconstructionist, and he serves as a Team Leader for a county-wide, multijurisdictional crash investigation team. Ari developed the organization's policies and procedures for the first Drug Recognition Expert Team, which have been sought after as models for other multijurisdictional crash investigation teams throughout the country.

In addition to his primary law enforcement duties, Ari is a Senior Consultant for Dynamic Impairment LLC, a law enforcement training and consulting firm. Throughout Illinois, Ari has taught the following courses: Standardized Field Sobriety Tests (basic and refresher), Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement, Standardized Field Sobriety Test Instructor Development, Drug Recognition Expert (preliminary school and seven-day school), Drug Recognition Expert Instructor Development, and Comprehensive Impaired Driving Enforcement.

Ari also serves as an adjunct instructor for the Homeland Security Training Institute at the College of DuPage. In this capacity, Ari developed and teaches course material on drug impairment in the workplace and impaired driving enforcement.

Congratulations, Ari!

THE DIANE MAINS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING VICTIM WITNESS ASSISTANCE



Diane Mains and her daughter Caitlin Weese

AAIM developed an award in memory of Diane Mains to be presented to a State's Attorney's Victim Witness Assistance Representative for outstanding dedication to the needs of impaired driving crash victims and their families. Diane Mains, an AAIM victim advocate, died unexpectedly after heart surgery in August 2006. The recipient of this award will be determined each year by AAIM victim advocates.

Diane's seventeen-year-old daughter, Caitlin, was killed by a drunk driver a week before her high school graduation in 2003. Diane turned her horrific sorrow into action by volunteering for AAIM and speaking at Victim Impact Panels to court DUI offenders. These panels are one way that crash victims and their families work to educate arrested drunk drivers about the impact of drinking and driving tragedies. Diane also spoke to high school students throughout the area as part of AAIM's pre-prom prevention programs. Ultimately, Diane became a part-time victim advocate for AAIM in 2005 and was instrumental in developing a working relationship with the McHenry and Lake County State's Attorneys.

In all of her efforts, Diane championed the cause of justice for the victims of impaired driving crashes. In honor and memory of Diane, AAIM is pleased to present the Diane Mains Award to acknowledge outstanding courtroom work assisting the victims of these crimes.

EMILY ABBENE

RECIPIENT OF THE DIANE MAINS AWARD 2023

Emily Abbene
Victim Witness Specialist
Cook County State's Attorney's Office
26th & California



I have been interested in working within the criminal justice system since my senior year of high school when I took a psychology course taught by a Village of Manhattan Police Officer. I began learning about the intersection between psychology and the criminal justice system, and most importantly, I learned about all the places where services and advocacy were needed. I went on to obtain my bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology with a social justice minor from the University of Missouri. Throughout my time there, I worked for many organizations, including Fulton State Hospital and True North Domestic Violence Shelter, where my passion for helping people grew. I continued on to The Chicago School of Professional Psychology and obtained a master's degree in forensic psychology. I completed my master's level clinical internship in the inpatient unit at Hartgrove Behavioral Hospital. It was there that I solidified my desire to work with individuals suffering from many victimizations and injustices. Not only did I want to work with the individuals involved, but I also wanted to work somewhere where I had a chance to make a difference and affect policies that are working against those who need help. I started working for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office at 26th and California in November 2022. I have served a multitude of victims across four courtrooms within the Felony Trial Division. Within these four courtrooms, I have had the honor to work with the immensely special families who have unfortunately lost a loved one in impaired and reckless driving crashes. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with each and every family member that has lost someone due to these senseless crimes. I want to dedicate this award to all of the victims we have lost, including my dear friend Brendan Kivlehan.

*We are proud to award Emily the Diane Mains Award.
Respectfully submitted by AAIM Victim Advocates*

EMMA RANNELLS

RECIPIENT OF THE DIANE MAINS AWARD 2023

Emma Rannells
Victim Witness Specialist
Will County State's Attorney's Office

Emma Rannells has been working with victims of crime at the Office of Will County State's Attorney James Glasgow since January 2021. As a Victim Witness Advocate in the Victim Witness Services Division, Emma provides information, assistance, resources, support, and compassion to help victims of crime as they navigate the complex and often very confusing criminal justice system. Emma walks with them as they go through some of the most traumatic experiences in their lives.



Emma is dedicated to bringing kindness and understanding to the diverse community within Will County. She is dedicated to helping children and adult survivors of domestic and sexual violence, families of murder victims, victims of intoxicated and distracted drivers, and other survivors who have endured violent crimes. In addition to informing victims of their rights under Illinois law, she guides families through the court process -- keeping them updated, coordinating support services, and linking survivors and their families to resources and services to help them heal.

Before joining the State's Attorney's Office as a Victim Witness Advocate, Emma served as a Court Clerk at the Will County Circuit Clerk's Office. This experience equipped her with unique insight into the inner workings of the criminal justice system, and she is thrilled to be on the helping side of the system. Emma earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Lewis University and looks forward to continuing her work with survivors and their families to help shed some light in those moments of darkness and uncertainty.

We are proud to award Emma the Diane Mains Award.

Respectfully submitted by AAIM Victim Advocates

OUTSTANDING ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY



Robin Babcox-Poole

Boone County Assistant State's Attorney

**17th Municipal District Boone County
Courthouse**

Robin graduated Magna Cum Laude from Northern Illinois University College of Law in 2014. Prior to practicing law, Robin was a Pathologist's Assistant and college instructor after having earned her Master of Science degree in Pathology from the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Robin is an Assistant State's Attorney in the Boone County State's Attorney's Office. Since 2018, Robin has prosecuted primarily misdemeanor cases, handling Boone County's entire misdemeanor caseload while focusing heavily on cases involving domestic violence, abuse, and DUI cases.

Robin is unwavering and steadfast and manages her impaired driving prosecution cases with poise and prestige. She has demonstrated outstanding leadership and dedication to the citizens of Boone County. She works hard to protect the residents in her community by vigorously pursuing justice for the good of the people. She is unbiased when it comes to each case and defendant. This is shown through her excellent record of impaired driving cases, with consistently low to no DUI cases dismissed or amended to a lesser charge. Robin sets the bar particularly high for DUI prosecution. This was proven when it took multiple assistant state attorneys to cover her prosecution call while she was out of the office. She is responsible for prosecuting every misdemeanor impaired driving case in Boone County. Her passion for justice is admirable, and she selflessly will take a stand for what is righteous and refuses to back down when she knows that the truth and law are on her side. The number of lives she saved in Boone County through her prosecution is immeasurable. Impaired driving crashes are 100% preventable, and with her commitment and efforts to keep the community safer, she has deterred many from repeating the reckless choice of driving impaired and ultimately saves countless innocent lives from being lost.

**OUTSTANDING ASSISTANT
STATE'S ATTORNEY**



Katy Flannagan

**Kane County Assistant State's Attorney
16th Municipal District Kane County
Courthouse**

Katy is an Assistant State's Attorney for the Kane County State's Attorney's Office. She has been the supervisor of the DUI and Major Traffic Crimes Unit since May 2022. Outside of work, Katy is married with two beautiful children.

Katy received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois in 2014 and went on to obtain her Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Illinois College of Law in 2017. She has long held an interest in practicing law and was excited to work for the State's Attorney's Office during college and law school. She was first hired as an intern in 2013, and has worked for the office since that time, becoming a full-time attorney after graduating law school. During her internship, Katy worked in multiple different courtrooms and divisions, including the misdemeanor DUI courtroom. That work inspired an interest in DUI cases. Shortly after graduating law school, a drunk driver hit a car that Katy and her friends were traveling in. Thankfully there were only minor injuries, but Katy realized that it could have been much worse and how life can change in a split second by the poor choices of someone else driving drunk. This is why she decided early on in her career to devote her time to prosecuting DUI offenders. She feels passionate about helping victims and their families through very difficult times in their lives, and holding DUI offenders accountable to help make the roadways in Illinois safer. She is humbled by the trust that victims and their families put into her work every day and is proud to be their voice in court.

OUTSTANDING ATTORNEY AWARD

Elin Shoback

19th Municipal District Lake County Courthouse

Elin graduated from Loyola University Chicago in 2014 and received her Juris Doctor Degree from DePaul University College of Law in 2018. While at DePaul, Elin was a member of the Social Justice Journal and participated in the Criminal Appeals Clinic. As a member of the Criminal Appeals Clinic, Elin wrote appellate briefs filed with the First District Court of Appeals. Elin was an assistant coach for Loyola University Chicago's undergraduate mock trial program. Elin was an Assistant State's Attorney with the Lake County State's Attorney's Office from 2018-2021. During her time there, Elin tried numerous bench and jury trials at misdemeanor and felony levels, including dozens of DUI and traffic offenses. Elin was certified in Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE), a training course provided to police officers to improve recognition of drug impairment in motorists.



During Elin's time at LaLuzerne & Smith, she handled the firm's DUI and traffic case intake, and numerous branch court calls and has tried dozens of motion hearings, bench, and jury trials to verdict. Most recently, she has extensively researched and prosecuted several DUI-drug cases with Drug Recognition Expert evaluations and testimony.

When Elin was asked why she cares so much about prosecution, she responded: Individuals need to be held accountable for their actions. DUI is the crime that is most easily avoidable. There is no reason to drive impaired or even a little "buzzed" with all the rideshare options available. Recently, Elin had someone approach her in the courtroom, an individual she had previously prosecuted for DUI. She thanked her for forcing her to complete drug and alcohol abuse treatment because it saved her life.

PAST AWARD RECIPIENTS

VICTIM WITNESS AND ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEYS

Diane Mains Award for Outstanding Victim Witness

- 2007 - Joan Dolan – Maywood Courthouse
- 2008 - Pamela Walker – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2009 - Isabel Martinez – Bridgeview Courthouse
- 2010 - Iliana McKittrick – Skokie Courthouse
- 2011 - Patty Gonzalez – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2012 - Roberta Lewis – Markham Courthouse
- 2013 - Debbie Vanderwall – Lake County Courthouse
- 2014 - Barb Stone – Winnebago Courthouse
- 2014 - DuPage County Victim Witness Unit
- 2015 - Nichole Pasteris – Will County Courthouse
- 2015 - Linda Roman – Markham Courthouse
- 2016 - Evelyn Velez – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2016 - Jody Miller – Winnebago Courthouse
- 2017 - Edith Hernandez – Maywood Courthouse
- 2017 - Michelle Bradford-White – Markham Courthouse
- 2018 - Silvia Cruz – Kendall County Courthouse
- 2018 - Vicki Surman – Grundy County Courthouse
- 2019 - Maria Collazo – Maywood Courthouse
- 2020 - Patricia Burns – Markham Courthouse
- 2021 - Jessica Gil – Will County Courthouse
- 2021 - Lori Smith – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2022 - Annie Purtell – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2022 - Natalee Schroeder – Winnebago Courthouse

Outstanding State's Attorneys

- 2007 - Paul Chevlin – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2007 - Mike Deno – Bridgeview Courthouse
- 2007 - Mike Fitzgerald – Will County Courthouse
- 2007 - Helen Kapas – DuPage County Courthouse
- 2007 - Donna Kelly – McHenry County Courthouse
- 2008 - Nancy Galassini – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2008 - Deborah Lang Lawler – Bridgeview Courthouse
- 2008 - Mark Shlifka – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2008 - Steve Sims – Kane County Courthouse
- 2009 - David Bayer – DuPage County Courthouse
- 2009 - Kathy Lanahan – Bridgeview Courthouse
- 2009 - Jim Newman – Lake County Courthouse
- 2010 - Michael Baker – Daley Center Courthouse
- 2010 - Scott Clark – 26th & California Courthouse
- 2010 - Michael Clarke – Rolling Meadows Courthouse
- 2010 - Peter Troy – Bridgeview Courthouse
- 2011 - Mohammad Almad – Rolling Meadows Courthouse

Outstanding State's Attorneys continued

- 2011 - James P. Byrne Jr. – 26th & California Courthouse
2011 - Catherine Crowley – Skokie Courthouse
2011 - Mary Ann Jennings – Bridgeview Courthouse
2012 - Brittney Rae Burns – Maywood Courthouse
2012 - Mary Cronin – DuPage County Courthouse
2012 - Ari Fisz – Lake County Courthouse
2012 - Maureen O'Brien – Maywood Courthouse
2012 - Robert Zalud – McHenry County Courthouse
2013 - Frank Byers – Will County Courthouse
2013 - Nick D'Angelo – Markham Courthouse
2013 - Renee Dehn – Miller – Winnebago County Courthouse
2013 - Nancy Galassini – 26th & California Courthouse
2013 - Christina Kye – Skokie Courthouse
2013 - Laura Leahy – Daley Center Courthouse
2014 - Adam W. Delderfield – Maywood Courthouse
2014 - Dan Groth – Maywood Courthouse
2014 - Kyle Klukas – Grundy County Courthouse
2014 - Michael J. Ori – Lake County Courthouse
2014 - David Shin – Rolling Meadows Courthouse
2015 - Torrie Corbin – Markham Courthouse
2015 - Michael Gerber – Rolling Meadows Courthouse
2015 - Jason Grindel – Lake County Courthouse
2015 - Renee Thibault – Daley Center Courthouse
2015 - Demetri Tsilimigras – McHenry County Courthouse
2016 - John T. Gibbons – McHenry County Courthouse
2016 - Dominique R. Marshall – Maywood Courthouse
2016 - Debbie Mills – Will County Courthouse
2016 - Martin Moore – 26th & California Courthouse
2016 - Michael N. Pattarozzi – 26th & California Courthouse
2017 - Caitlin Casey – Maywood Courthouse
2017 - Michael Falagarario – Skokie Courthouse
2017 - Regina Mescall – Markham Courthouse
2017 - Kathleen Rowe – DuPage County Courthouse
2018 - Susan Caraher – Markham Courthouse
2018 - Jennifer Gadow – Winnebago County Courthouse
2018 - Shilpa Patel – Rolling Meadows Courthouse
2018 - Kim Przekota – Skokie Courthouse
2020 - Mary Cole – Lake County Courthouse
2020 - Desiree Sierens - Boone County Courthouse
2021 - Christopher Menich – Daley Center Courthouse
2021 - Alice O'Connell – Daley Center Courthouse
2021 - Joy Eleanor Tolbert Nelson – Maywood Courthouse
2022 - Conor Woods – Skokie Courthouse

CONGRATULATIONS



Tami O'Brien

Thank you for eighteen years of outstanding dedication and contributions to the mission of AAIM. On behalf of the AAIM Board of Directors and your colleagues, You have inspired us all!

Thank you for everything you have done and taught us; we send our best wishes for a happy retirement!



AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

AAIM's Story

ANN BRIERLY STORY
1963 - 1981

Out of Tragedy Can Come Positive Action
How AAIM Came to be...



The imagined sounds continually rise to the surface of my consciousness - tires squealing on the pavement, the reverberating clash of metal on metal, the screams, then silence. From a window, someone has heard and called for help. Sirens pierce the nights, headlights fall upon the bodies of three crumpled teenagers tossed helter-skelter across the intersection. One girl is dead; another is dying. The boy can't move; he has a broken neck. From a second car, another nineteen-year-old boy emerges, holding his broken arm. He has run a red

light at a high speed, broadsiding a Toyota, sending its occupants flying from their vehicle. Now he is swearing, incoherent and terribly, terribly drunk.

The dead girl is my daughter, Amy Brierly, three weeks past her eighteenth birthday, one week past her high school graduation. My oldest child – bright, funny, a talented artist and musician – enrolled at the University of Wisconsin on an art scholarship just two days before the crash.

In June 1981, Ann and her friend Lilich Shazar, a foreign student, and only child, died in Antioch, Illinois. The typical reaction during the 1980's was, "Oh, how awful, but those things happen." Such things were happening in Illinois all right, with astounding frequency. In "Blood Border", straddling the Illinois and Wisconsin state lines, there were over 65 drunk driving deaths that occurred in less than three years, death usually resulting because Wisconsin's legal drinking age was 18, 21 in Illinois. Under-age drinkers flocked to Wisconsin bars then tried to drive home, sometimes with devastating consequences.

It wasn't just in "Blood Border" that drunk drivers were killing and maiming hundreds of people every year. Half the driving deaths in Illinois were alcohol-related and the state's record on dealing with drunk drivers was one of the worst in the nation. The wide media attention given by this case brought a phone call from Lake Forest school teacher Glenn Kalin, grieving over the death of his brother Rob who was killed by a drunk driver. "Let's do something about this," Glenn said, and so we did.

ANN BRIERLY STORY

Out of Tragedy Can Come Positive Action How AAIM Came to be...

In April 1982, we called a meeting at Glenn's school and invited people that were concerned about the drunk driving problem. People that lost loved ones, paramedics, police officers and coroners that were tired of picking up the dead and injured off the highways, then watching drunk drivers walk away in court with little to no repercussions. These were the people that built AAIM.

We shared a painful bond as drunk driving victims and we also shared something else, a determination to stop the killing. During the first few meetings, our mission, philosophy and priorities became clear. We needed to create greater awareness among Illinoisans that drunk driving is a crime and that there are no drunk driving "accidents". More importantly, we needed to tighten the laws, build in stiffer penalties and assure that courts would prosecute those penalties and they would be imposed upon conviction. We needed to work with Wisconsin to achieve a legal drinking age of 21 in that state. And, we needed to provide emotional, legal and sometimes financial support to victims.

There were no other drunk driving organizations in Illinois in 1982. AAIM was the first citizen's group to take on the drunk driving issue and found a strong legislative champion in Governor Jim Edgar and Secretary of State George Ryan. Governor Edgar created a citizens task force to develop and integrate an approach to the problem

Now, 39 years later, AAIM continues to work to keep impaired drivers off the roads and bring awareness to the dangers of underage drinking. AAIM has led the way and set the standard for citizen action and organizational leadership in Illinois. Those standards are difficult for a volunteer organization to maintain, but maintain them we will – with your help. The tragic toll of intoxicated and irresponsible driving is still much too high; for this is a job that isn't, and may never, be finished. We do it gladly in remembrance of those we lost, and in the fervent hope that neither you nor anyone you will love will ever be a victim of an impaired driving crash.

Carol Brierly Golin
AAIM

THE ROBERT KALIN STORY



My nineteen year old brother, Robert, was a sophomore at Arizona State University. He loved racquetball, skiing and campus life. He was instrumental in forming an organization that provided nighttime escorts to coeds between classes, after a friend was assaulted on campus. Robert attended ASU because our sister, Shelley moved out to live in the Phoenix area. Robert wanted to be near Shelley. Robert and Shelley spent much time together, since he worked at her Cutlery World store.

On January 13, 1982, I received a middle of the night phone call telling me that Robert had been killed in a car crash. Shelley's everyday life was completely shattered. Following the funeral, I took Shelley to visit the Arizona State Capitol. As I'd had previous political experience, I immediately felt the need to take action against drunk drivers. I took Shelley along to show her how citizens can take a direct approach to issues. We visited every key member of the Arizona House and Senate. Shelley took this experience and formed the first chapter of MADD in the state of Arizona. I returned to Illinois where, thanks to a letter to the editor of a local paper, I was introduced to Carol Golin. Carol had been researching drunk driving issues since her daughter, Ann, had been killed the previous June. Carol and I decided that it was time for action in Illinois.

As we did research, we found that there wasn't a MADD chapter in Illinois. We considered joining MADD and called a meeting of interested citizens in May 1982. After several meetings, we concluded that forming a chapter of MADD would restrict our opportunities to have the most impact. We wouldn't control our monies and would be subject to rules that were adopted in California.

The name AAIM, the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists, was adopted. Early members such as Dave Osborn, Louie Greenwald and Jeff Lyons helped guide AAIM's beginnings. Other people were instrumental in our goal to rid Illinois highways of drunk drivers....Secretary of State Jim Edgar, Lake County State's Attorney Fred Foreman (now a Lake County judge) and Deputy Secretary of State Wayne Anderson (now a federal judge). It was through the efforts of these and many other supporters that AAIM has continued to save lives.

Glenn Kalin
AAIM Co-founder

AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

AAIM's Programs

AAIM PROGRAMS

Victim Services

AAIM victim service advocates are available to victims working to meet survival needs. Our history is working with crash victims and their families, those directly affected by impaired and reckless drivers; this includes those causing a crash while using an electronic device.

Advocates support all ages, genders, colors, disabilities, language barriers, and undocumented immigration status. Since 2007, AAIM has provided victim advocacy to 144,714 victims. Last year, we served 2604 victims, and we project we will serve 2,500 or more in 2024.

Victims receive emotional support, informal legal guidance, information regarding counseling, aid in identifying community resources, and financial assistance. Advocates regularly accompany victims to court, track case dispositions, and help ensure that justice is being done. They act on behalf of the victims to ensure that victims' rights are respected and acknowledged throughout the court process. Assistance is given in preparing their victim impact statement for final court disposition. Victim services are offered free of charge.

Financial help to victims comes from AAIM's Victim Assistance Fund, established in 1991, to aid families facing financial devastation due to death or serious injury caused by an intoxicated driver. Today's benefit, now in its 33rd year, raises money for the Victim Assistance Fund and AAIM Prevention Programs. Since 1991, through our donors' generosity, over \$836,682.00 has been donated to families in a financial crisis due to uninsured and underinsured impaired drivers. AAIM is the only organization in Illinois and possibly the nation to give direct financial assistance to victims of impaired driving crashes.

Program Support Specialist

AAIM's programs and activities are available to any population. Events focus on victims who might not have access to services or would not have known about our services and resources without outreach. Advertising community outreach includes social media, the press, brochures, booklets, newsletters, advertising stalls and displays, and dedicated events. AAIM's victim service information is provided in English and Spanish.

Victims accessing services can be complicated by geographic isolation, language barriers, cultural intolerance, disability, and lack of social support. AAIM heightens awareness of the issue and gives victims hope that help is available, and people do care. Serving diverse populations could include meeting specific needs for low-income families, people of color, individuals living in rural areas,

AAIM PROGRAMS

immigrants, and individuals with cognitive or physical disabilities. Working to change a victim's environment will shape their healing and provide them with the tools needed to help heal and build trust.

Including these individuals and groups in our programs and activities help to eliminate stereotypes and build personal authenticity.

Drunkbusters

To encourage drivers with cellular phones to report erratic driving to police, AAIM initiated the "Drunkbusters" program in 1990. AAIM gives \$100 to tipsters whose call led to a DUI arrest. In 2022, AAIM gave \$21,800.00 in rewards. Since the program's inception, we have awarded \$792,100.00 and removed 8685 impaired drivers from Illinois roads. This life-saving program has been recognized with first-place awards from the National Safety Council, Ameritech, and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce. The drunkbuster program is going strong in Boone, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties.

Speaker's Bureau

AAIM speakers are well received at high schools, colleges, middle schools, before civic groups, law enforcement agencies, and victim impact panels to encourage prevention, create awareness and illustrate the consequences of underage drinking, impaired, reckless, and distracted driving.

Victim Impact Panels

AAIM conducts live Victim Impact Panels for the courts, with victims and defendants telling their stories to DUI offenders who have been ordered to attend as part of their sentence to prevent recidivism. Currently, AAIM presents monthly panels in Cook, Dekalb, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, Will, Ogle, Jo Daviess, and Winnebago Counties. Panels are also presented in Spanish in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, Will, and Winnebago Counties.

Prevention and Education

AAIM Prevention and Education Specialists service the Chicagoland Communities, increasing public awareness and knowledge about the dangers of impaired driving, underage drinking, alcohol and drug misuse, distracted driving, speeding, and other risky driving behaviors.

Community Outreach Program

We immunize. We require seat belts in the car and helmets while biking. We insist on sunscreen. We do almost everything we can to ensure that our kids are healthy, safe and prepared for success. But when it comes to drinking alcohol or even

AAIM PROGRAMS

smoking marijuana, why does it seem so easy to shrug it off as “a rite of passage” or “just experimenting”?

Parents are divided on how best to handle teenage drinking. Should they prohibit it outright or let teenagers drink with parental supervision? Some parents think they might as well say OK since the kids will drink anyway.

Early onset of substance use is associated with higher risks of developing dependence and other problems during adult life, and people of younger ages are disproportionately affected by substance use compared with others.

Research shows that parent’s disapproval is the number one deterrent for underage drinking. Kids who learn from their parents about the dangers of alcohol misuse, underage drinking, drug misuse, dangerous driving decisions, and other risky behaviors are less likely to make poor choices.

Teachers and administrators have an important influence in the lives of their students. AAIM’s Community Outreach Program will provide you with expert advice designed to be used for both middle and high school students and or their parent/guardian. Your participation will help to ensure your teen has a healthy lifestyle and a positive future.

Court Monitoring

Court Monitors are staff who are physically present in the courtroom regularly. They receive training to observe and document what happens during impaired and reckless driving proceedings. Court monitors track results and identify inconsistencies from courthouse to courthouse. The regular presence of monitors reminds all justice system personnel, including judges, attorneys, clerks, and administrative personnel, that they are accountable to the public and that the public is interested in what happens in DUI and reckless driving courtroom cases.

The goals of court monitoring are:

- To hold the justice system accountable for its actions by maintaining a public presence in the courts
- To identify problematic patterns and concerns with the court system as well as to propose practical solutions
- To improve the administration of justice
- To increase public awareness of and public trust in the justice system

Studies have shown that when court monitors are present, there is a different demeanor in the courtroom, which can positively affect sentencing.

AAIM PROGRAMS

AAIM DUI PIN Award Program

The enforcement of DUI laws is a thankless, time-consuming, and unpleasant arrest situation. However, it is one of the most important arrests that you can make regularly. Officers who work hard every day in this area are not always recognized for their efforts as they should be.

With this in mind, AAIM, in conjunction with IDOT, who instituted the awards program, will carry on this ambitious project. The awards program provides a continuing recognition system for those officers who excel in arresting impaired drivers. The program began in 2001, and any officer who has made 25 or more DUI arrests since January 1, 2001, is eligible to receive the award.

The award package includes a lapel pin, a letter of appreciation, and an achievement certificate.

Awards are given upon the eligible officer's supervisor's request in the following denominations: 10, 25, 50, 75, 100, 200, 300 etc. To request the DUI Pin Award, visit: www.aim1.org

Beyond Driver Education Presentation

This program targets high school students preparing to drive or have recently received their driver's license. Teens learn about the dangers of impaired, reckless, and distracted driving, the impact underage drinking and drug use can have on their developing brain and body, the effects of substance misuse, the importance of good decision-making, and important traffic safety laws and regulations.

AAIM collaborates with the Illinois Secretary of State Driver Education Programs. We take students beyond the basics of driver education and give a deeper understanding of the impact of making good choices, the lifelong consequences of poor decision-making, and how to become the best driver possible.

Illinois Crime Victims' *Bill of Rights*

The Illinois Constitution and Illinois statutes provide that victims of violent crime have the following rights:

- The right to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and privacy and to be free from harassment, intimidation and abuse throughout the criminal justice process.
- The right to notice of and to a hearing before a court ruling on a request for access to any of the victim's records, information or communications which are privileged or confidential by law.
- The right to timely notification of all court proceedings.
- The right to communicate with the prosecution.
- The right to be heard at any post-arraignment court proceeding in which a right of the victim is at issue and any court proceeding involving a post-arraignment release decision, plea or sentencing.
- The right to be notified of the conviction, sentence, imprisonment and release of the accused.
- The right to timely disposition of the case following the arrest of the accused.
- The right to be reasonably protected from the accused throughout the criminal justice process.
- The right to have the safety of the victim and the victim's family considered in denying or fixing the amount of bail, determining whether to release the defendant and setting conditions of release after arrest and conviction.
- The right to be present at the trial and all other court proceedings on the same basis as the accused, unless the victim is to testify and the court determines that the victim's testimony would be materially affected if the victim hears other testimony at the trial.
- The right to have present at all court proceedings, subject to the rules of evidence, an advocate and other support person of the victim's choice.
- The right to restitution.

These rights apply in adult criminal proceedings and juvenile delinquency proceedings.

Violent crimes include homicide, felony assaults and batteries, kidnapping, sexual assault and abuse, arson, domestic battery, misdemeanors that result in death or great bodily harm, stalking, driving under the influence and violations of domestic violence orders of protection, civil no contact orders and stalking no contact orders.

The law requires that these rights must be requested in writing when charges have been filed against an offender. Contact the state's attorney's office prosecuting the case and complete a written "Notice of Victim's Assertion of Rights."

For more information, please contact your local state's attorney's office or the Attorney General's toll free Crime Victims Assistance Line for more information.

Crime Victims Assistance Line
1-800-228-3368
1-877-398-1130 (TTY)



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This material is available for electronic retrieval upon request.

AAIM VICTIM ADVOCATES

Victim Advocate personnel are available to victims and families who have been directly affected by intoxicated, reckless, and distracted driving crashes. Victims can receive emotional support, a guide to legal terms and court process, information regarding counseling, and financial help. AAIM coordinators regularly accompany victims to court, track case dispositions, and help ensure that justice is done. They act on behalf of the victims to ensure that victims' rights are respected and acknowledged throughout the criminal process. Assistance is also given to victims in preparing their Victim Impact Statements for final court disposition.

- ❖ *They talk to victims anytime, any day, 365 days a year...*
- ❖ *They get involved with lawyers, judges, state's attorneys, police and doctors on behalf of victims...*
- ❖ *They go to schools, to court, to the hospital and sometimes even to funeral homes...*
- ❖ *They provide a safe place for grieving families in support groups...*
- ❖ *They secure financial assistance to those who are in economic crisis because of an uninsured drunk driver.*

Below is our dedicated staff servicing crash victims:



Kristina Lawler
Director of Victim Services



Kelly Krenzer
Victim Advocate



Lauren D. Armour
Victim Advocate



Margaret Borgia
Victim Advocate



Kathleen Fletcher
Victim Advocate



Cindy Huerta
Victim Advocate



Carrie Kilpatrick
Victim Advocate

AAIM VICTIM ADVOCATES

Why Each Advocate Does This Job

“Through my own tragedy, I advocate with compassion and understanding so others are not alone in this process. I had amazing, caring people that helped me through the criminal justice process, and I lead by their example for others.”

– *AAIM Advocate Kelly Krenzer*

“After I lost my son to an impaired driver, I feel as though this is what I’m meant to be doing with the life that has been dealt to me; it’s my purpose now. All I want is to be the shoulder to lean on, the ear to listen, and the source of strength when they need it. Grief is a lonely place; if I can make it a bit less lonely, it’s all worth it.”

– *AAIM Advocate Carrie Kilpatrick*

“After a drunk driver paralyzed my sister/best friend, our lives changed forever. I remember feeling sad that my sister’s life would never be the same. Our AAIM advocate helped us understand the criminal justice system. Supporting us emotionally while going through the darkest time of our lives made the unimaginable bearable. I’m inspired to *pay it forward*. This is why I became an advocate.”

– *AAIM Advocate Cindy Huerta*

“Although I am not a victim of losing a loved one to an impaired driver, I have had a parent battle alcoholism for the past 12 years, which has impacted my life in a way that drives me to give back to the community, help others through their own trauma, so they are not alone, and advocate for change. To me, being a victim advocate is not a job, but a way of life.”

– *AAIM Advocate Kathleen Fletcher*

AAIM VICTIM ADVOCATES

“I have faced trauma, witnessed, and survived from childhood through adulthood. I live with the impact of violence that my sister faced before her life was taken by a man she loved. My friend lost a limb and another friend their life due to a driver’s recklessness. I do this because no one should be overlooked while the world keeps going. I do this because I know how it feels to not have support and to do it all alone. I do this because of my love and compassion for others. I do this because you deserve to be heard.”

– *AAIM Advocate Lauren D. Armour*

“When my happy, handsome, and funny 10-year-old child Tony, was killed on the Chain-O-Lakes by an impaired boat operator, my family witnessed the horrific scene. The trauma that we all endured, because of his loss, changed us in a way that is indescribable. My family started the Y-noT Project (Ynot is Tony spelled backwards) and with AAIM’s help, my family and I sought to change the laws and a culture that accepts operating a boat while impaired. I hope to make a difference and advocate for others who are going through trauma.”

– *AAIM Advocate Margaret Borcia*



AAIM GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP PIZZA PARTY

March 2023, AAIM has a recipe for fun, and once a year, our grief support group hosts a pizza party. This is a wonderful chance for our families to relax with others, share stories, and enjoy a Lou Malnatis pizza.

This year's pizza party was held at the Schaumburg Park District



From the left: Lauren Armour Advocate, Kelly Krenzer Advocate, Patrick Finlon AAIM Vice-President, Carrie Kilpatrick Advocate, Rita Kreslin Executive Director, Christina Potempa Program Support, and Cindy Huerta Advocate.



Steve Levy former board member, Rita Kreslin and Lisa Lilly former board member

Resilience



TWELFTH ANNUAL AAIM PICNIC

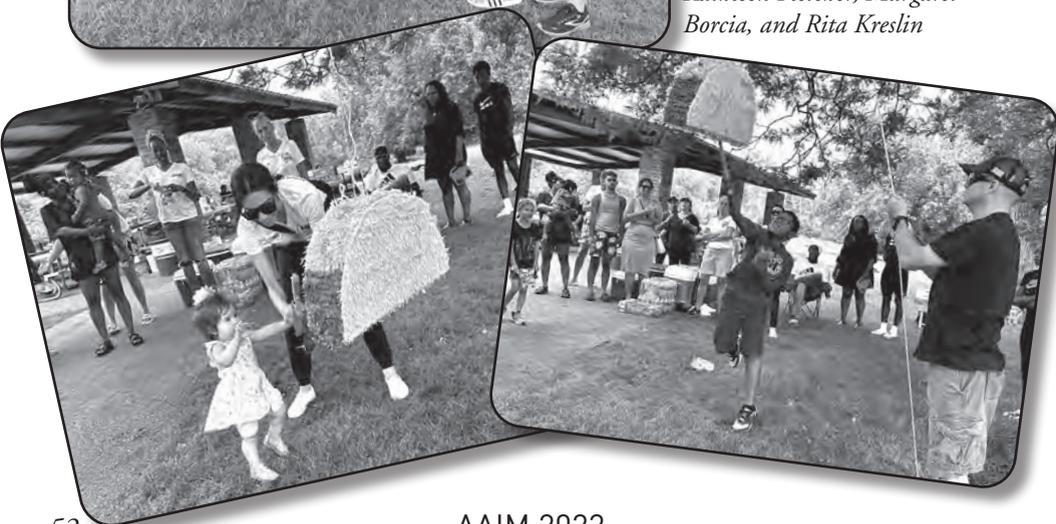
On July 16th, AAIM Victim Advocates hosted our twelfth annual picnic at Cermak Grove in Lyons, Illinois.

A special day was created to support all the families of impaired and reckless driving crashes.

Everyone enjoyed the waterpark, sack races, bingo, piñata, and good food! Thanks to all who came out. Thank you, AAIM staff and board members, for all your hard work and for making this a memorable day!



*AAIM Victim Advocates
From left: Cindy Huerta,
Lauren Armour, Christina
Potempa, Carrie Kilpatrick,
Kathleen Fletcher, Margaret
Borcia, and Rita Kreslin*





COURT MONITORING PROGRAM

*This program is funded through a grant from
Illinois Department of Transportation*



***Court Monitor Program
Lisa Rogers, Director***

Court Monitors are staff who are physically present in the courtroom on a regular basis. They receive training to observe and document what happens during impaired and reckless driving proceedings. Court monitors track results and identify inconsistencies from courthouse to courthouse. The regular presence of monitors reminds all justice system personnel, including judges, attorneys, clerks, and administrative personnel, that they are accountable to the public and that the public is interested in what happens in DUI and reckless driving courtroom cases.

The goals of court monitoring are:

- ❖ *To hold the justice system accountable for its actions by maintaining a public presence in the courts*
- ❖ *To identify problematic patterns and concerns with the court system as well as to propose practical solutions*
- ❖ *To improve the administration of justice*
- ❖ *To increase public awareness of and public trust in the justice system*

COURT MONITORING PROGRAM
Dedicated Court Monitors:



Barb Cutro



Tracy Lorence



Bonnie Marshall



Ayanna Smith



Bianka Salinas



Ivan Salinas



Carol Russell



Cathy Stanley



Joyce Synek

AAIM'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

AAIM's Community Outreach Program was developed to help parents navigate the teen years and educate the community about the dangers of underage drinking, drug misuse, and vaping. Parents have more power over their children's choices than they may realize. Kids who learn from their parents about the dangers of underage drinking, cannabis, and other drugs, dangerous driving decisions, and other risky behaviors are less likely to make poor choices. While many teens are making positive choices, parents cannot help but continually worry about the challenges and potential risks that teens face.

This program discusses:

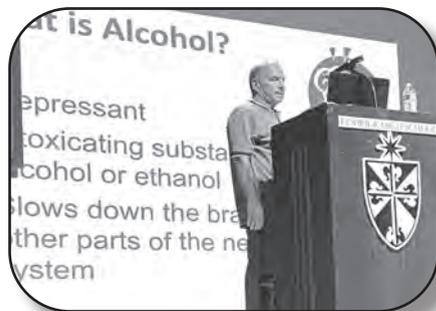
- Parental influence
- Proven skills to prevent underage drinking and drug misuse
- Expert brain research and the effects of alcohol, cannabis, and vaping on the developing teenage brain
- Social host ordinances
- Medical Amnesty Law



Patrick Finlon



Defendant Speaker



*Dr. Charels Nozicka,
AAIM Board President*



*Speaker, Rita Kreslin, Patrick Finlon and
Dr. Charles Nozicka*

AAIM TEAM BUILDING

Team building activities bring people together and allow them to connect in a different setting and see each other in a different light.

This event created a fun-filled day for all of the AAIM staff. The benefits of team building increase communication, planning skills, employee motivation, and employee collaboration.



AAIM'S YOUTH VICTIM IMPACT PANEL

A Word About Youth

Adolescence and young adulthood are the most difficult periods of life. Youths are notorious for making decisions on a whim, often rash, and without considering how it can affect them later.

Careless and reckless can be used interchangeably when describing youth culture. Nowadays, many of the actions of youth and young adults seem to have no consideration or cautiousness. This reduces their ability to avoid harm, danger, or error.

This program encourages teens and young adults to make good choices, thus decreasing behaviors that put themselves and others at risk. While some young people make good choices, others need to be reminded of the tragic consequences that one poor decision can have on their lives and the lives of others. Sometimes, they need to hear the story of someone who has been through the nightmare of bad choices either by themselves or others. The selected victim and offender speakers share their very personal and painful stories in the hope of touching the hearts of the young participants and impacting their decision-making process.

In cooperation with the Departments of Probation and Court Services, AAIM began its first YVIP in 2014. The program targets individuals twenty-four years old and younger. We urge judges, state attorneys, and local prosecutors to consider having this age group attend the panel. This age group will attend a YVIP in place of the court-ordered adult Victim Impact Panel.

AAIM'S YOUTH VICTIM IMPACT PANEL



Rita Kreslin



Doug Petit



PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM



Samantha Gallagher-Gannon
Prevention and Education

AAIM's prevention and education programs to reduce excessive alcohol/drug misuse and work to prevent impaired driving and impaired driving crashes for all ages. We promote alcohol and drug-free events throughout the year, particularly in high schools and local community events, with appropriate emphasis on high-risk events, such as homecoming, spring break, prom, graduation, and various community festivals. In addition, AAIM provides public awareness events and activities to promote our services that are essential to reaching people in the community, including under-served groups. Finally, AAIM community engagement events help promote positive change in neighborhoods throughout the Chicago Metropolitan Area. These include various interactive, safe driving events with law enforcement, traffic safety enthusiasts, and like-minded organizations for the public of all ages.

Beyond Driver Education Presentation

AAIM collaborates with the Illinois Secretary of State Driver Education Programs. We take students beyond the basics of driver education and give a deeper understanding of the impact of making good choices, the lifelong consequences of poor decision-making, and how to become the best driver possible.

Program Support Specialist

Victims accessing services can be complicated by geographic isolation, language barriers, cultural intolerance, disability, and/or lack of social support. The Program Support Specialist heightens awareness of the issue and gives victims hope that help is available and people do care. Serving diverse populations and providing programs and activities are important in the community and to all populations.



Christina Potempa
Program Support Specialist

AAIM PREVENTION AND EDUCATION



AAIM began the Prevention and Education Program to reduce excessive alcohol/drug misuse, impaired and distracted driving, and those crashes. We present in high schools, colleges and at local community events yearly. We give a deeper understanding of the impact of making good choices, the lifelong consequences of poor decision-making, and how to become the best driver possible.



From left: Samantha Gannon, Prevention and Education Director, Christina Potempa, Program Support Specialist.

AAIM collaborates with the AAA Foundation and the Illinois Secretary of State Driver Education Programs to take students beyond the basics of driver education.

Topics include driver inexperience, driving with teen passengers, nighttime driving, seat belt safety, distracted driving, drowsy driving, reckless driving/speeding, alcohol-impaired driving, drugged driving, underage alcohol and marijuana misuse, Scott's Law (Move Over Law), fraudulent ID's, the impact of marijuana on the developing teenage brain and interactive activities that demonstrate cognitive impairment.



Impaired Driving Activity - Alcohol Impaired Goggles



Ketzaly Huerta

AAIM PREVENTION AND EDUCATION



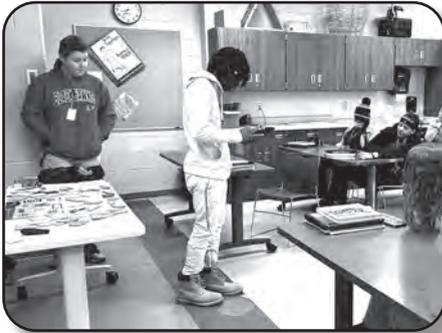
Leeslyee Huerta



Speaker



AAIM PREVENTION AND EDUCATION



AAIM STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

DUI INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION

Protecting the Arrest and Winning the Case



Jennifer Cifaldi

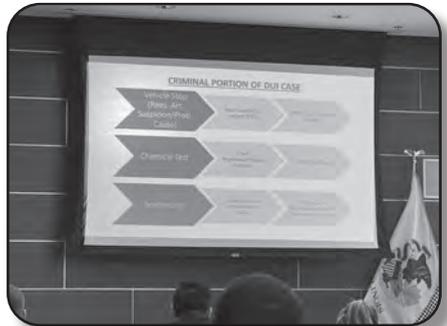
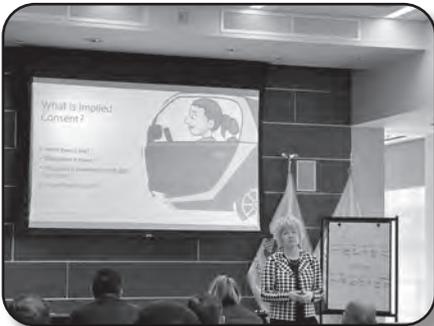
March 24 - AAIM staff attended a DUI Investigation and Prosecution Training at the Hoffman Estates Police Department. Jennifer Cifaldi, Illinois Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, presented.

Every year, impaired drivers cause thousands of traffic deaths and injuries. Prosecutors and law enforcement officers need the skills to ensure they succeed in the courtroom. Additionally, with the decriminalization of adult-use cannabis, DUI crashes have increased. This course helped instruct prosecutors how to navigate a successful DUI investigation and recognize some of the differences between alcohol impairment and impairment caused by cannabis.



This program was sponsored by the Illinois Dept of Transportation and the University of Illinois – Springfield.

From left: Lauren Armour, Advocate, Margaret Borgia, Advocate, Jennifer Cifaldi, Illinois Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, Lisa Rogers, Court Monitor Director, Christina Potempa, Program Support Specialist, and Rita Kreslin, Executive Director



AAIM TRAUMA-INFORMED ADVOCACY TRAINING

Guiding Others Through Trauma While Caring for the Self

July 2023, AAIM Program Support Specialist Christina Potempa, Director of Victim Services Kristina Lawler, and Guest speaker Judy Pasternack, BSN, RN, NPD-BC, provided AAIM staff with trauma training. Christina began assembling this presentation by attending the NOVA Trauma-Informed Advocacy online training. This training was weeks long and allowed Christina to take note of the important lessons to bring back to the staff. While knowing the basis of trauma-informed care is essential, this year's presentation was intended to be specific and thorough regarding self-care, boundaries, and how to care for ourselves in our work. From personal stories to humorous videos lightening the mood, everyone enjoyed the training in the spirit of friendship and camaraderie.



From left: Advocates Cindy Huerta, Kelly Krenzer, Lauren Armour, Program Support Specialist Christina Potempa, Advocates Margaret Borcia, Carrie Kilpatrick, and Director of Victim Services Director Kristina Lawler. Seated: Advocate Kathleen Fletcher and Director Rita Kreslin.



Guest Speaker Judy Pasternacki



TOP COPS HONORED BY AAIM

AAIM recognizes Illinois “Top Cops” at our annual Benefit. These police officers have demonstrated a proven commitment to traffic safety in the fight against impaired driving.

AAIM has been conducting a DUI survey from municipal and county police departments across the state since 1990. By publicly recognizing the achievement of the top departments and individual officers, we reward those currently doing a good job and inspire others to increase their efforts as well.

The survey provides a valuable service by encouraging citizens to compare the DUI enforcement record of their local police department with that of other communities. As a result, public pressure can be applied, where needed, to make DUI enforcement a priority.

Top departments receiving awards for 2022 are:

Aurora Police Department for making the most DUI arrests in Illinois (339)

Franklin Park Police Department for making the most arrests per officer in Illinois (5.21).

AAIM received the National Commission Against Drunk Driving (NCADD) Citizen Activist award for our survey and recognition of outstanding departments and officers.



Top Cops honored all year. They include municipalities, sheriff deputies, and state troopers.

2022 TOP COPS

The following officers are recognized at AAIM's 2023 Benefit for making 100 or more DUI arrests in 2022:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Arrests</u>
Trooper Kevin Bradley	ISP Troop 15	145
Officer Joshua Zumarraga	Chicago PD District 12	129
Trooper Daniel Pedreya	ISP Troop 3	121
Trooper Christopher Wittemann	ISP Troop 7	121
Officer Michael Phillips	Chicago PD District 12	119
Patrol Officer Alfredo Quinones	Franklin Park PD	108



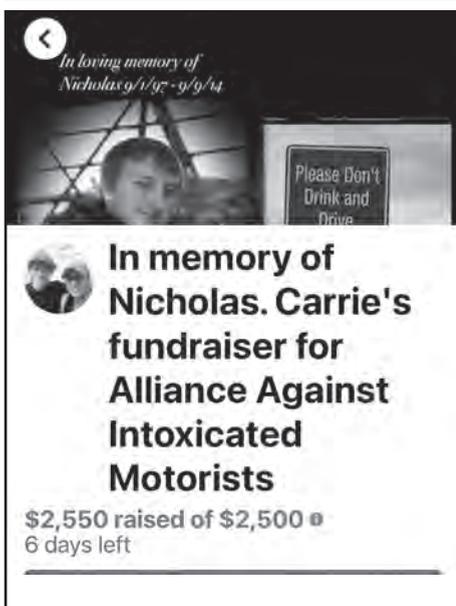
PEER TO PEER ONLINE FUNDRAISER FOR AAIM

Raising funds for AAIM doesn't cost you a thing. AAIM's Peer to Peer fundraising site will give you the tools to get started to support AAIM and honor your loved one. You can create, share and collect support for your online fundraiser in just a few clicks.

AAIM to make a difference is contagious and often inspires others to be generous.

AAIM will make it easy for you to get your fundraiser off the ground, and you can rest assured knowing that all of the funds donated will go directly to AAIM.

Thank you to all the Peer to Peer campaigns held in 2022-2023!



www.classy.org/campaign/aaim-to-make-a-difference/c147934
Peer to Peer Fundraising

AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

AAIM's Partnerships

JESSE WHITE CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY

For the Victims of Impaired and Distracted Driving Crashes

On December 7, 2022, the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists co-hosted a Candlelight Ceremony for the victims of impaired and reckless driving crashes, sponsored by former Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White.

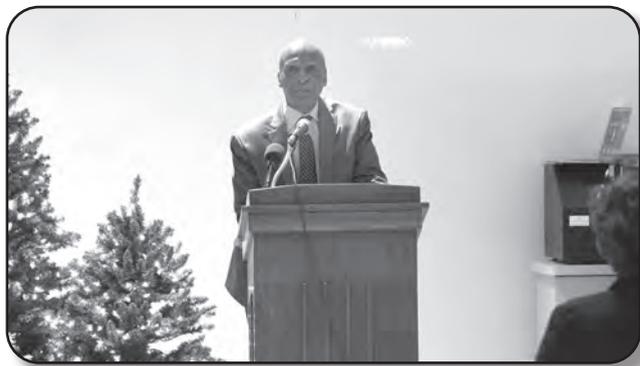
This event was held at Our Lady Of Hope Catholic Mission, 9711 W. Devon Ave., Rosemont, IL. The program included remarks from Jesse White, 20th District State Representative Bradley A. Stephens, and Rosemont Public Safety Chief Julio Alvarado.

Abby Matson recounted the horrific impaired driving crash that changed her life in April 2017. Abby was seventeen and on spring break when she was severely injured by an impaired teen driver.

Michele Lendino shared the terrible story of how, on July 21, 2018, a reckless driver traveling over 107 MPH took the life of her 16-year-old daughter, Alyssa.

There was a ceremonial candle lighting along with a local vocalist performing. Reverend Derek Ho provided the invocation and benediction. Mayor Bradley Stephens and Chief Julio Alvarado, of the Village of Rosemont, gave remarks.

The candlelight ceremony has been held for many years, not only for the victims but also for the public—to remind everyone of the tragedies caused by impaired and reckless driving and the ripple effect for crash victims and their families.



*Secretary of
State Jesse
White*



JESSE WHITE CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY



*Rosemont Mayor Bradley
Stephens*



Reverend Derek HO



Abby Matson



*Kelly Krenzer, AAIM
Advocate*



Michele Lendino



*Dr. Charles Nozicka,
AAIM Board President*



JESSE WHITE RETIRES

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE



Rita Kreslin, AAIM Executive Director

AAIM has been honored to work with Secretary White's Administration since he took office in 1998. On December 14, 2022, AAIM was invited to speak at Jesse Whites' retirement party and celebrate his contributions and outstanding work in Traffic Safety, DUI Prevention, Victim Advocacy, and educating youth about making good decisions to keep them safe on the road.

Jesse was celebrated for his outstanding effort to crack down on DUI. Such as requiring 1st time DUI offenders to have the BAIID installed in their vehicles, supporting key legislation for traffic safety issues and stiffer penalties for impaired and

reckless drivers, for Implementing the Teen Driver Safety and the Graduated Driver's License Program, and instituting new rules and regulations for the CDL licensing process – just to name a few.

Jesse's additional achievements and contributions to AAIM include:

- Serving as AAIM's Honorary Chairperson at our annual fundraiser – supporting financial assistance for crash victims.
- Hosting a Candlelight Ceremony in December each year to honor crash victims and their families because he understands how difficult the holiday season is for those who have lost a loved one.
- Respecting the voice of the people, encouraging AAIM's testimony during Advisory Council Hearings.
- Attending AAIM high school programs and speaking to students about the importance of safe driving behaviors and making good choices.

JESSE WHITE RETIRES

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

AAIM will miss working with Jesse White, but we look forward to working with Alexi Giannaouis and the new administration. AAIM won't say goodbye! We will see Jesse and The Jesse White Tumblers, God willing, for many years to come at AAIM events!

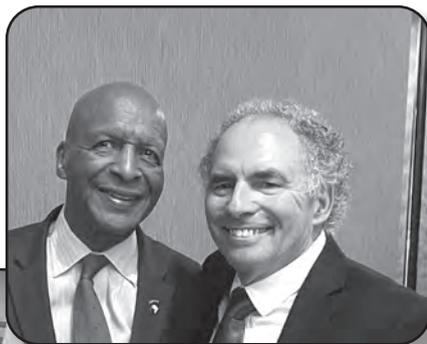
May God Bless you and your family, and may you enjoy your retirement!



The Jesse White Tumblers



*Rita Kreslin and Jesse White,
IL Secretary of State*



*Jesse White and
Dr. Charles Nozicka*



AAIM PARTICIPATED IN NATIONAL NIGHT OUT IN SEVERAL COMMUNITIES

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, CARY, HANOVER PARK, LISLE, MACHESNEY PARK, ORLAND PARK, SOUTH ELGIN, WEST CHICAGO, WOOD DALE

WHAT IS NATIONAL NIGHT OUT?

National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live.

National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors, law enforcement, and first responders while bringing back a sense of community. Furthermore, it provides an excellent opportunity to get police and neighbors together under favorable circumstances.



Yana AAIM Volunteer, Aidan Fischer AAIM Volunteer and Samantha Gannon, AAIM Prevention and Education (Arlington Hts.)



Aidan Fischer (Arlington Hts.)



Samantha Gannon (Arlington Hts.)

AAIM PARTICIPATED IN NATIONAL NIGHT OUT



Arlington Hts. Top Cops



Arlington Hts. NNO



Cary PD NNO



Cary PD NNO



From left: Sergeant Josh Victor, AAIM Court Monitor Director Lisa Rogers, and Police Chief Patrick Finlon (Cary PD)



Cary PD NNO

AAIM PARTICIPATED IN NATIONAL NIGHT OUT



Christina Potempa (So. Elgin NNO).



So. Elgin NNO



So. Elgin NNO



From left: AAIM Advocate Carrie Kilpatrick and AAIM Program Support Specialist Christina Potempa. (So. Elgin NNO)

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS POLICE DEPARTMENT

PARTNERSHIP TO EDUCATE DRIVERS ABOUT LIQUOR PEDAL EVENT



The 2023 PEDAL event. AAIM Prevention and Education team partnered with the Arlington Heights Police Department to help educate the community about the danger of impaired and distracted driving. This was a fun, interactive obstacle course.

Thank you, Arlington Heights PD!



Picture from left to right:

*Sergeant Russ Mandel, AAIM Prevention and Education Director
Samantha Gannon, Officer Steve Dinou, Officer Oleh Yuspnyuk,
Public Service Officer Mary Hatfield, and Officer Dave Lavin.
Seated: AAIM Program Support Specialist Christina Potempa*



CHICAGO AUTO SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

AAIM was an exhibitor for ten days at the Chicago Auto Show at McCormick Place. Board members, staff, and volunteers connected with individuals and companies to exchange information about driver education, traffic safety, underage drinking, impaired driving, victim advocacy, and distracted driving. The public engaged in interactive traffic safety challenge activities.



*Jim Borgia, Volunteer and
Margaret Borgia, AAIM Advocate*



Anna Cody, Volunteer



*Dr. Charles Nozicka, AAIM Board
President, Rita Kreslin, AAIM Executive
Director and Former Secretary of State
Jesse White.*



*Lauren Armour, Advocate and
Barb Cutro, Court Monitor*

CHICAGO AUTO SHOW HIGHLIGHTS



Patrick Finlon, AAIM vice-President, and Terry Vandergrift, AAIM Board Member



From left: Kathleen Fletcher, Advocate, Barb Cuto, Court Monitor; and Lisa Rogers, Court Monitor Director



Ari Briskman, AAIM Board Member



Samantha Gannon, Prevention and Education Director, and Kelly Krenzer, Advocate



AAIM supported the Jesse White Tumblers Foundation at the Chicago Auto Show's First Look for Charity.

COMMENDABLE AWARDS FOR DUI EFFORTS

It's no secret that in today's climate, Law Enforcement Officers are not given the respect and acknowledgment they deserve for their heroic work in public service. Many of you may not think of yourselves as heroes, but your families, friends, and those of us who work closely with you in the community recognize the sacrifices you make every day.

The enforcement of DUI laws is often a thankless, time-consuming, and unpleasant arrest situation. But - it is one of the most important assets that a police officer can make regularly. Officers who work hard in this area are not always recognized for their efforts as they should be.

With this in mind, AAIM, in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Transportation, which instituted the DUI Carrer Pin Program, continues this ambitious program to recognize law enforcement officers across the state who excel in arresting impaired drivers.

Thank you, and keep up the good work!

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

During National Night Out, AAIM recognized Law Enforcement Officers for their DUI enforcement efforts. Hundreds of people from the community were present to applaud their lifesaving work.



Aidan Fischer, AAIM Volunteer and Samantha Gannon, Prevention and Education Director.

COMMENDABLE AWARDS FOR DUI EFFORTS

LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

AAIM board member Sergeant Ari Briskman and Law enforcement officer for the Lake County Sheriff's Office was recognized for his 600 DUI career

*Sergeant Ari Briskman and Rita Kreslin,
AAIM Executive Director.*



GURNEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

AAIM Court Monitor Director Lisa Rogers recognized officers for their career DUI enforcement efforts. These awards are presented when officers reach a designated cumulative total of DUI arrests. Each officer received a commemorative pin and certificate for their achievement.

Officer Joshua Silvernail, Chief Brian Smith, Officer. Patrick Koutris, Officer Jonathan Savage and Deputy Chief Jeremy Gaughan.



HOFFMAN ESTATES

AAIM was honored to recognize 41 officers from the Hoffman Estates Police Department for their lifesaving efforts in DUI enforcement.



Officer. Jesus Villagomez, Detective Mark Shaw, Officer Matt Park, AAIM Executive Director Rita Kreslin, Lt. Scott Lawrence, Detective Krzysztof Kowal, Officer Tony Caceres, Officer Patrick Buch, Officer Anthony Bartolone, Officer Richard Soby and Sergeant Phillip Giacone.

COMMENDABLE AWARDS FOR DUI EFFORTS



FRANKLIN PARK

AAIM presented Officer Alfredo Kwi-Nownz with his 300 DUI Pin - acknowledging his 300 career arrests in DUI enforcement. Congratulations!

*Rita Kreslin, AAIM Executive Director
and Officer Alfredo Kwi-Nownz*

NORTH RIVERSIDE

Congratulations Officer Josh Czerak from the North Riverside Police Department on 100 DUI career arrests!



*Chief Christian Ehrenberg, Officer Czerak,
Deputy Chief Dave Kopka, and Commander
Chris Boenzi*



*Court Monitor Carol Russell, Officer Czerak
and Executive Director Rita Kreslin*



*Village President Joseph Mengoni, Officer Josh
Czerak and Chief Christian Ehrenberg*

WOOD DALE POLICE DEPARTMENT

AAIM recognized Wood Dale Police Officers with certificates of appreciation for their lifesaving efforts in DUI Enforcement. Presenting on behalf of AAIM in memory of Aric Wooley, is Charlie Wooley, Aric's stepmother. Aric was killed in a drunk driving crash at the age of eighteen on June 16, 2000.



NATIONAL CRIME VICTIM'S RIGHTS WEEK - NNCV RW

Since 1981, National Crime Victims' Rights Week is celebrated annually in April. This week is dedicated to learning about victimization, the effect victimization has on individuals, families, friends, and the community, and to promote laws, policies, and programs to help victims of crime. Every year, thousands of communities across the nation honor the dedication of those before us that established victim rights and renew their commitment to guarantee that all victims have the rights and services they need to recover from crime.

In honor of **NCV RW**, AAIM participated with the Office of the Illinois Attorney General and the Lake County State's Attorney's Office.

The Illinois Attorney General's Office and Eric Rinehart, Lake County State's Attorney, are committed to supporting crime victims. This year's event was designed to reach all victims of crimes and be more inclusive for everyone in every community.



From left: Bonnie Marshall, AAIM Court Monitor, Lisa Rogers, AAIM Court Monitor Director, Lake County States Attorney, Eric Rinehart, and Margaret Borcia, AAIM Victim Advocate



From left: Lisa Rogers, Bonnie Marshall and Margaret Borcia

NINTH ANNUAL WIFFLEBALL TOURNAMENT



On August 13, 2023, the Borcia family and friends held the ninth Wiffleball Tournament fundraiser in memory of their son, Tony Borcia. Tony was killed at the age of ten on July 28, 2012, by an impaired boater. (see Borcia tribute). Proceeds from the tournament have been generously donated to AAIM's Victim's Assistance Fund and The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR).



Margaret and Jim Borcia



Lake County DNR

NINTH ANNUAL WIFFLEBALL TOURNAMENT



From left: Rita Kreslin, AAIM Executive Director, Margaret Borgia, AAIM Advocate, Julie Morrison, Illinois State Senator and Kelly Krenzer, AAIM Advocate.



Y-noT CHAMPS

The Y-noT Project is a non-profit organization honoring Tony Borgia and dedicated to stopping intoxicated boaters. www.ynotproject.com



Lake County Sheriff's Office



ILLINOIS TRAFFIC SAFETY CHALLENGE

AAIM Board Member Elizabeth Earleywine spoke about AAIM programs at the 2023 Illinois Traffic Safety Challenge (ITSC). ITSC is a friendly competition between law enforcement agencies of a similar size and type. It is a program coordinated by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police (ILACP) Traffic Committee and supported by a NHTSA grant administered through the Illinois Department of Transportation, Bureau of Safety Programs and Engineering (BSPE), as well as much-appreciated funding from private entities.

The Challenge is much more than a peer competition. It is a template for law enforcement agencies to identify traffic issues, plan strategies, reduce social harm and improve the quality of life in their communities. The Challenge helps agencies demonstrate successes to their government officials, community leaders and citizens. The Illinois Traffic Safety Challenge provides law enforcement agencies with an opportunity to contribute to the Illinois' Strategic Highway Safety Plan and have a significant impact on the reduction of crashes, deaths and associated injuries across the state.



AAIM Board Member Elizabeth Earleywine

ILLINOIS TRAFFIC SAFETY CHALLENGE



IMPAIRED DRIVING PREVENTION CAMPAIGN MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY



In May 2023, AAIM supported local bars and restaurants in downtown Arlington Heights and encouraged patrons to celebrate the Memorial Day Holiday safely. AAIM partnered with the Arlington Heights Police Department to help educate the community about the dangers of impaired driving.

Thank you, Sergeant Russell Mandell, the Arlington Heights Police Department, and restaurant owners for working on this project with AAIM.

Samantha Gallagher-Gannon, AAIM Prevention and Education Director, and Rita Kreslin, AAIM Executive Director.

Thank you for all your hard work!



**IMPAIRED DRIVING PREVENTION CAMPAIGN
MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY**



MIDWEST IMPAIRED DRIVING CONFERENCE

November 8-10, 2022, the Illinois Truck Enforcement Association - ITEA Regional Conference was held at the Westin Chicago Northwest. The best expert speakers in their field gathered and presented a pre-conference training for Drug Recognition Experts and Phlebotomists.

The ITEA trucking industry brought together law enforcement, attorneys, judges, social workers, and victim advocates to educate and promote roadway safety and save lives.

AAIM was a vendor sponsor and presented in one breakout session, bringing information about AAIM programs.

Thank you, ITEA, Illinois Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, Jennifer Cifaldi, Commander Brian Cleaver, Carol Stream PD, and all the presenters who provided a very educational conference!

<https://www.illinoistruckcops.org/>



AAIM Staff: Court Monitor Director Lisa Rogers, Prevention and Education Director Samantha Gannon, Advocate Carrie Kilpatrick, Advocate Margaret Borcia, and Executive Director Rita Kreslin




Sponsored by
DXCAR

Mission Statement

The Illinois Truck Enforcement Association is a professional organization dedicated to serving police officers who specialize in truck enforcement, the trucking industry itself, and attorneys who prosecute and defend truck cases.

Core Values

- I. Safe Roads**
As police officers, our primary commitment is to protect the citizens we serve. The people most committed have invested greatly in law enforcement and the highway infrastructure they depend on.
- II. One Voice**
We believe a plurality of law enforcement voices speaking together is more powerful personal opinions from claiming authority that does not truly represent all. Credibility and trust in truck enforcement officers begins with inclusivity and.
- III. Partnership**
Effective truck enforcement does not rest solely on the shoulders of the police, but depends upon cooperation with the trucking industry and the legal system by. When all these professions partner together, fair and reasonable enforcement can happen.
- IV. Uniformity**
The laws that require trucking vehicles are complex and extensive, which leads to enforcement that is not uniform across local jurisdictions. It is our goal to create consistency in practice that correctly interprets the law while providing a baseline for consistent enforcement across jurisdictions.
- V. Resource**
The trucking industry is threatened by the need to work within the differing policies and procedures of thousands of law enforcement agencies and counties throughout the State of Illinois. We seek to build a central resource point for the industry to help us build a database of information critical to their operations.

MIDWEST IMPAIRED DRIVING CONFERENCE



From left: Jennifer Bash, UIC Analytical Forensic Testing Laboratory, Rita Kreslin and Scott Kristiansen, Law Enforcement Liaison



AAIM Board member Sergeant Ari Briskman, Lake County Sheriff's Office

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR VICTIM ASSISTANCE (NOVA)

AAIM victim advocates attended the NOVA conference in Denver, Colorado.

NOVA is the oldest national victim assistance organization of its type in the United States and is the recognized leader in victim advocacy, education, and credentialing.

Its mission is to champion dignity and compassion for those harmed by crime and crisis.



*Carrie Kilpatrick, AAIM Advocate, and
Kristina Lawler, Program Support Specialist*



Samantha Gannon (Arlington Hts.)

ROADSIDE MEMORIAL MARKER PROGRAMS

How the programs work:



IDOT DUI Memorial Sign Program

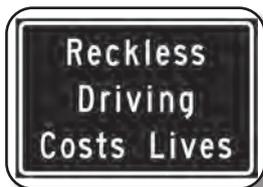


The department has established the DUI Memorial Sign program to memorialize deceased victims of crashes caused by drivers found to be under the influence of alcohol, or other drug or intoxicating compounds, as well as to raise the public awareness of the consequences of driving while impaired.

An immediate relative of a deceased victim of a crash caused by a driver found to be under the influence of alcohol, or other drug or intoxicating compound may request a DUI memorial along a state highway by filling out an official application form and returning it to IDOT at the address indicated on the form. Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists (AAIM), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) or other interested groups may assist the immediate relative in obtaining and filling out the form. The crash must have occurred on or after January 1, 1990.

Fatal Accident Memorial Sign Program

The fatal accident memorial marker program is intended to raise public awareness of traffic fatalities caused by reckless driving or other means by emphasizing the dangers while affording families an opportunity to remember the victims of traffic crashes.



An immediate relative of a deceased victim of a crash caused by a driver who committed an act of reckless homicide or who otherwise caused the death of one or more persons through the operation of a motor vehicle may request a fatal accident memorial along a state highway by filling out an official application form and returning it to IDOT at the

address indicated on the form. Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists (AAIM) or other interested groups may assist the immediate relative in obtaining and filling out the form. The crash must have occurred on or after January 1, 1990.

THE HISTORY OF THE MEMORIAL MARKER PROGRAM

In August 2007, Governor Blagojevich signed H.B. 1900 (Mendoza, Dillard) into Law, creating the Roadside Memorial (Tina's Law). This legislation was a result of the efforts championed by the Tina Ball Memorial DUI Task Force, along with the Legislation Committee of AAIM. Tina's Law allows the families of individuals killed by impaired or reckless drivers to apply to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to install a memorial marker sign at the crash's location. These markers serve as a remembrance of a loved one whose life was taken as a result of a senseless act committed by an individual while driving impaired or reckless. The markers are blue road signs saying, "Please Don't Drink and Drive" and "Reckless Driving Costs Lives." Family members

ROADSIDE MEMORIAL MARKER PROGRAMS

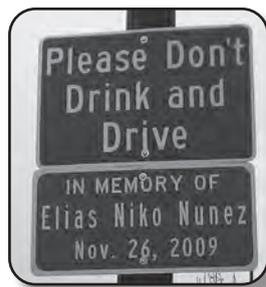
may also request a special marker indicating the name of the victim and the date of the crash.

One of the provisions of the Memorial Program called for a fee to be paid by the family wishing to have the marker installed, to cover the cost of the manufacturing and installation of the sign. But major questions were raised by legislators during the hearing process “Why are the families who suffered such a tragic loss being required to pay? Why are the offenders not the ones being forced to pay for the act they committed?”

AAIM is proud to say as a result of the continuing efforts of the AAIM Legislative Committee and all those who support efforts to eliminate DUI offenders from the roadways in Illinois, HB 881 (P.A. 96-0667) was signed into Law on August 25, 2009. This Law shifts the financial burden of the Memorial Sign Program from the families who have suffered such a tremendous loss, to the offenders, whose actions have led to the senseless loss of life and to all of those who get behind the wheel while under the influence. The Law calls for an additional fee of \$50 to be paid by all drivers who are found guilty or are granted supervision as a result of driving under the influence. The monies collected will be used to pay for memorial markers and to fund DUI prevention programs.

ROADSIDE MEMORIAL MARKERS

<https://idot.illinois.gov/doing-business/special-sign-programs/roadside-memorial/dui-memorial-sign-program.html>



AAIM STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

DUI INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION

Protecting the Arrest and Winning the Case

March 24 - AAIM staff attended a DUI Investigation and Prosecution Training at the Hoffman Estates Police Department. Jennifer Cifaldi, Illinois Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, presented.

Every year, impaired drivers cause thousands of traffic deaths and injuries. Prosecutors and law enforcement officers need the skills to ensure they succeed in the courtroom. Additionally, with the decriminalization of adult-use cannabis, DUI crashes have increased. This course helped instruct prosecutors how to navigate a successful DUI investigation and recognize some of the differences between alcohol impairment and impairment caused by cannabis.

This program was sponsored by the Illinois Dept of Transportation and the University of Illinois – Springfield.



From left: Lauren Armour, Advocate, Margaret Borcia, Advocate, Jennifer Cifaldi, Illinois Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, Lisa Rogers, Court Monitor Director, Christina Potempa, Program Support Specialist, and Rita Kreslin, Executive Director



Jennifer Cifaldi



THE ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE DRIVER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION IHSCDEA

With the support of the Illinois Secretary of State's Office, AAIM collaborates with the IHSCDEA on teen road safety initiatives. IHSCDEA is a professional teaching organization that was established in 1952. They are composed primarily of high school and college driver education instructors, supervisors, coordinators and safety enthusiasts throughout Illinois. They have over 700 members and represent over 600 public high schools in Illinois.

Samantha Gallagher-Gannon provided **Beyond Driver Education** materials to address the issues that go beyond Illinois Rules of the Road.

Beyond Driver Education and topics can be modified to fit each school's class schedule.

- Driver inexperience
- Driving with Teen passengers
- Nighttime driving
- Seat belt safety
- Distracted driving Drowsy driving
- Reckless driving/Speeding
- Alcohol-impaired driving
- Drugged Driving
- Underage Alcohol and Marijuana misuse
- Scott's Law (Move Over Law)
- Fraudulent ID's
- Impact of marijuana on the developing teenage brain
- Interactive activities that demonstrate cognitive impairment
- Evidence based information on the preconceived ideas about marijuana use
- The physical and cognitive processes that are affected by marijuana use



*Samantha Gallagher-Gannon,
Prevention and Education
Specialist.*

AAIM FOR COMMUNITY

Sponsored by AAA The Auto Club Group



On June 14, 2023, AAIM hosted our 3rd annual CommUNITY Matters Event at the Richard J. Daley Center in Chicago. Outreach is critical in serving people who are members of disadvantaged and underprivileged populations. Accessing services can be complicated by geographic isolation, language barriers, cultural intolerance, disability, and the lack of social support. The AAIM For CommUNITY event addressed these issues and gave crime victims hope that there is help available and that people do care.

Serving diverse populations could include meeting specific needs for low-income families, people of color, individuals living in rural areas, immigrants, and individuals with cognitive or physical disabilities. Working to change a person's environment will shape their healing and provide them the tools needed to help heal and build trust.

The event brought community coalitions and like-minded agencies from the Chicago Metropolitan Area to provide information on social services available to the public. This event aimed to reach out to individuals and families needing community support. This event was open to the public and free of charge.

Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias told the crowd about impaired and distracted driving dangers and the devastating effect this crime has on crash victims.

Representing the Illinois Attorney General's Office, Christelle Perez, Division Chief for Violence Prevention and Crime Victims Services, addressed the needs of crime victims and the importance of victim advocacy.

A guest appearance from Jesse White and the Jesse White Tumblers entertained the crowd.

Attendees received free raffle tickets and giveaways!

AAIM FOR COMMUNITY
Sponsored by AAA The Auto Club Group



*Secretary of State
Alexi Giannoulias,
AAIM Executive Director
Rita Kreslin and
Former Secretary of State
Jesse White*



*Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias
and Community Partners.*



Jesse White Tumblers



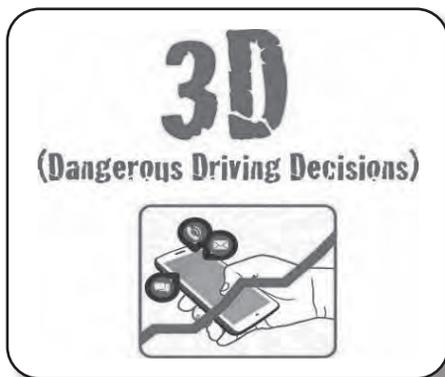
*AAIM Board President Dr. Charles
Nozicka*

AAIM FOR COMMUNITY
Sponsored by AAA The Auto Club Group



ARE YOU INTEXTICATED?

Congratulations to our 2023 “Are you InTEXTicated?” PSA Contest Winners! AAİM challenged Illinois high school students to put together PSA videos highlighting the importance of focusing on the road and putting down their phones. This challenge was created to start the conversation between young people and their parents about driving distractions – mainly using cell phones, other people in the vehicle, putting makeup on, eating, and various other dangerous driving decisions that can result in tragedy. These students had guidelines and rules set forth by AAİM to maintain the safety of all participants. The videos send a strong public safety message to the community to focus on the road while driving – for driver safety and that of their passengers.



We thank everyone who voted and shared the creative and impactful videos these teens created. We are grateful that these videos brought awareness to the dangers of distracted driving and helped others to think twice before driving InTEXTicated.

2023 “Are You InTEXTicated?” Winners:



1st Place: Loyola Academy student Aidan Fischer and Niles West High School student Yana Krutnyk

ARE YOU INTEXTICATED?



2nd Place St. Viator High School SADD Club Students

3rd Place: Fremd High School Student
Maya Patel



Rita Kreslin, AAIM Executive Director, Aidan Fischer, Loyola Academy Student, and Samantha Gannon, Prevention and Education Director



Loyola Academy student Aidan Fischer and Niles West High School Yana Krutnyk and Rita Kreslin.



Saint Viator High School Students



Fremd High School Student Maya Patel and Rita Kreslin

#AreYouInTEXTicated #AAIMPSAContest #AAIMtoSaveLives
#EndDistractedDriving

THE JOHN KRESLIN SCHOLARSHIP – 2023



Congratulations to Matthew Swolsky from Lake Zurich High School and Sydney Litney from Conant High School!

Matthew and Sydney are both recipients of the 2023 John Kreslin Scholarship Award (\$1,000.00 each).

We wish both all the best!



Matthew Swolsky



Sydney Litney



THE JOHN KRESLIN SCHOLARSHIP – 2023 5K FAMILY FUN/RUN WALK



*John Kreslin, August 26,
1983 – August 30, 2002*

On August 20, 2023, the Kreslin family held their 11th annual fundraiser in memory of John J. Kreslin, Jr., at Mallard Lake – Hanover Park. John was 19 years old and a pre-pharmacy student at Butler University in Indianapolis. On August 30, 2002, just four days after his birthday and two days after starting his sophomore year of college, he was killed in an impaired driving crash.

Proceeds benefit the John Kreslin Scholarship Fund and AAIM's Victim Fund. Since 2012, the John Kreslin Scholarship Fund has given \$20,000.00 to graduating high school seniors.

**WE WALK TO REMEMBER AND
AAIM TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

www.johnkreslin.com



*Thank you to AAIM's TOP COPS for your
life-saving efforts to keep our roads safe!
Carol Stream: Officer's Brian Rudelich,
Nichols Barcidore, Mario Lopez, Molly
McGovern and Kyle Symes.*



THE ERIN OLMSTED *AAIM* FOR CHANGE MEMORIAL GYMNASTICS INVITATIONAL



Erin Olmsted
August 6, 1979 – March 2, 1997

On January 7, 2023, Erin Olmsted's 9th annual *AAIM* for Change Memorial Gymnastics Invitational was held at Victor J. Andrews High School in Tinley Park, IL. Along with fellowship, music, and social awareness, money was raised for the Erin E. Olmsted Memorial Scholarship and the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists. For more information, please visit www.erinsaaimforchange.org (*See Erin's Story*)



Gerry and Sandy Olmsted



THE ERIN OLMSTED *AAIM* FOR CHANGE
MEMORIAL GYMNASTICS INVITATIONAL



SPECIALTY COURTS

The Specialty Courts are problem-solving courts. They are designed to help addicts and alcoholics change their behaviors on and off the roadways and prevent recidivism. AAIM is in awe of the staff that facilitates the specialty court programs currently in Lake and McHenry Counties. They are dedicated and committed to supporting the clients who agree to participate in this Specialty Court Program. The programs are demanding and require rigorous honesty and complete surrender to the requirements—along with the trust of the staff leading them through the process.

On October 3, 2023, AAIM attended the DUI Specialty Court graduation at the McHenry County Courthouse. The program was recognized for assisting individuals to overcome addiction, maintain sobriety and become productive citizens – promoting community safety and safer roadways.



*The Honorable Judge Michael Feetterer , Lisa Rogers, AAIM Court Monitor
Director and Graduates*

AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

AAIM's
Event Sponsors



Thanks for your
important work, AAJM!

Best Wishes,
Retired Circuit Judge Bob Anderson



*The City of Belvidere and the Belvidere Police Department
would like to thank AAIM for all their hard work and
support over the years.*

Keep fighting the good fight!

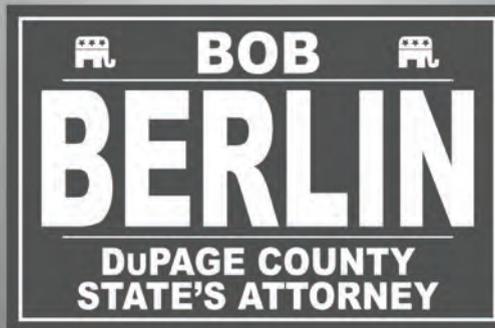
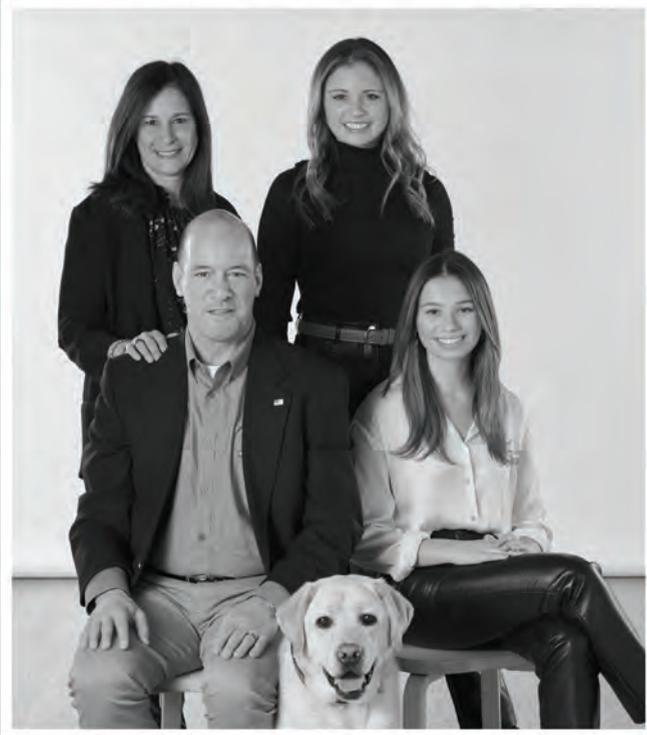


*Our hearts and prayers go out to all those who have lost loved
ones or suffer injuries caused by intoxicated motorists.
We AAIM to prevent anyone else from suffering these
terrible losses.*

Mayor – Clinton Morris

Police Chief – Shane Woody

**Best wishes to the Alliance
Against Intoxicated Motorists.
Thank you for all that you do!**



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alliance against intoxicated motorists

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AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

Victim Stories

THE JENNI ANDERSON TRIBUTE
March 30, 1981 – October 17, 1997



On October 17, 1997, Jenni and her best friends, Ali Matzdorf and Jennifer Roberts, were killed by a drunk driver in a horrible crash. Our lives have been altered and forever changed. The memories of our Jenni will be in our hearts and minds forever. It is not natural to bury your child. Jenni's death gave us a life sentence to live without her.

We feel Jenni's presence often, especially when we see a butterfly or hear a song that was special to her. This year marks 26 years since Jenni passed, but it seems like yesterday that she was here with us. We can still hear her laughing voice and see her smiling eyes. She will always be with us, even through our tears.

The vision of her pretty face that passing time cannot erase; what we wouldn't give if, one more time, we could hear, "Hi Mom, Hi Dad." Any sign to know that she is okay and close at hand, just happy and living in another land.

Our daughter, Kerri, and her husband, Jamie, have blessed us with two beautiful grandchildren, Austin, 16, and Emma, 12. We often wonder how many more grandchildren we would have if Jenni were still here. We will never know because of the selfish choice of a drunk driver.

Your loving Mom, Dad and Sister

THE ALEX BANKS TRIBUTE
July 20, 1990 – December 4, 2015

People say time heals all wounds, but that is the furthest thing from the truth! Time only allows the ability to cope. Cope with the anger, hurt and unreasonable sense of loss.

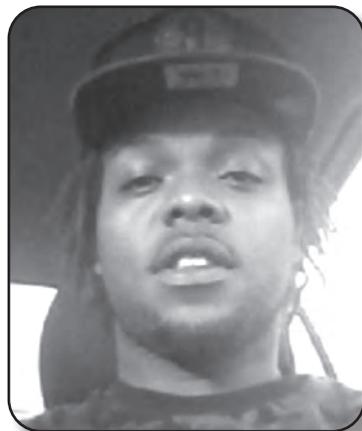
On December 4, 2015, I lost my baby when he was just 25 years old due to the decision and actions of someone who decided to get behind the wheel intoxicated.

My son will never get the chance to see his beautiful daughter go to homecoming or his son play football. I know he would have been so proud of them both.

Time certainly doesn't heal all wounds because not a day goes by that I don't think about my son. His laugh, his smile, the way he ate Doritos or the way he would take hours to iron a pair of jeans.

The driver that did this not only took my son, but also a father, brother, uncle, grandson and a friend to so many.

To my first born, your Mom will forever be grateful for the time that I had with you...always



Love,

Mom

MICHAEL BELL TRIBUTE
November 27, 1981 – January 28, 2008



His Journey's Just Begun

- by Ellen Brenneman

*Don't think of him as gone away
his journey's just begun,
life holds so many facets
this earth is only one.*

*Just think of him as resting
from the sorrows and the tears
in a place of warmth and comfort
where there are no days and years.*

*Think how he must be wishing
that we could know today
how nothing but our sadness
can really pass away.*

*And think of him as living
in the hearts of those he touched...
for nothing loved is ever lost
and he was loved so much.*

Michael, we love you.

Grandmother Bell, Mother, Aunts, and Jermerial and Karer

THE MARTI MULL BELLUSCHI STORY

All these years later, that crash still has a significant impact on my life, both good and bad. I will always struggle with some related medical issues but I have also had the privilege of meeting many, many good and caring people. And, I have had the benefit of knowing and working with AAIM, other crash victims and traffic safety advocates for many years. I do know that often some good can come from our tragedies.



My tribute this year is to crash victims, their families and to the AAIM organization. The theme of Resilience is perfect as a description of the journeys for all of them. For new crash victims and families, resilience may one day be a goal. Life will never be the same as before but it will hopefully be better than it is today as you try to find your way. For long time crash victims, we have been resilient as we have carried on, particularly by assisting others and pushing for safer roads.

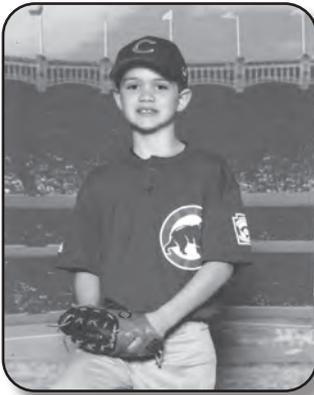
For AAIM as an organization, you have been resilient in carrying on with your work despite changes and complications. Most importantly, AAIM is so very special in promoting messages about safe driving and providing resources and emotional support to those who desperately need help in adapting to the challenges of being a victim and survivor.

Thank you all for all of your compassion in continuing to assist each other and working to make our roadways safer. I, and people like me, appreciate your resilience more than you know. God bless us one and all!

Marti Mull Belluschi

THE TONY BORCIA TRIBUTE

June 3, 2002 – July 28, 2012



My son, Tony Borgia, was ten years old when he went tubing with his father, Jim, and siblings, Kaeleigh, Joe, and Erin, on the Chain-o-Lakes on July 28, 2012. Tony was having the time of his life until he fell off the tube. Before his father could pick him up, he was hit by a large boat despite wearing a bright red lifejacket and waving his arms. The man who hit Tony pled guilty to causing the incident and operating his boat under the influence of cocaine and alcohol. He was sentenced to ten years in prison.

Prior to July 28, 2012, I had everything I ever wanted. I had a wonderful husband and four beautiful, healthy children. Tony was the youngest and completed our family. His smile, with the big gaps between his teeth and his sweet dimples, lit up the room.

My world was shattered by one phone call from my husband. As the night wore on, I slowly got more details about what had happened. I was eventually told that Tony's body had been dismembered. It was only then that I truly realized the horror that my husband and children had witnessed.

The days, weeks and months after Tony's death seemed to blend into one another. It has been eleven years since Tony died, and my family is still struggling every day to deal with this loss.

There is not enough time or words to describe Tony. He was incredible joy in our lives. He was always happy and made you happy just being around him.

I miss the little things about him the most. The feel of his hand in mine, the smell of his head after he took a bath, cuddling with him in my bed every night before bedtime, trying to steal a kiss from him at the bus stop because he thought he was too big to kiss his Mom in public, the way his eyes lit up when he saw me after work, and giving him a piggyback ride to bed every night singing our bedtime song "Tony Mine," kissing him good night, telling him "I love you" and hearing him say "I love you too Mommy."

Our family and friends have formed The Y-noT Project (Tony's name spelled backward) as a tribute to him. The Y-noT Project is dedicated to stopping intoxicated boating. Unfortunately, driving a boat is one of the last places where it is still socially acceptable to drink and drive, and The Y-noT Project, with help from AAIM, seeks to change this culture and make our lakes and rivers safe again.

Margaret Borgia

THE THOMAS BURLESON STORY

On August 21, 1999, at approximately 11:02 pm, a drunk driver on the wrong side of the road hit my VW microbus head-on, killing my wife Eva, 34 our three children, Daniel 13, Tiffany 11 and Dallis 7, and our dog Emmitt. In addition, I suffered a broken neck in four places, a broken nose, a broken left clavicle and numerous cuts and bruises. I was in a Halo brace for over three months.



*The Burleson family at
Great America just hours
before the crash.*

In the months after the crash, I wrote a suicide note and was sharpening the knife when a friend intervened. I can tell you I didn't want to die. I was tired of being alone and feeling emotional pain I can't describe; it must be experienced to be understood. I was tired of sleeping alone, waking up alone, and living in an empty house. I was tired of the first thing I felt each moment was emptiness and pain. I was tired that each breath took all my energy. I was tired of the last thing I felt each night before falling asleep: pain. I was tired of having the same nightmares over and over again each night. If breathing was not automatic, I would have forgotten to breathe.

Grief is ugly, yet beautiful. The ugly part is the photo of my son at the crash scene lying in a puddle of his own blood, with a hole in his skull large enough to accommodate a human fist; bones jutting through his flesh. The ugly part is Tiffany's hair being red in the crash scene photo; she was a blonde. The ugly part is knowing Dallis did not suffer life-threatening injuries. If I had checked to make sure Dallis, Tiffany, and Daniel were wearing their seatbelts, then Dallis would have survived. Instead, all I did that night was tell the kids to put on their seatbelts. The ugly part is the fact the drunk driver has never accepted responsibility for the crash and blames me. The ugly part is this man has threatened my new wife and me in court during a hearing that took place just a few years ago. The ugly part is the fact that during a search of his cell, they found our home address and telephone number. The ugly part is that my mom died on the crash's second anniversary.

THE THOMAS BURLESON STORY

Finally, the ugliest part is when my wife, Mollie and I found out she was pregnant and the due date for our baby was August 21, 2005. YES!!! Something to celebrate on August 21. A few weeks later, we find out we are having a little girl. Then a few weeks after that we find out our little girl is Trisomy 18 and will die either in utero or very soon after her birth. The doctor told us, "Trisomy 18 is not conducive for life." How do I, as a husband to Mollie and a father to Elijah, our oldest child, support, protect and help carry their burden, when I barely have the strength to breathe and to live? Abigaele Eden Burleson lived 38 hours and 24 minutes; she died in my arms. I have never seen a human being fight so hard to live, to draw each breath. I told Abbey over and over again, "Please Abbey, its ok. You can go home to Jesus." Mentally, I was screaming at God, "You will heal my daughter **NOW!!!**" God listened but didn't give me the answer I desperately wanted.

The beautiful part of grief is the memories I did not know I had of my wife and our three children. I am not talking about the memories of Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries. I am referring to the seemingly innocuous memories that only I have. Memories so precious, that it took the depths of grief to reveal them to my heart.

The beautiful part of grief is falling in love with a beautiful, strong woman who enjoys hearing my stories and wants to know my family. The beautiful part of grief is seeing Mollie for the first time, standing at the back of the church in her wedding dress and telling the best man that she is a gift from God.

The beautiful part of grief is when Mollie told me we were pregnant with our first child. I opened a bottle of champagne at 5:30 am for me to celebrate. I called in to work telling my manager; "Mollie is pregnant. I am drinking champagne, and I am not coming to work. If she calls, I will not answer the phone."

The beautiful part of grief is telling Mollie each night, "Good night, sweet dreams, love you." The beautiful part of grief is in the middle of the night having Mollie to cuddle and to touch, because she is there and it comforts me; and to play footsie while we sleep. The beautiful part of

THE THOMAS BURLESON STORY

grief is smelling her perfume on her pillowcase when I wake up; having her hair in my face. The beautiful part of grief is praying with my wife each morning.

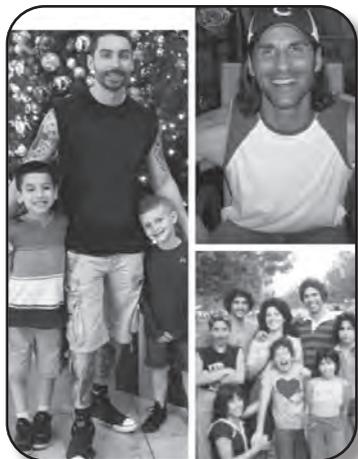
The beautiful part of grief is being a daddy to Elijah Thomas, Abigaele Eden and Gideon Luke. The beautiful part of grief is celebrating the differences between my sons. Elijah, looks more like me, but has more of Mollie's personality; Gideon, looks like his mommy, but has my personality.

The beautiful part of grief is watching Gideon demand to sit in a big boy chair, to use a fork and go upstairs by himself, because his brother can do it. The beautiful part of grief was when my son Elijah was six months old and very fussy. First a friend held Elijah, but he wouldn't calm down. Then, his nana held him, and he wouldn't settle down. I took Elijah, and he immediately cuddled into my shoulder, stopped crying and relaxed. Elijah didn't need our friend, his godmother, he didn't need his nana. He needed me, his daddy.

Grief is ugly and beautiful just like life. My life does have some ugly parts but most of it is beautiful. August 21, 1999 was an absolutely perfect day until the crash. I cherish my memories of Daniel teasing me, of Tiffany's soft giggle when I kissed her nose and sitting next to Dallis during her first roller coaster ride. Standing next to my bride as we recite our wedding vows, making a lifetime covenant between each other and God is beautiful. Holding my children for the first time just moments after they were born is beautiful. Hearing the word Dada for the first time, that is beautiful. I am a husband and a father, that is beautiful. Yes, I grieve every day and will until I die. Then there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain. Then life will be....perfect.

Tom Burleson

THE FRANK S. CARUSO, JR. TRIBUTE
January 5, 1970 - February 11, 2012

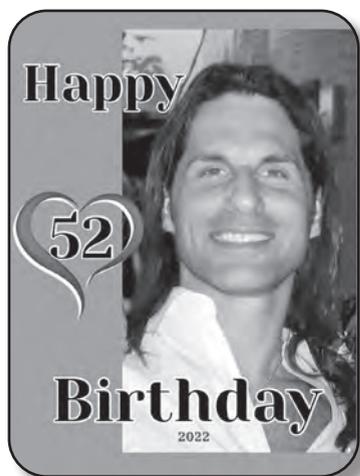


FRANKIE FOREVER!

My son, Frank, was killed by a drunk driver while he was sitting in a state trooper's car after surviving a previous crash caused by an intoxicated driver. The years have passed, and I've forgiven the offender, but I still ask the question... Why? A mother should never lose a child. I'll never have another opportunity to see his beautiful smile, hug him, or tell him I love him.

Frankie, my son who was killed has a son, Frank and two beautiful grandchildren, Matteo and Frankie who have been deprived of their grandfather's hugs and kisses since he was killed. Their grandfather has been deprived of watching his grandchildren grow.

His brother, Sam and sisters Anna, Cathy, Rosie and Gina and their families still miss him on holidays, birthdays and at family get-togethers. It's been 11 years and we still celebrate his birthday together. We're grateful for the good times that we shared and fun stories that are told. Family photos and funny stories fill our hearts with thankfulness to God that we have those memories to keep him alive forever.



Always grateful for the compassion and support from the AAIM advocates.

When I miss you, I do not have to go far...

I just look inside of my heart, and that's where I'll find you.

Mom



THE CINDY CEBRZYNSKI TRIBUTE

October 18, 1983 – November 7, 2004

Our daughter, Cindy, had her life tragically taken away from her at the hands of a drunk driver on November 7, 2004. Some of you will be reading this tribute for the first time. Others, who have been associated with AAIM, may remember how Cindy's life was cut short.



Cindy turned twenty-one on October 18, 2004. Shortly after that, on the evening of November 6, 2004 she went out with friends to celebrate her birthday. Upon leaving our house on the night of the party, we kissed her goodbye and wished her a good time. She assured us she would be safe. The next time we knew of her whereabouts or what happened to her was from three Illinois State police troopers at 5:20AM on the morning of November 7, 2004. Cindy was killed in a roll over crash as she was ejected from the car she was traveling in. By the time paramedics arrived on the scene, Cindy was already dead.

There is nothing so tragic and sad as seeing one's child laid out in a coffin ready for burial. NOTHING. Losing a child is absolutely the worst possible thing that can happen to parents.

It will be nineteen years this November since Cindy died. However, the loss and hurt her passing has caused often makes it feel like it only happened nineteen days ago or even nineteen minutes ago. Your child is a part of you and when they are gone this "part" can never be replaced. The closest association we have with Cindy now are our thoughts about her and our visits to the cemetery.

Since the time of Cindy's passing, we have been blessed with two beautiful grandchildren, Tyler now 14 and Avery now 10. As you can see, they were not here to meet Aunt Cindy. We can see it in their eyes how sad they are that they will never meet their dad's sister. All they have are the recollections we share with them in trying to explain who Cindy was and how much she meant to everyone. They know that Aunt Cindy is looking down on them from heaven.

Cindy, we your family and friends continue to love you and miss you ever more deeply every year. We ask our family and friends to pray for us to give us strength to continue somehow deal with his terrible tragedy that has permanently altered our lives.

**Mom and Dad
Pam and Bob Cebzynski**

THE NADIA CHOWDHURY TRIBUTE

May 14, 1983 – February 21, 2004



Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists (AAIM) aims to save lives. *“Saving one innocent life is like saving all of humanity.” [Al-Quran 5:32]*

It has now been more than 19 years since our beloved daughter, Nadia, was snatched away by drunk and reckless drivers at UIUC (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) campus.

Nadia started her higher education at UIUC after graduating from Naperville

Central high school in 2002. Her academic advisors at UIUC remember her as a great student, focused on the business core curriculum and excited at the prospect of being an honors student. Her goal was to obtain the CPA examination from one of the *best schools* (UIUC) in the country. Her desire, and ours as well, is going to remain as a dream.

To keep the memory of Nadia and her dream alive and to reward young people for their academic and community service achievements motivated us to establish *The Nadia S. Chowdhury Memorial Scholarship (NSCMS)* fund at UIUC. The fund is a humble endeavor, by her family and friends, for the enlightenment of the human spirit by providing scholarship to other students to materialize Nadia’s goal and make a difference in their lives as well as in the multicultural global societies.

Quite a few students have already graduated from UIUC with humble support from the NSCMS fund and more is coming.

“When bright minds are given the chance to flourish a world-class educational experience, they achieve incredible things. Thank you for your scholarship support, which plays an important role in shaping this generation and those to come.” Wrote the Senior Director of Stewardship and Donor Relations at UIUC.

May God, the Almighty, continue to bless the scholarship recipients to fulfill their goals and make a difference worldwide in general and in their lives in particular.

*With gratitude,
Nasrin and Shamsul Chowdhury*

THE PAUL CONRAD AND SHERYL ANDREASEN TRIBUTE

Paul – May 23, 1952 – June 29, 2018

Sheryl – July 11, 1955 – June 29, 2018

On Friday, June 28, 2018, at approximately 5:10 pm, my husband called me on his way home from work to let me know there was a car crash on Old River Road and that he was rerouted and going to be a couple of minutes late. I sent my dad a text stating that I heard there was a crash outside of his neighborhood and wanted to make sure he was okay. I didn't receive a text back from him, so I called him repeatedly. I sent a text to my stepmom, and I didn't receive a text from her either. A local news station was "live" at the scene of a crash and showed the back end of a silver car from far away. I tried to call them again. My gut couldn't let it go, so I called the local hospital near their house and asked if they were there, but neither had been admitted. I still couldn't let it go, so I decided to call the coroner's office. Through my tears, I explained there had been a crash near my dad's house and I was unable to reach him. They asked me for his name and told me they didn't have anyone there by that name. I had felt a little better, but for some reason, I still couldn't shake my gut feeling. I contacted my stepmom's sisters and my brother to see if anyone had heard from them. I tried one last time at 10:40 p.m. to reach them at home.



At approximately 11:20 pm, as I lay in bed awake, my phone rang. I looked at my phone and it was a local number that I didn't recognize. I instantly knew something was wrong. The local chaplain asked if I was the daughter of Paul Conrad and I answered yes. He wanted to know if he could come to my house to speak with me. I remember every painful minute of waiting for him to arrive at our house and every second of that conversation. With my husband and mom by my side, he delivered the worst news of my life. My dad and stepmom were in a car crash and didn't survive. My life and so many other's lives, were flipped upside down that night. I have thought about that day every day since.

To lose a parent in a blink of an eye is beyond painful, but to lose two parents is unimaginable. My dad was filled with corny jokes and a smile that could light up a room. He loved spending time with his children and grandchildren. He loved helping friends and family with projects. He had a passion for gardening and the movie "The Wizard of Oz." Sheryl was an amazing stepmom and had a heart

THE PAUL CONRAD AND SHERYL ANDREASEN TRIBUTE

that could fill a room. She was a friend to everyone and volunteered for multiple organizations. She was a deaconess in her church and a strong and faithful Christian. They left behind three children, nine grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. They missed meeting their newest grandchild and great-grandchild. They both had so much more life to live and love to give.

Instead, our lives were immediately filled with meetings with the funeral director, attorneys, banks, and tax professionals. They had an entire home filled with their possessions that needed to be sorted. Life as we knew it stopped, while we finished everything in their lives that they had started and left behind.

The impaired driver who killed them was driving at a high rate of speed during the middle of the day and abruptly swerved his car directly in front of them hitting them head-on and killing them instantly. They weren't even given a chance to try to avoid him or to save their lives. They both had multiple "instant killer" injuries that are unthinkable. We were advised to wait to see them until they were ready for their double funeral. Two caskets, floral arrangements, and headstones to pick out; two lives that were taken.

It's been five years and the case abruptly ended with no real closure for our family. The impaired driver that killed them was in jail for almost a year and a half. Multiple changes of attorneys and public defenders among other things, kept delaying any real progress with the case. He received help from a local organization and bonded out of jail a week before the second anniversary of the crash. A week after bonding out, he overdosed on drugs and died. This part of our journey of grieving may not have finished the way we thought it would, but the criminal justice part is over. After everything we have gone through as a family, we never got to hear the words "guilty" and a sentence of "X amount of years in prison" for his actions.

Although we all lived through this tragedy, sometimes it feels like a nightmare that we couldn't have possibly experienced. Sometimes I go to pick up the phone to call them and struggle to accept this is no longer an option. At the same time, it feels like forever since I heard their voices and hugged them.

Life completely changed after that day for all of us who knew and loved them. Five years later and there are so many moments in all of our lives that they haven't been here for. More grandchildren and great-grandchildren were born and will never know them. Engagements and weddings that they couldn't attend. These are moments that they should be here for, and it hurts that they aren't able to be.

THE PAUL CONRAD AND SHERYL ANDREASEN TRIBUTE

We will continue to remember and celebrate the amazing people they were. Husband, dad, wife, stepmom, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

A million times we have needed you,

A million times we have cried,

If love alone could have saved you,

You never would have died.

In life, we loved you dearly,

In death, we love you still.

In our hearts, you hold a memory,

No one can ever fill.

It broke our hearts to lose you,

But you did not go alone,

For part of us went with you

The day God called you home”

Call your parents often and tell them you love them...

you'll never regret it.

Nancy GeRue,

Daughter of Paul Conrad

Stepdaughter of Sheryl Andreasen

THE JAMES DAY TRIBUTE
February 19, 1964 – September 19, 2017



No quantity of words or quality of writing would be sufficient to describe our husband and father, James E. Day, or the depth of our indescribable sorrow over losing him. He was truly an extraordinary man, a wonderful husband, an incredible father, a devoted son, a loving brother, a supportive uncle, and a loyal friend. With a zeal all his own, he loved others unconditionally and his joy was contagious. He had a larger-than-life personality and a unique sense of humor that endeared him to hundreds of people from all walks of life. His wit and fun-loving spirit were magnetic, effortlessly drawing others to him. Most memorable of all, he shared his great gift of laughter with everyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

Jim exemplified what it means to be a Christian and a family man. A recurring theme in the flood of cards and messages that we received after his death was that he left such a positive impact on people's lives. So many recalled that he'd always have a smile on his face and a kind word to offer. His love for his family and friends was evident in everything he did, and his giving spirit spilled over into all his relationships, including coworkers, acquaintances, and even strangers. One of the comments from a former coworker was, "The world lost a great man in Jim. He was my boss for seven years, and because of his leadership, I am a better person today." Jim's was a shining example of a life filled with love, joy, and faith in God.

In spring 2017, Jim made a job change and started a new position at Woodward. He was so pleased to be working for the large, international manufacturer and he expected to spend the rest of his career with the company. Around the same time, he began a rigorous discipline of exercising twice a day and watching his diet closely. By September 1st he had lost 80 pounds and was excited to begin training for RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa) in summer 2018. Jim was proud of his recent accomplishments and seemed to have found a new lease on life. By his own accord, he was as happy as he had been in a long time.

THE JAMES DAY TRIBUTE
February 19, 1964 – September 19, 2017

Jim's life was cut tragically short on September 19, 2017, when he was hit and killed by a van while riding his bicycle on Squaw Prairie Road. He will never get the chance to walk his daughters down the aisle or get to meet his future grandchildren. He won't have the satisfaction of watching his children flourish in their chosen careers, after years of cheering them on and giving them his undying support as they pursued their dreams. He didn't deserve to die at age 53 and miss out on this next chapter in his life. And we didn't deserve the heartbreak of losing him. His absence has left a permanent hole in our lives and in our hearts that will never heal.

There is nothing to be done, no words to be said, no price to be paid, and no sentence to be served that could reconcile the wrong done to our family. However, we do want the driver to know that her actions and negligence have not only taken Jim's life, but have forever robbed us of Jim's love and laughter.

Negligent driving, distracted driving, reckless driving, and impaired driving have affected our family in ways that this driver may never comprehend, but our hope is that by sharing his memory and tragic death and the tremendous loss our family has suffered that the public will make a better choice when operating a vehicle.

Thank you,

Cindy Day, Hannah Day,

Michael Day, Katie Day, John Day

This tribute is sponsored by Tricia Smith, Boone County's State's Attorney

THE BRANDON FERREIRA TRIBUTE

June 4, 1992 – December 30, 2017



Brandon Ferreira was an enthusiastic 22-year-old who had the world at his feet, and he was “living the dream”. He was working two part-time jobs and trying to figure out how to go to college without becoming part of the rat wheel and owing more than he would ever be able to pay off. He dived into poetry and writing music. He even helped create a club in high school to influence other students to express themselves in such a way that had no

gateway at that time. It was called the Music Industry Club. He helped form the club that has now taken off and inspired many students. Brandon was the kid that had friends across every barrier, the jocks, stoners, nerds, and high achievers. Everyone knew and loved him. He had the best sense of humor and could make any one laugh.

In February 2015, Brandon was out celebrating a friends’ birthday and realized he had too much to drink, so he made the decision to leave his car at the bar. One of his friends had offered to drive him home since he was the designated driver that night. Although Brandon thought he could trust his friend to get him home safely, he wasn’t as trustworthy as Brandon believed. On the way home they were hit by a driver under the influence of both alcohol and drugs. They were t-boned, and Brandon was trapped in the car. The crash left him a quadriplegic, and he had to re-learn how to breathe, eat, sleep, and all daily functions, just to survive. Brandon spent four months in inpatient rehabilitation centers and that was just the beginning. Both my husband and I had to quit our jobs and be at the hospital learning how to take care of our son. Brandon recovered beyond expectations and once released we tried our best to get back to life as “normal” as possible.

We remodeled our home and did our best to accommodate him and his needs. Brandon recovered as best as he could with the most positive outlook

THE BRANDON FERREIRA TRIBUTE

on everything. He would never succumb to being hateful towards the drunk driver because he believed it would impede his recovery. Both that belief and his strength carried me and our family through this tragedy.

Brandon continued to create beautiful art beyond his ability, and he was excited about his future. He wanted to get his degree in business and accounting. I had never seen him so confident and passionate about his future. Despite his disabilities he overlooked and tried his best to overcome them. He fought against being immobile and wanted to give back to those in the same situation and to provide needed necessities. Brandon had dreams to open a foundation that could help people that have mobility issues.

Although Brandon's body fought as long as it could we lost him on December 30, 2017, due to the perils of being a quadriplegic. His legacy will live on as he made the decision to donate his organs which have helped over 30 people to live.

It has now been over 8 years since Brandon was hit by a drunk driver, and almost 6 years since he passed away. The pain and grief of losing Brandon hits hard every single day. Our lives will never be the same, but we try to move forward with the same diligence and perseverance with a positive outlook on life that Brandon had taught us.

We were so fortunate to meet the advocates from AAIM who helped us immensely through this tragic time in our lives. We have made lifelong friends and will always continue to inform and educate others about the dangers of driving under the influence.

Robin Finucane

Brandon's Mom

THE GARY FINK TRIBUTE

October 19, 1960 – January 22, 2017



I never thought there would be a day where I'd need to put on paper how someone's willful negligence would cause my father's death. I can't describe to you when I wake up in the morning, the first thing that runs across my mind, is my dad is no longer here with me. My dad won't be able to walk me down the aisle to give me away or be there to watch me at equestrian competitions. I won't be able to watch my dad grown old in his golden years because of a person's selfish actions.

I don't have much to say to the defendant, other than "Why?" Why did he, knowing that he had engine troubles, get back on to the highway, not only clearly endangering my father's life but others around him, too? Why didn't he put on his caution lights when he was stopped in the lane of traffic on I 90? Why didn't he go back and see if my father needed help when he felt the crash? Why did he falsify his logbook about where he was at the time the crash?

The defendant has taken so much away for me, my mom, and our family. One thing he didn't take from me is my strength to live to keep my dad's memory alive.

I won't sugar coat anything, I am angry. I'm angry the driver got back on the road that day. I'm angry he took away the one man in my entire life who was my constant. He took away my peace. He too away my mental health, as I've had to go on medication to cope with depression and anxiety since that fateful day.

Sure, accidents happen, but this crash was completely avoidable. If the driver had made a better decision, my father would still be alive. I wouldn't have to write this tribute and the driver would not have have felony charges brought against him.

There is will never be closure for me or my family. While the driver goes on living his life, my family suffers. Because of this crash, I no longer celebrate my birthday on January 19th and my family dreads important dates like my father's birthday, his wedding anniversary and holidays. I hope the defendant never forgets my father's name.

THE TANESSHA GATES STORY

December 4, 2015

A 23-year-old girl's life has been changed forever. A girl who had dreams and was the provider for her children. What I mean to say is she will never be the same due to the crash. I'm her sister and I've been her caregiver since the crash. I've seen her struggle with everything in life, even the simple things.



The brain injury she sustained, due to a drunk driver traveling the wrong way on a bridge, has changed her life. She's mad and has anger issues due to the brain injury; she's always on the run, lost and very confused.

Tanessha was very independent and focused before the crash. She was attending college. She was a single parent working hard each day, trying to reach the goals she set for herself. She has four beautiful children who looked up to her, but now they will never know her the way she was before the crash. This crash didn't just change her life, but it changed her entire family's lives as well.

As her caregiver I gave up my life and goals because family is important. We were taught if your family needs you, you help them. She's my baby sister who I love very much, and I wanted to make sure she got the best care she could after her injury.

Innocent people's lives were taken that day. Alex Banks, her friend who was with her that night will never see his family and children again, as he died due to the crash.

Tanessha was hanging on for dear life and the doctors didn't think she would pull through. She spent about two weeks in a coma with a severe brain bleed. She had a traumatic brain injury, two broken legs and feet. After about two weeks in a coma, she woke up, but didn't recognize anyone. She had to relearn everything after the crash.

She is alive but will never be the same. Every day is hard for her, as she struggles with her brain injury. The defendant received 10 years for killing Alex and 5 years for injuring Tanessha, which are being served concurrently; hardly enough in our eyes.

It took me five years to get back to my goals and complete school, but I did it. I never gave up! I'm a nurse now.

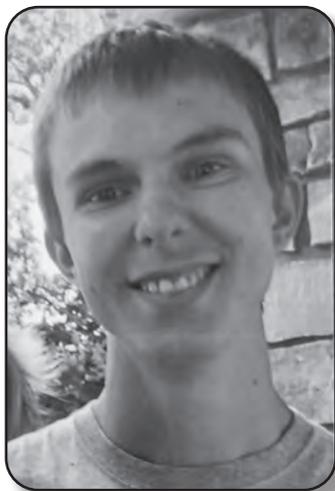
My family suffered another tragic loss when our baby sister Chiquita, died in a car crash. I've had my second child, who has brought my family back to together for something good. I've named her Chiquita after my beloved baby sister.

Please don't drink and drive.

Written by her loving sister,

Latricia Gates

THE BRANT ALEXANDER GRIEBEL TRIBUTE
October 22, 2001 – September 15, 2019



It's coming up on three years now and I find myself more emotional. Maybe it's the reality that Brant really isn't coming home.

I want to share my beautiful boy with you. I adopted Brant, who was my grandchild when he was two-years-old. He was so special. At a young age we discovered he had autism, which only meant he was even more special. He was a funny and happy child. He was the delight of my life.

The remainder of his autistic beautiful life was spent bringing joy and happiness to the hearts of many. He danced to his favorite music, played with all his favorite toys, and took care of his pets Angel and Karma. He was innocent and loved playing with kids, riding tricycles or scooters and doing anything kids liked to do! He loved cartoons; Sponge Bob Square Pants was his favorite. He loved music and stories. He was kind, loving and gentle. He even planted a flower bed at his school. Sadly, I never got to see how it turned out, as he was killed shortly after.

By the age of 17 he was blessed by God to live and see life through the eyes and heart of a four-year-old. On the night Brant was killed, he snuck out of our house in his pajama bottoms and went to Walmart and the gas station. On his return home he was hit on the road right outside our apartment. A witness saw the first driver hit Brant and left him on the road; never stopping, never even considering helping him. The first driver hasn't been caught for this crime. A second, third, fourth and fifth vehicle also drove past Brant in the road and never stopped. According to the witness; Brant was still alive when the

THE BRANT ALEXANDER GRIEBEL TRIBUTE

vehicles passed. A second vehicle hit Brant and failed to stop. That driver is now in the criminal court system for hitting Brant and we're still awaiting a trial.

The pain of losing Brant is indescribable. My whole life has changed. I've moved because it was so painful to look at the spot he was killed, day after day, week after week, month after month.

Please be aware that whatever your actions are in life they have consequences.

It's terrible that several people hit Brant and didn't have the decency to stop and try to help him. I have a feeling it's because they were probably drunk or high. I don't know what is wrong with the world. My innocent boy is dead, and our lives will never be the same. Brant gained his wings and now moves on to heaven to celebrate his after life with all our loved ones who have passed.

Written by Brant's loving Mom



THE RA'NYA AAMIRA GUIDER TRIBUTE

March 10, 2020 – July 21, 2020



It took me some time to sit down and try to figure how to tell Ra'Nya's story. It's something that I have struggled with for the past three years. I often ask myself how do you tell someone's story when it had just begun? She was four months old and just coming into her own little personality. She had just learned how to smile and show expressions. So, I just ask that you be patient with me as I try to find the words to show how much this crash impacted and changed my life. In just one second our lives would be changed forever.

Covid had just hit, and the world was pretty much shut down. Ra'Nya and I were isolated from the world; no one in the family had a chance

to see or meet my bubbly baby girl. I decided to pick my mom up and let her spend the weekend with us. The visit was great. When it was time to take her back home, I had a gut feeling not to go that night, but my mom was persistent. We dropped my mom off without a hitch, but on the ride back home my life as I knew it would never be the same.

We were about 15 minutes from home and the expressway was reduced to two lanes, so traffic was at a standstill. I make it a habit to watch my mirrors and I could see the van coming at a high rate of speed. There was no time to unbuckle my belt to get to her and no place for me to pull the car to escape the impact. I turned around and used my arm as best as I could to shield her and then everything went black.

What I can remember is standing next to the police car. It's like I had just realized what happened. I began running down the highway barefoot yelling where is my baby? The officer said she's in the ambulance they are working on her. The next three days were a blur, I was in the hospital, and she was

THE RA'NYA AAMIRA GUIDER TRIBUTE

hooked up to tubes. Her body was swollen, and I was numb. Doctors and nurses in and out, several tests were run but still no change. They told me it was nothing more they could do.



A part of me died the night of the crash, I will never be the same. I thought as time went on things would get better, but in reality, you just learn to live with it. What I wouldn't do to have followed my gut and stayed home that night. Now all I have are memories and thoughts of what could have been. I'm in therapy weekly and have moved away from my depressed and suicidal thoughts. I still have my bad days, but I try to push forward for her and do what I can to keep her memory alive.

In loving memory of Ra'Nya Aamira

Written by her mom,

Lanetha Guider



THE DEANDRE DESHAWN HARRIS TRIBUTE

September 30, 1978-February 25, 2023



We received a call late in the evening on February 25, 2023, that will forever have a devastating impact on our lives. DeAndre Deshawn Harris was tragically killed in Bellwood, Illinois by a drunk driver, who was driving at a high rate of speed.

DeAndre was a son, father, entrepreneur, relative and friend to many. He was loved beyond measure. This “senseless” act left three beautiful children, DeAndre, (19), Malia (6) and Khalil (3) without their dad. It also left his bedridden mother who has Multiple Sclerosis without her only child. The thought of losing him ripped our hearts apart, but those left behind were dependent on him; words just can’t explain.

DeAndre’s passion was to be an entrepreneur and he devoted so much time and energy to that. He was a chef and enjoyed cooking. He was best known for creating the “The Turkey Leg Gang”, because of his expertise in seasoning and grilling turkey legs. He participated in various festivals and left an everlasting impression on those he served. Unfortunately, the evening he was killed, he was in route to an event where he was to cook.

We will never know why this happened. We no longer ask why. We’ve finally accepted that his death is a reality. We do ask when. When does the heartache lessen and when do the tears cease flowing? We also ask how. How do you make it all go away? How do we make sense of it all?

Unbelievable, how a split second can forever change the lives of so many. His loss will forever have a devastating impact. We will forever keep him close in heart and cherish the beautiful memories. He is missed so much and the grief is unbearable.

As we patiently await the court proceedings, we can only hope that this man who “made a choice” to drink and drive will receive the consequences for the choices he made. Each time attending court and seeing his face, brings us back to that dreadful February 25, 2023 evening and we are forced to relive this excruciating pain all over again.

In loving memory of DeAndre DeShawn Harris

Written by Vanessa Harris – Deandre’s Aunt

THE LEESLYEE HUERTA STORY



Leeslyee Huerta

It has been 16 years since the day that my life changed forever! A drunk driver caused a head-on crash that caused me to be paralyzed from my waist down, sustain severe internal injuries and later, develop a lot of emotional problems.

After the crash, I was depressed for more than 5 years; I suffered anxiety and stopped having the desired to live. My family struggles alongside me, helping with my daily physical needs, understanding and supporting my emotional pain. The crash changed our lives, and I worry about the toll my life has taken on my family. I started going to a counselor, which has helped me a lot, and little by little, I started going out more. I have searched my faith and become close to God.

The last few years I gained new independence through the generosity of the YnoT Project (The Tony Borcia family) and AAIM. The YnoT Project funded a handicapped van, and now I can use hand controls and drive again. YnoT is Tony spelled backward. Tony was killed at the age of 10 in an impaired boating crash, and the YnoT Project was created in his memory.

Even though it has been 16 years, my life still not easy; I struggle every day. I must take care of my immediate medical needs, such as the catheter and colostomy bag. I have to do therapy on my legs in order to avoid spasms when I'm sleeping. I have to wake up every 2 hours and flip sides to prevent bedsores. There are many days I have so much pain I can't get out of bed; the anxiety of my disability is overwhelming and causes great fear of what the future holds.

My life will never, ever be the same! But thanks to my family's support, God's strength and AAIM's support I have been able to move on and keep fighting. The Y-noT Project has allowed me to drive myself to physical therapy, doctor's appointments, speak at victim impact panels, and pick up my daughter from school. I don't have enough words to thank The YnoT Project and AAIM for all they have done for me. AAIM has become my family!

Thank you very much for all you do! God Bless you!

Leeslyee Huerta

THE JAMEEL ALI HARRIS TRIBUTE

July 17, 1976 – April 22, 2012



As the new day's sun was rising on April 22, 2012, Jameel Ali Harris (35 years old) had just picked up his mother's car. He was excited about going to buy a birthday cupcake for his son, Timothy, who turned two years old at sunrise. His plan was to wake Timothy up and sing Happy Birthday, but instead, a drunk driver crashed into the back of the Chevy Tracker

at a horrendous speed, making contact on the left side near the gas tank. He pinned my son to the steering wheel. The drunk driver somehow managed to turn his own steering wheel away from the crash just before the burst of flames began to engulf the Tracker with my son in it. The drunk driver was oblivious to what happened and hours later asked to be taken to the hospital because someone had hit his car.

Jameel left behind a wife and three boys, who are now 10, 12, and 14 years old.

To say the least, April 22 is a bittersweet day for the Harris family, friends, colleagues, and the many lives that Jameel Ali Harris touched, even at his young age. Jameel was my son, a husband and father, an anointed ordained evangelist, corporate executive, mentor, music producer and an angel to all whom he met. The following are special memories of him from some of the people he impacted and ministered to, which speaks on the person that Jameel really was. And after the testimonies, this story ends with the **MIRACLE OF JAMEEL'S DEATH** – for from death comes life!

A client – “I am blessed to have worked with you. Thank you for believing in me!”

A friend and colleague – “You taught me forthrightness, perseverance, to trust in the good intentions of others, and what it was to be a friend to someone. Most importantly, you taught me about forgiveness.”

THE JAMEEL ALI HARRIS TRIBUTE
July 17, 1976 – April 22, 2012

An employee – “Thank you for teaching me about life, showing me that LIFE is all about what you can give and do for others. You were a great teacher, amazing FRIEND AND BOSS.”

A mentor – “You were the one who took a chance on me. Where I am today would not have been possible without you. You told me to chase my dreams, there will always be risks, but taking a chance was better than a life of “what ifs.”

A fellow minister – “You may or may not have known his name, but you knew the spirit of this man: creative, dependable, selfless, hard-working, disciple of God, reliable co-worker, responsible and never complaining.”

These testaments and more honored God. JAMEEL’S IN HEAVEN, THE ANGELS CAME TO GET HIS SOUL BEFORE THE FIRE. THE AUTOPSY PROVED THAT THERE WAS NO SMOKE IN HIS LUNGS. GOD IS FAITHFUL, EVEN UNTO DEATH.

This is the miracle of Jameel Ali Harris’ death.



THE RAYMOND N. DANIEL JACKSON TRIBUTE

June 16, 1977 – April 25, 2021



Raymond was a hardworking father and husband with strong family values, who did everything with courage and determination. He was a friend, protector, advisor, and inspiration in all he did. Ray was a very devoted and respected man, trustworthy and dependable in every type of relationship.

Ray loved fishing, riding motorcycles and ATVs, playing Xbox, cooking, and most of all spending time with his family. He loved and adored his children, Megan, Rachel, Rayne, Johnathan, Raylynn, and was excited to meet his unborn daughter Araya. Ray liked to take his wife and children on adventures, whether it was going fishing at his favorite spots, off-roading, jumping on the motorcycle, taking an unplanned trip in the car, or building an igloo in the front yard. He was the happiest when he was with family and friends.

Ray was confident and stern. Often people were intimidated by him until they got to know him, and then they found he was very loyal and selfless. He always put everyone before himself and would go the extra mile for those he loved.

In the blink of an eye, Raymond lost his life. He left behind a pregnant wife and five children. Johnathan and Raylynn were in the vehicle at the time of the fatal crash on April 25, 2021. Raylynn was left fighting for her life; Johnathan was left with minor physical injuries and devastating grief.

It took a split second the lives of so many to be changed forever. The loss of Ray left a wife without her life partner, six children fatherless, a mother grieving the loss of her son, and many friends and family members in shock and disbelief. Ray was killed at the age of 43 with so much life still ahead of him. There isn't a day that goes by that family and friends don't think about Ray. Thankful for the memories, missing him every day.

In loving memory of

Raymond N. Daniel Jackson

THE BEATA JANULEK STORY

Where I come from, we stress the importance of family. The bonds we form are inseparable; sometimes, we can sense when a close one is in danger. Yet, a feeling still haunts me every now and then. It is the feeling of emptiness, breathlessness, and despair. It jolted me awake early morning on March 8, 2009. I didn't understand the feeling, but with tears flowing down my cheeks, I laid myself back to sleep. Later that same morning, I woke up to a phone call from my stepdad, Libor. He told me that he, my mom, and her friend were involved in a crash caused by a drunk driver.



The collision left my mom with broken ribs, teeth, and nose; a punctured lung, and countless stitches. She remained in the ICU for four days, and in the hospital for ten days. My mom's friend, Libuska Kramser, suffered broken ribs, a collapsed lung and mild bleeding in the brain. She also stayed in the hospital for the same amount of time as my mother. My stepfather, Libor, was lucky to only be left with a few scratches from the glass. At the scene of the crash Libor was asked by an officer to take a BAC test for which he blew a .00. The driver of the other vehicle involved, who was visually identified as intoxicated by the responding police officer, refused to take the test.

Even now, in 2023, the light of justice hasn't shined down on us. The man who caused the crash, who eventually admitted to being guilty of his actions after multiple attempts to deny his fault in court, walks free. By now, most of the physical damage has gone away, but the emotional toll is relieved now and then. The friendship between my mom and her friend has slowly been rekindled. Yet, my mom still struggles with being a passenger in a vehicle. Whenever the driver of a car she is in gets too close to another car or has to use excessive braking to stop faster than intended, she panics, sometimes bursting into tears.

It's still a challenging road to travel. Although in the back of my head, I always remember that it could have been a lot worse.

Michal Junik, son of Beata and Libor Janulek

THE REGINALD “JALEN” JOHNSON TRIBUTE
January 8, 1997 – February 1, 2016



We did it, Jalen! Justice has finally been served.

We thought today we would write about you and to you, because today it's been over 7 years since you left earth. We know you're still nearby, and all around us, but lost the chance to touch and hug you again; that was the hardest thing we have ever had to let go.

Almost 8 years later it's making us look back on the years of our lives

without you. Of course, we each wonder how things would be different if you hadn't left. We wonder what an almost 8-year older version of you would look like or be like. How would you fit into a space in our lives? How would you be as a big brother, son, cousin, father, and husband.

But we try not to dwell on those thoughts because obviously we can't change what happened. We can't bring you back. In our minds, you'll remain nineteen forever. In a way, that's a joy, because you were such a bright, beautiful, innocent beam of light in your short little life, and you'll stay that way in our minds.

The anniversaries of your death have always been hard for us, but strangely not today. Today, we felt nothing but joy in remembering you and knowing that the offender is serving his time for taking you away from us. We can't believe it's taken so many years to get to this point, but it finally happened. Now we think that we can start to heal because we have closure.

For the first few years after you died, we all ached tremendously. We tried to function without the world seeing our pain. We all wished every person on this planet had known you and known what they lost when you left this earth to soon. We know some people might think it looks like living in the past.

THE REGINALD “JALEN” JOHNSON TRIBUTE

January 8, 1997 – February 1, 2016

To begin our healing process, we each wrote out every detail of you. We put on paper every single piece of you we could remember. We put into words exactly what it felt like when you laughed, or told a corny joke, played football, read aloud, or counseled your baby brother. We wrote what it felt like to hug you for the last time.

There were a lot of memories of your death that had been buried because they were too painful to dig up. But we faced them, so we could not only get past them but help the judge see the light that had been snuffed out of this world. Writing about you seemed to help heal the wounds. Leaving them on the pages once and for all, with all the ugliness and anger we felt over having to say goodbye to you forever. We've been reminded of how blessed we were to pay witness to your young life, curiosity, and zest for observing every little thing, great or small.

You'll never be a part of our past. You are part of our present, and always will be. The joy you gave us, the light you filled us with – it's still here. You're still here. We can feel you. Thank you for all the indescribably perfect memories you gave us, for making each one of us feel so special in your world and for nineteen years of joy. We'll never forget you.



Lovingly submitted,

Kendall, Jennifer, Tavia

and Kristopher Parrott

THE ANTHONY (TONY) JOYNER TRIBUTE

November 9, 1965 – January 18, 2007



On January 18, 2007, Tony's life ended because of the selfish act of a person who decided to drink and drive. Our lives were forever shattered due to the driver's disregard for the lives of others.

We miss Tony so much. He was a quiet, caring, and loving person. I still cry at night, thinking about how badly his body was dismembered in the crash and the pain he must have endured. Then, in my mind's eye, I can hear his voice whisper, "I'm okay, and I miss you all. It's in God's hands".

Every day, we prayed that the next time we went to court, we would get a trial date, and justice would be served. And we always said that no matter how Tony's case turned out, we would have to deal with it and hope for healing. Today, in 2023, it's an open wound in our hearts. We promised to fight for justice, and we fought for over a decade - Justice was not served. The drunk driver received a misdemeanor DUI and two years' probation. Everything about this case was dragged out and handled poorly, from the changing of three assistant state attorneys to the police department's investigation. We only received returned calls during the 2012-2016 Cook County State's Attorney's administration. There was little display of empathy or professionalism.

I know this is a small world, but I never expected to see the man who killed my brother again, especially at my place of employment, but there he was at my place of work. I went into my office on August 16, 2023, for staff training when the elevator doors opened, and to my surprise, the offender who killed my brother was waiting to get on the elevator. I had the worst panic/anxiety attack ever. I thought I would have a heart attack. I've been at my job for ten years and informed human resources immediately of the situation, and I'm still waiting to hear back. I know their hands are probably tied; I'm literally at a loss for what to do. This has re-opened a wound that never fully healed; now it feels like acid has been poured into it. For my family, there was no justice and now no peace.

We know Tony is with us in spirit; his presence on earth is still missed tremendously.

Missing you,

Your sister Elaine and the rest of our family

THE ANDREW KEATING TRIBUTE

October 26, 1989 – July 2, 2005

Andrew, I can't believe it's been 18 years since you were taken from us. It feels like a blink of an eye. I still see your face as you walked out the door and said you would be home in half an hour, but you didn't. My heart still hurts.

Your niece Lily turned 11 years old on July 3 and is starting 6th grade. We talk to her about you all the time, and she comes with us to visit you at the cemetery.

Ali, your younger sister graduated Suma Cum Laude from Southern Illinois University three years ago, and she is now working at a pediatric dental office.

Your sister Amanda is still working as a dental assistant. She's met someone and will probably be getting married soon. She and Lily will be moving to Kankakee.

As for me, I'm still retired and spending time in New Mexico in the home that Tom and I bought. We also spend time in Hometown so we can spend time with the girls.

Your Dad and Bill are doing fine.

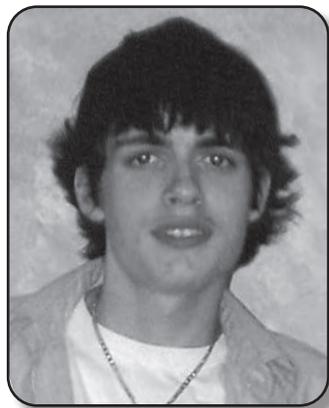
Andrew, your family and friends, miss you so much. I can only imagine the young man you would have become. You would have been 34 years old this year but will be forever 15.

Life is not the same without you, Andrew. I miss you every second of every day...

Until we see each other again, I love you forever and ever, Andrew...
Love, Mom

We miss and love you so much,

Dad, Mom, Mandy, Ali and Lily



THE NICHOLAS KILPATRICK TRIBUTE

September 1, 1997 – September 9, 2014



This year marks the 9-year anniversary of Nick's death, he would've been 26 this year. I find myself wondering more than ever who he'd be today? What career would he have chosen? Would he be married? A father? I'll never know.

On the night of September 9, 2014, I received the phone call that would change my life forever. My son was hit by a drunk driver while riding his skateboard. I immediately woke my other two children and rushed to the hospital. On the way to the hospital, I received the call that Nick didn't make it. I insisted on going to the coroner's office to see for myself that it was my child. It was then and there that I saw my baby lying on the gurney, lifeless. I felt for his heart beat and listened to his chest for breathing, there was nothing. I begged and pleaded for him to wake up. I held him and didn't want to let go. The coroner explained that Nick had died upon impact. His neck and spine were broken, his skull fractured and a multitude of other internal injuries; my heart shattering over and over again. Nicholas had just turned 17, eight days prior to being killed and had his whole life ahead of him. Now instead of celebrating, I was planning his memorial service. I kept thinking to myself this isn't how it's supposed be. We don't bury our children, they bury us.

I have had Nick's belongings from the crash in a box under my bed, looming over me. A weight on my shoulders. My fear that if something were to happen to me, that my children would have to see his clothing, I couldn't just throw out his things because that felt wrong, yet I didn't want the torn and stained clothing either. Just in case...it's how I live my life now, just in case. Because I know that tomorrow isn't promised to any of us. You see, my ex-husband wanted Nick's clothing from the crash and I wanted his other belongings. Sadly, Nick's dad died 3 weeks before we received Nick's belongings and I was left with it all. So, it

THE NICHOLAS KILPATRICK TRIBUTE

September 1, 1997 – September 9, 2014

sat under my bed untouched for the last 5 years. I decided to have a burning ceremony and “send” it up this year. It was excruciating to see everything and hold it in my hands, A part of me didn’t want to let it burn but yet I knew it was better than my kids to find it one day. The hardest part was when I came across his shoes. Nick always wrote on his shoes, used to drive me mad that he would write on brand new shoes. I had forgotten he had done that. Until I pulled them out of the evidence bag. Then the air was sucked out of me, that gut punch, seeing what he had written for the first time, 7 years after his death...Smile NOW, die later. It broke me all over again but yet it was so like my son. He may have only gotten 17 years on this earth but he lived, truly lived, each and every one of them to the fullest.

Nick, you live on through your brother and sister, I see you in them every day. I see the signs you give me; the number 44 is all around me and I know it’s you and I smile because I know it’s you saying “Hey Ma” and I always say “Hi Nickaby” back. You are always on my mind and forever in my heart.

We love you always and forever,

Mom, Keira

and Christian

THE AMANDA KORDICH TRIBUTE

March 3, 1991 – July 28, 2008



Just writing the title to this tribute is so difficult. Memories come flooding back to the day Amanda was born and the day that she died. I wish I could say that life is back to normal. Life will never get back to normal. In fact, life still hasn't gotten any better. Just when I think I'm doing better, something punches me in the gut to remind me that I'm a broken person and not whole.

It's been fifteen years since I have laughed, hugged, shared a story or future plans with my daughter. Just saying the words "my daughter" makes me want to cry. When I'm on Facebook and someone posts about their daughter, I always make an upbeat comment, but in private, I cry.

Another parent reached out to me regarding her 16-year-old son, that was killed in a car crash. She had so many questions about why him? What if she didn't let him go out that day? What if she would have bought him a bigger car or truck like he wanted? What if his brother had been in the car with him as planned? I tried to help her and walk her through her grief, telling her it would get better. God has a plan, and our children are bringing others to Christ. But at the same time, I'm dying inside. I wanted to say there are days when I still can't catch my breath.

I'm a teacher at the high school my children attended. Every other Wednesday, we have a staff meeting in the auditorium. Every time I walk in there, I have shortness of breath and can't sit anywhere close to the front. I go through a mini-PTSD episode. No one understands that we had my baby girl's funeral in the auditorium. It's where I sat and looked at her lying in her casket. It's the last place I hugged my baby girl and said my final goodbye. I can't escape this room as our meetings take place in it. My husband

THE AMANDA KORDICH TRIBUTE

hasn't been able to work since Amanda died; he just sits at home. I need to be the breadwinner now as I must take care of everyone. I want to quit my job, but I already have 16 years of service at the school.

On one Friday, when I was teaching, a student that I helped had on the same perfume Amanda wore. At first, I smiled as it brought back memories, but then I wanted to run away. The hundreds of students that I see each day look, dress, and laugh like Amanda did. I'm glad I can help these children. I can relate to them in a way that other people can't, but inside I just want to die!

My brain doesn't shut down with the memories from the night she was killed. Yesterday was a bad day; I don't know why. It just was. I tried reading, devotions, crafts, crossword puzzles, grading papers, and nothing could clear my mind.

So, when people ask if it gets any better or tell me to just get over it... this is why I can't.

Maybe tomorrow will be a better day.....

Written by Diane Kordich

Amanda's Mother

THE CHRISTOPHER KRENZER TRIBUTE

January 20, 1990 - August 26, 2010



I never thought I'd survive the first year Chris was killed, let alone the 13 years since then. In the beginning, it was nothing but crying, throwing up, and sleepless nights for months on end. I would get up in the middle of the night, stare out of the window at the driveway to see if his car was home and then the realization and pain that he was never coming home again would set in. The senselessness still strikes me, and it angers me. There are no words to explain what the grief and anger feel like or what it does to your life.

On August 26, 2010, at 12:04 a.m., our lives were changed forever. A 20-year-old repeat DUI offender that was drunk and had THC in his system left a party to drive home. He ran a red light at an intersection in Rockford, speeding between 93-104 mph. He struck the driver's side of our 20-year-old son's Honda Civic. Chris was trapped in the back seat, as there was no longer a front seat. An off-duty nurse, Kelly, witnessed the crash and was the first one to Chris' car. She did all that she could for Chris who was in the twisted wreckage of his car. She had no gloves, equipment, or lights. The impaired driver who hit Chris' car was trying to leave the scene. Luckily, as Kelly worked on Chris, witnesses restrained the impaired driver. Kelly couldn't tell how old Chris was, because it was dark, and his injuries were so extensive. There was blood everywhere, but she knew he was young. His college textbooks were thrown about the car and scene. When they got Chris on a gurney, the EMT's allowed Kelly to make the call... do they transport him to the hospital? Or do they call it at the scene? Absolutely transport, as he was a young person and might still have a chance.

At the hospital, they tried to intubate him, but his lungs were too bruised, and his injuries were too numerous. He had massive head trauma that he couldn't have survived. We know Chris had a pulse when the nurse got to him, that he had gasps of breath, and that the gasps stopped at the scene. We know everyone did everything in their power to revive our son. We are eternally grateful to Kelly, and the people who stopped to help. He wasn't alone; he was prayed over in the last moments of his life.

My husband, our oldest son and I didn't know there had been a crash involving Chris, as we were in bed asleep. We were notified by phone that Chris had been in a bad crash, and we needed to come to the hospital immediately. We had no

THE CHRISTOPHER KRENZER TRIBUTE

idea Chris was dead; the thought never crossed our minds. You don't go there. We thought about ICU, surgery, and rehab. We sat in a room off to the side in the Emergency Room of St. Anthony Medical Center. A doctor and nurse came in and said, "We're sorry, but there was nothing we could do. His injuries were too severe." Just like that. No appeals and no second chances. It was final and devastating news. Our kind, funny, handsome, 20-year-old son, Christopher was dead; he was our youngest. He was dead due to the selfish, reckless decision of a stranger to drive impaired.

Only one person could have changed the outcome of that evening. If only the driver of the car wouldn't have put the keys in the ignition that night. If he'd called an Uber or a friend.... this tribute wouldn't have been written. We would have gone on with our lives the way it was supposed to be...celebrating his marriage, having grandkids, and happy family times.

The years after Chris' death have been spent in great pain; I guess that pain will always be there. We are shadows of the people we once were. Losing Chris knocked us to our knees. It changed our every breath, thoughts, and our very souls. We may look the same on the outside, but inside we are broken people.

The shock has worn off, but the emptiness inside is still there. The ache, and loneliness hasn't gone away. Learning to cope without our son has been the hardest thing we've ever done.

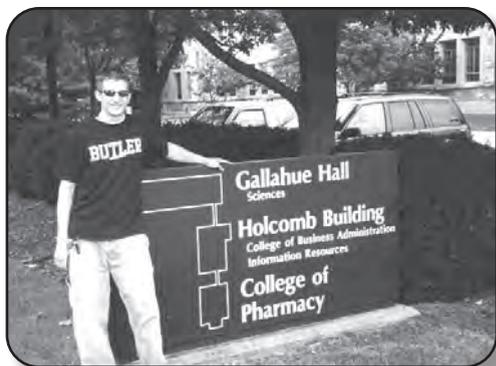
The man who killed Chris has finished his prison sentence. He received twelve years, 85% of the sentence had to be served in prison, plus, an additional three and a half years at 50% for killing Chris; this part of his sentence was served in a work release program. The man also spent his entire prison sentence trying to get out of his sentence or get it reduced, so we trudged back into court every time he entered another motion. He is out now living life and having fun. I wish Chris was able to do that. His family celebrated his release and his starting his life over. I wish we got that. This man is engaged and looking forward to marriage. Chris will never get to do that. I pray this man has learned a lesson because everyone has someone, that they love, that are on the roads. No one should have to lose their life because of driving impaired, driving distracted, texting, or driving reckless. WE MUST DO BETTER WHILE DRIVING.

*Love,
Mom, Dad and Michael*

THE JOHN KRESLIN JR. TRIBUTE

August 26, 1983 – August 30, 2002

Finding Purpose in Pain



John was 19 years old and a pre-pharmacy student at Butler University, Indianapolis, IN. On August 30, 2002, just four days after starting his sophomore year of college, he was killed in an underage drinking and impaired driving crash. John was a passenger, along with three girls in the back seat when the driver hit a tree traveling over 65 miles per hour.

Everyone was injured, and my son

was the only one who lost his life. The driver's BAC was .13. I'm his mom, and I couldn't keep him safe. I'll spend the rest of my life broken to some level.

Since John's death, time has taken on a whole new meaning for me. The calendar is marked with dates and memories that fill the years of what was, and what should have been. My journey through grief, my memories and emotions, the past and present, would bring a sea of tears that have become a trickle over time. In the early years of my grief, I often got lost trying to find purpose in the pain. That's when I found AAIM and I began sharing my brokenness and vulnerability to help others.

The people in my life, family, dear friends, and my work at AAIM have shaped my identity. The work is important and filled with purpose; if it didn't matter, it wouldn't matter. For twenty years, I've served others, and worked with the most compassionate people I have ever met. I believe I've found purpose in the pain and it has far exceeded my expectations.

A mother's heart is always with her children even if they are no longer here. The everchanging grief in my soul will forever echo the love in my heart. And I will continue to learn and grow kindled by the love of my son, John.

And finally, as I revisit the pivotal moments in my life, I'm grateful for the peace and joy I have found. And as I reset my compass for the next 20 years, I hope God will bless us all!

Rita Kreslin

Visit www.johnkreslin.com

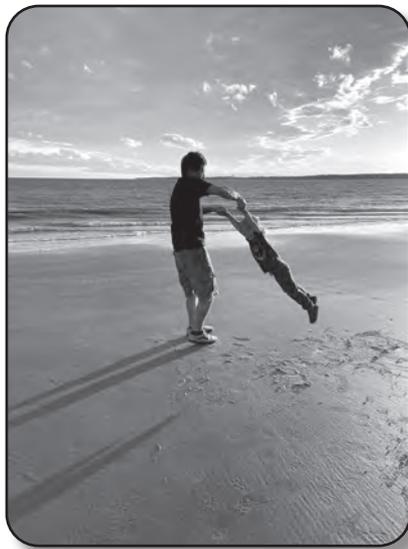
This story is sponsored by Wetoska Packaging, Elk Grove Village

THE ANDREW “DREW” LEWIS TRIBUTE
April 28, 1988 – August 21, 2021

Drew,

It has been 751 days since you were taken from us. 751 days of missing you, asking why and knowing the answers will never come. The world keeps moving but a part of me is standing still. Still unable to move past August 21, 2021, when I received that phone call. I know you are with us in spirit, but I just want to hear your voice and feel your hug.

I am so thankful that I feel you through your son; what an amazing young man he's becoming. So many accomplishments this year for him – wake surfing, learning to play chess, losing both his front teeth, getting accepted into the gifted program at school, learning to swim, playing soccer, flying by himself on an airplane, learning to drive the boat – just to name a few. I know you were smiling at each of these accomplishments and saying “that’s my boy” as you always did. He is beginning to look so much like you and he definitely has your sense of humor. He loves learning story puzzles and retelling them. Just like you loved Jake, he has his little cat “Cloudy” and loves her so much. I smile knowing you and Jake have been reunited.



I think about what your life would be like now. You and Connor would be doing all the things you were excited to teach him. I could hear your cheers yesterday when Green Bay won the game. I wonder what you would think of the Aaron Rodgers trade. So much I wonder about and so much has been senselessly taken from us.

Know that as long as I live you will be a part of every celebration, milestone, holiday, sunrise and sunset. You are so loved, so missed and always remembered.

Until we meet again in our heavenly home my dear son, I love you Drew #forever33.

Your Mom and Biggest Fan

THE TRIBUTE MERCEDIZ ELANII LAMBERT

May 8, 2016 – November 3, 2016



This particular Thursday started off like any other, work, babysitter, school and games. Never in my wildest dreams did I think it would become the worst day of my life. My oldest Bionca had a game that day; she was a cheerleader. We were on our way home that evening driving down the same road I had driven down my entire life. Only this time my life would change forever. That

day a young man decided to drink and drive and unfortunately for us, we were on the same road. Turning into our subdivision, less than three blocks away from home we were crashed into. All three of my babies were thrown from the vehicle due to the impact. My two daughters Bionca (12) and Brielle (8) were seriously injured. My Mercediz unfortunately gained her wings. I'll never get the sound of my screams out of my head. One decision, a split second, and our lives changed forever.

Bionca was so close to her baby sister; she loved her so much. Brielle and her three other sisters adored Mercediz. She brought so much love to our family. The girls were sent to different hospitals after what seemed like a lifetime. I went with Mercediz, as I knew from the moment I found her, she was hurt the worst. They tried everything they could and as I watched I felt like I was in the twilight zone. This can't be real; we were only a minute away from home. Hearing those words will forever haunt me...my baby girl was gone. My heart literally ripped from my chest and shattered into pieces.

Telling the girls that their baby sister was no longer with us had to be the hardest thing next to losing her that I ever had to do. Brielle was hospitalized for weeks recovering from a fractured hip. She had plastic surgery on her face and almost lost her arm. Bionca was covered from head to toe in bruises and cuts. They were so hurt and there was nothing I could do.

THE TRIBUTE MERCEDIZ ELANII LAMBERT

Mercediz was five days short of turning six months old. After six long years fighting for justice for Mercediz, we finally had a sentence handed down. Although it's nowhere near enough justice; no amount of jail time will ever bring our princess back. We as a family are just happy; happy she can finally rest in peace and the court part of this nightmare is over. Nothing will ever heal our forever broken hearts.

We'll forever hold onto the memories we have and do whatever it takes to keep her memory alive and spread awareness in hopes of saving at least ONE life.

Mercediz, we love you and miss you so very much. Forever our "Chunkys". Not a day goes by that we don't think of you and wish you were here.

"Your wings were ready, but my heart was not."

Love, Mom

This tribute is sponsored by Sally Hoffman

THE DAVID LOGTERMAN TRIBUTE
September 21, 1956 – May 20, 2014



Dave Logterman was a husband, father, son, brother, uncle, friend, MRI technician, swim coach, golfer, and so much more. A year after his death he would have added grandfather to this list, a role he couldn't wait to play.

He never got that chance. On May 20, 2014, a driver under the influence of alcohol and drugs, driving at a high rate of speed from the opposite direction, took Dave's life instantly. Here one minute, on his way to work, and gone the next, forever.

When I left for work that morning, I heard of a crash that was causing major backups, so I took a different route to my workplace. Dave had left two and a half hours before, so it didn't cross my mind that it was him

involved in the crash. Not until I got to work, and the secretary asked me to call the police; and then seeing the coroner walking up the sidewalk did the reality set in.

It happens every day to people everywhere but having to notify my family and friends that Dave was killed in a DUI crash was unimaginable. It was truly the hardest thing I have ever had to do.

Our son Jeremy's wedding was less than three weeks away...we had to fight hard to make it their special day. Dave would have wanted it that way. Stephanie our daughter was married last April. Jeremy walked her down the aisle, and at the reception, he danced with her to the song "Over the Rainbow". There wasn't a dry eye in the house watching Stephanie dance with her brother to represent her beloved father. Kellie our youngest is engaged and will be married next March at one of Dave's favorite places in Mexico. It will be another special day, but it will be a hard day without him. We've all learned to live life without Dave. Some days are harder than others, but his spirit and memories live on forever.

I've now retired and have four beautiful grandchildren. Dave would have loved to be able to do play sports with his grandchildren. Dave was the

THE DAVID LOGTERMAN TRIBUTE

swim coach at Harlem High School in Machesney Park for many years. We raised money in Dave's honor and used it for new bleachers in the pool area at Machesney Park High School, as they needed to be replaced. We also give student scholarships, in Dave's memory, to members on the swim team. Harlem High School dedicates the first Invitational Swim Meet every year in Dave's honor. Our youngest daughter followed in her father's steps and is a head swim coach in the suburbs. Dave would be so proud of his children.

There is a beautiful plaque hanging in the MRI Department of Swedish American Hospital and two bricks in the healing garden of the hospital where he worked for 25 years.

After two years in the court system and having the first trial declared a hung jury, there was a second trial. The defendant was found guilty and received a sentence of 42 months in prison. Even though he still denies doing wrong, he'll never drive again!

In August of 2022, our AAIM advocate happened to see the defendant's name on the docket. We attended court and found out that it was the second time the defendant had submitted motions to the court. The assistant state's attorney said the defendant submitted pages and pages of nonsense. Nonsense or not, we'll be at court to represent Dave.

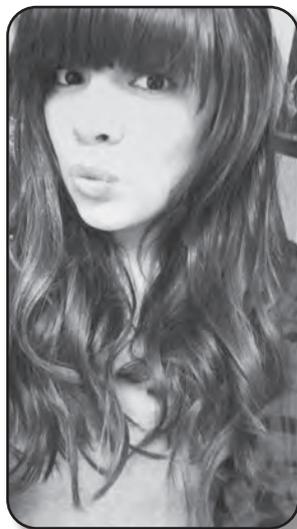
We continue to thank Jen Gadow, our attorney, our advocates through the State's Attorney, and Kelly Krenzer, our Victim Advocate from AAIM. We'll forever be grateful for their dedication to their jobs and prosecuting DUI offenders

Thank you to our AAIM advocate, Kelly, who was with us every step of the way. We appreciate your guidance and time as you lead us through this process. It's because you went through this yourself that you knew how to guide us – thank you.

**In loving memory,
The Logterman Family**

THE ASHLEY MARIE LOPEZ TRIBUTE

January 23, 1993 – October 11, 2016



On October 11, 2016, what started out as a beautiful day ended as my worst nightmare. Ashley and I had spent the day together. She had just returned home from the University of Nebraska where she was attending school. Ashley's plan was to finish her last year at Columbia College and move with her sister Angela to Chicago. She was happy and excited to finish school and explore what the world had to offer. What I didn't know was that would be the last conversation I would have with my daughter.

As we were driving home, we picked up my daughter Angela from work. We were waiting at the intersection to turn left. A distracted driver chose to grab his phone to use it and rear ended the car my daughters and I were in. Not only was he distracted by using his phone, but he was speeding too. When he hit my car, he caused it to go into the other lane, where another car hit us. My car was pushed into the ditch and the rear end of my car was smashed. While I don't remember anything from the impact my daughter Angela does. She remembers hearing me wheezing because I couldn't breathe, and she was looking for Ashley. The police told me that they didn't know Ashley was in the car because the car was badly damaged. They saw Ashley's hair and began immediate extraction. Ashley was airlifted to a trauma one center due to her injuries, but she didn't make it.

While I was fighting for my life, I had no idea that my daughter was no longer with us. I was unaware of where I was and what had happened. I lay unconscious, unable to breathe, talk or walk. The moment I was finally able to speak the first thing I asked was, "Where are the girls?" My children didn't know how to respond to my question. That day, my family surrounded me and told me we were in a crash. Angela was okay, but Ashley didn't survive. I felt numb and couldn't stop crying. No mother should bare the loss of a child.

THE ASHLEY MARIE LOPEZ TRIBUTE

My children had to make the most difficult decisions without me after Ashley passed away. They had to make the decision of how to lay to rest my daughter and their sister. They had to make those decisions without their mother. I couldn't say goodbye to my daughter, and I struggle with that daily. The young man who caused the crash took away my ability to walk, talk, breathe, and to say goodbye to my daughter and to grieve with my family—because I was fighting for my life.

Since her passing each day has been a challenge. As I tried to recover from my injuries, I found myself crying constantly, remembering my daughter was no longer with us. I never got to hold or see my daughter one last time. I didn't get to say goodbye to her. Not saying goodbye to Ashley has been one of the most difficult issues I've had to face. It's hard to live life without Ashley and have to celebrate every moment in life without her. If Ashley was still with us, she would be spending all her time with family. Ashley was someone's daughter, sister, and aunt. It's almost seven years since we lost Ashley and living life without her is the hardest thing to do. We as a family are trying to live the life Ashley would want us to have.

Our family is very thankful for AAIM especially our advocate Carrie. I don't know where we would be without her support and the other families we have met. It's great to have a support system and know that we are not alone in this journey.

**To my daughter Ashley,
we love you and
we all miss you very much.**

THE IZAIAH LOPEZ TRIBUTE

February 1, 2011 – March 25, 2019



I remember both days like it was yesterday; the day my son Izaiah Nathaniel Ornelas Lopez was born and the day he was taken from everyone. He was born at Copley Hospital the day of the big blizzard. I knew he would bring storms, but never did I think the storm was going to stay over me. Izaiah liked to play ABC mouse on his computer and did online learning. He would practice reading or writing before playing his PlayStation or Xbox. He loved his video games. He would play Fortnite and Roblox with older kids who said Izaiah was smarter than his age.

His spring break had finally started so I took him to Medieval Times on Saturday night. Izaiah said he wanted to go spend time with his mother and grandparents and he called me Sunday night saying he wanted to stay an extra day with his grandparents. This was the decision

that changed my life forever.

On March 25, 2019, I got a call from my son's grandmother at 7:45 p.m. with the terrible news that my son was hit by a car. She didn't have any other details. Once I heard what happened, I told Karina, Zaya's stepmom and we left to go to the hospital. Karina dropped me off at the front door and she went to park the car. I ran through the doors into the emergency room and saw my son getting CPR. They were pushing on his chest, and it hurt me to see them do that to him. I knew my son was not alive. They stopped doing CPR and came to tell me there was nothing more they could do for my son. I felt so alone knowing that my first born, who I thought would grow old with me was no longer alive.

Every day I try to forget that Izaiah was killed by someone who didn't care to stop after hitting him and his grandfather. I hate feeling like he's going to come home when in reality he's never coming home. In the short 8 years of life he had, I'm grateful I got to spend them with Izaiah.

I want to thank AAIM for the help they've given me during this difficult time. AAIM has shown me that I'm not the only one who lost a loved one. It's hard to live without my son and even though it hurts I know AAIM is always a phone call away.

Written by Izaiah's father

Angelo Lopez

POSITIVELY NEGATIVE

We drank for happiness and became unhappy.

We drank for joy and became miserable.

*We drank for sociability and
became argumentative.*

*We drank for sophistication and
became obnoxious.*

We drank for friendship and made enemies.

We drank for sleep and awaken without rest.

We drank for strength and felt weak.

*We drank “medicinally” and acquired
health problems.*

We drank for relaxation and got the shakes.

We drank for bravery and became afraid.

*We drank for confidence and
became doubtful.*

*We drank to make conversation easier and
slurred our speech.*

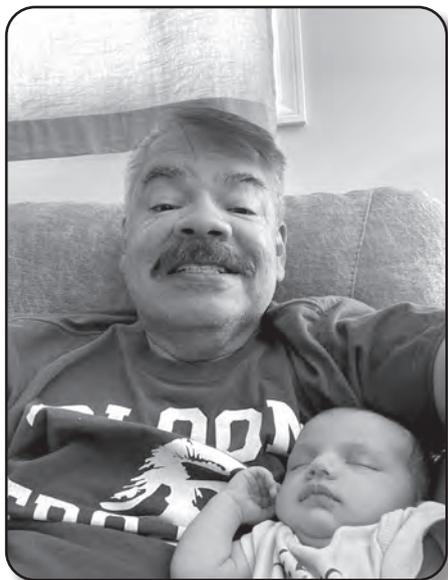
*We drank to feel heavenly and ended up
feeling like hell.*

We drank to forget and were forever haunted.

*We drank to erase problems and
saw them multiply.*

We drank to cope with life and invited death.

THE MANNY LOPEZ STORY



Seventeen years ago, on September 26, 2006, my daughter and I were on our way home from a volleyball tournament when I got a call from a Belvidere police officer. He told me my then husband had been injured in a crash. That was all he could say and that he was being taken to St. Anthony Trauma Center in Rockford. My heart sunk and there was a pain in my gut, wondering how badly he was injured. I later learned he'd been hit by a drunk driver while he was walking and had been airlifted to the hospital.

When I arrived at the hospital, my pastor and a friend were waiting for me outside the emergency room doors. I knew then it couldn't be good. I was quickly ushered down a long hallway to the family room, where many friends and police officers (all who knew my husband quite well) were waiting. The Belvidere Chief of Police and the Boone County Sheriff were also there, as well as several high-ranking officers from the Illinois State Police, my husband's employer. Strangely, the first thing I asked was, "was the guy drunk?" I still don't know why I would ask that at 7:30 p.m. Sadly, the answer was a resounding "yes." Rather ironic since Manny had been working with the Breath Alcohol Section for several years.

When the doctor came to talk to me, he gave me the long list of injuries my husband had suffered. . . a broken neck, fractured ribs, five fractured vertebrae, fractured and separated pelvis, scrapes on his hands, big gash on the back of his head, broken front tooth, concussion and worst of all, a traumatic brain injury. That's what frightened me most. There was silence in the room, as we all took in the gravity of the situation. Even though the room was full of friends and coworkers, I never felt so alone. I knew he would recover from the broken bones and scrapes, but I've seen what a brain injury does to a person and it's devastating. That's what scared me. Manny was in a medically induced coma for two of the three weeks he was in ICU. He spent six weeks in a rehab facility where he had to completely relearn how to care for himself, from walking, to bathing, dressing, eating and how

THE MANNY LOPEZ STORY

to do life again. The “doing life” was most difficult and many things would never be the same.

Calling family and friends was very difficult! It was almost 11:30 p.m. before I was able to start making these calls. The State Police brought his mom and sister to Rockford from their home in the south suburbs. Telling our children (our son 7 and daughter 12 at the time) that their father had almost died was the most difficult thing I’ve ever had to do. Thankfully, we had plenty of support from family, friends, church, his coworkers and AAIM.

It’s been very difficult to watch my strong husband struggle as he learned once again how to care for himself. We’re very grateful that his life was spared. Our life, family and marriage were forever changed and damaged because of this crash. He was off work for over a year, which placed a great financial burden on us. After a year off, he was able to go back to work, albeit in a much-reduced capacity. He was no longer able to carry a weapon, wear his uniform or even drive his State issued vehicle. Thankfully, he was able to work a few more years until retirement, but it was extremely hard to go through. He’ll always have physical limitations and he struggles with short-term memory loss (which has progressively gotten worse over time).

Manny was an avid runner, which came to a halt because of his injuries. Several years ago, he was able to complete a five-mile Tough Mudder Competition! He had a great time even though he had to pass on two events. He struggles daily with chronic pain, physical limitations, memory trouble and keeping up with yard and housework.

Manny is so grateful to be alive, he recently became a grandpa for the first time and she is amazing!

We are thankful for AAIM and the love and support they continue to give us. I have spoken at Victim Impact Panels with Kelly and Art Krenzer, where we each share how a drunk driver adversely affected our lives. I’ve also spoken to high school students to get them to see the terrible effects drinking and driving has on people. Please share our stories and stop impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel of a vehicle.

Heather Lopez Lopez
Manny's ex-wife

THE JUAN LOZANO TRIBUTE
October 12, 1993 – February 3, 2016



I'm Juan's mom and I would like to share a short story about my son and what his purpose was in life. I'd also like to share what happened to us in the criminal justice system.

My son was a good, kindhearted, and wise person. Juan was a young man full of life who had big dreams. One of his biggest dreams was to become an architect; he would always say he wanted to build me the home of my dreams.

Juan was a humble and noble person. I was always his priority, and everyone knew that about him. His entire family loved him deeply. He was a great big brother to his siblings and an awesome uncle to his nieces and nephews. There was never a time when he wouldn't do everything in his power to see his loved ones happy.

Juan's little brother has struggled with the loss of his big brother. The tears and anger are so hard for him to deal with. He looked up to his big brother and he is angry someone has taken him away. We all miss Juan. There are times when I feel that I'll never be able to live a happy life anymore, but I try my hardest for my four other children and my grandchildren that still need me; they're my only motivation for moving forward. However, I still feel lifeless without Juan, a part of me is gone forever, but a part of him will live forever inside of me. How I wish this was all a nightmare I could wake up from. My life has completely changed, nothing is the same without him. He has left an empty feeling in my heart. Juan left so many beautiful memories with me that although it is painful to think of, I will forever cherish them.

My son never got a chance to meet his biological father. He searched everywhere for him and yet he was nowhere to be found. Sadly, Juan's father contacted me three months after Juan's death.

Juan has left so many beautiful memories and although they're painful to think of, I will cherish them forever. I ask God for the strength to carry on every day knowing I can no longer kiss, hug, or hold my son again. At 22 years old, my son lost his life and dreams in the blink of an eye. I would give anything to bring my son back, but I am aware that it's his time to rest with God.

The drunk driver took Juan's dreams away from him. He was supposed to be Juan's friend and instead he ended Juan's life that night. I've been told by another occupant in the vehicle that Juan begged the driver to stop the car when he fled from the police that night.

Throughout the case, the defendant bonded out, he had his girlfriend put up \$50,000 cash and then he ran away. We spent months worrying that he wouldn't

THE JUAN LOZANO TRIBUTE

be found. Luckily, on June 24, 2019, my victim's advocate called me with the good news that the defendant had been found in North Carolina. That was a day of relief that he had been caught. The defendant was extradited to Rockford, Illinois, where he would be held until trial.

In November of 2020, my son's case was closed without my family being contacted by the State's Attorney's Office. My AAIM advocate was never informed that our case was closed either. We all were in shock. We couldn't believe they would do this to us, I was angry, and I cried for months. My AAIM advocate cried along with us and felt responsible. The AGG DUI Death Charge was dropped, and the defendant plead to Reckless Homicide. This is a lesser charge and less prison time than the AGG DUI Death charge. The defendant received 10 years for killing my son; and according to Illinois law, he is only required to serve 50% of the time.

I didn't know the court proceeding was also going to be a heart-sickening slap in the face to me and my family and add to my unbearable pain. I have thought long and hard about what I would say to the court, state, and defendant since I wasn't informed of what was going to happen with the case. I was never allowed to give an impact statement.

I relied on the criminal justice system to do right for me, and my family; they failed. The assistant state's attorney knew I was there and involved in the case, they had meetings with me over the years to talk about the case. My advocate told them I wanted to be there when the time came for a trial or plea and sentencing.

I had a lawyer fighting for my rights as a victim, after they closed the case. My AAIM advocate stood by my side to try and get justice for Juan. It didn't change anything for me, but hopefully, it changes something for someone else and this never happens again.

Our family is growing. Juan never thought his sister would have children; he'd be so happy to meet his beautiful niece. We're all trying to learn to live again after losing Juan, he was the one who held us together. The victim rights violation in Juan's case is being used to teach others in the criminal justice system in our state, what not to do with victims. What happened to us in court should never happen to anyone. The State's Attorney in Illinois and their staff must do better. The court and judges must do better; for victims and their families.

My SON, the deceased victim, DESERVED BETTER.

I appreciate your taking the time to read my son's painful story.

Written by his mother who misses him dearly,

Elizabeth Alvarado

THE CHRISTOPHER “CHRIS” L. LUKES TRIBUTE

July 13, 1990 - August 6, 2021



On July 18, 2021, my life changed forever. The night of the crash that took my son's life, Chris decided to take his brother, Bryan, out for his birthday. He told Bryan that he loved him and that this was going to be his best birthday. Chris' girlfriend, Shaleika, his brother's girlfriend, Valeria, and a friend, Kimani went out and enjoyed themselves. Afterwards, they decided to go downtown and get

something to eat. They were in three different cars when one rear-ended the other. They all stopped on the expressway to check for damages. That is when a car came along at a high rate of speed and crashed into Chris and two friends. Chris' friends were injured but ultimately recovered. Chris sustained a severe head injury. Due to the impact, his spine shifted to the point that his brain stem disconnected from it, and he sustained great liver damage. Chris went into cardiac arrest while in surgery, but they were able to stabilize him. For the next two weeks, I was told that he would never recover and that I had to make the decision to let my son go.

After three weeks, we decided to let him go. I talked to Chris and asked that he let us know because I didn't want to let him go. Chris miraculously awakened the next morning, but my heart knew that it wouldn't be for long. I feel he came back to make sure that Bryan, Shaleika, Valeria and Kimani were okay and to say good-bye. On August 5th, he closed his eyes one last time and on August 6th it was determined that he had passed away overnight. The young man that took my son's life left the scene of the crash. A witness followed him until he got all the information on the car and the driver was picked up a few hours later. He had driven home and gone to sleep.

Police determined that he was highly intoxicated at the time of the crash. He is now facing 14 years in prison. 14 years for injuring two people and taking the life of my vivacious, charismatic, and loving son. My son was a father to two beautiful girls, Amya, and Jazara. Chris also leaves behind four brothers, Dontae, Bryan, Terrell, and Antione.

I always called Chris the pied piper of fun. Everyone he met adored him. He was always there to lend a helping hand to friends, family, and strangers. He was a beautiful person. My days are long and lonely but as much as I love Chris, God loves him best.

*Chris my love, we will meet again.
Love, Mom*

The Great Remover

Alcohol is a product of amazing versatility.
It will remove the stains from designer clothes,
it will also remove the clothes off your back.

If by chance it is used in sufficient quantity
alcohol will remove furniture from the home,
rugs from the floor, food from the table,
lining from the stomach, vision from the eyes
and judgment from the mind.

Alcohol will also remove good reputations,
good jobs, good friends, happiness from children's hearts,
sanity, freedom, spouses, relationships,
and man's ability to adjust and live with his fellow man
and even life itself.

As a remover, alcohol has no equal.

Author – Unknown

THE SHEILA LUPTON STORY AND KATHLEEN BOWES TRIBUTE

Sheila- Injured August 31, 2020
Kathleen – June 15, 1947-August 31, 2020



From Left: Sheila –Kathleen

On August 31, 2020, my world shattered and was changed forever. At the intersection of East State and Second Street, my vehicle was struck by a reckless, speeding driver driving on South Street. The police report said the car smelled like Marijuana when they arrived. But no charges were ever added for that. My friend Kathy was in the passenger seat, I was taking her to a doctor's appointment, she was a good woman, and a great friend. She died because of the injuries she received in the crash. I carry survivor's guilt, because she died and I survived.

I now have anxiety when approaching a lighted intersection. I wait in dread for a vehicle to run the red light, twice I have seen this happen. It has left me crying, shaking, and gasping for air. I have had to call family members to calm me down. Another time I had to change my plans, instead of going out to eat, I returned home, where I felt safe.

I spent 8 days in the hospital and three weeks in a rehabilitation center, my injuries were so severe. I suffered a brain bleed from the crash, fractured ribs on my right side, and breathing was an agony. I had vertigo so bad, that I would almost pass out when being moved. I had injuries to my thumb and wrist that had to be surgically repaired and fused. I now carry three scars on my left wrist and thumb. I also carry a permanent scar on my stomach from the seat belt. I suffered daily migraines for months. I suffered a Deep Vein Thrombosis in my left calf in rehab. I had to have blood thinner shots in my stomach twice a day and then remained on blood thinner medication for months. I still have vertigo issues and take medication for it twice a day. I still have migraines and now wear tinted glasses to help with them.

THE SHEILA LUPTON STORY
AND KATHLEEN BOWES TRIBUTE

I spent a month not being able to see my family. I have three grandchildren that I saw almost daily, my granddaughter gets very upset if she thinks I'm leaving without giving her a hug and kiss goodbye. She worries I may not come back.

My fiancé worries about me constantly. He needs to know where I am and that I am safe.

When I was finally able to return home, I had to use a walker to get around. I had at-home physical therapy for a month. I worked to regain my strength, so I could graduate with a cane. And finally, to be able to walk without one. It took 14 months for me to be strong enough to return to work. I no longer feel safe in a car, I choose to drive an SUV now because it's bigger.

The day this "incident" happened, it changed so many lives. Kathy's family lost their sister and friend. I and many of our other friends lost Kathy as well. We will miss her kindness, and her love for pets, friends, and family. We will miss her loving and generous spirit. We all feel her loss daily.

I have spoken to my family clergy many times privately, to help me deal with my feelings of guilt, anger, and depression. This is what recklessness does to people's lives.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story and for listening to what I had to say.

Sincerely Sheila Lupton

THE JACOB JUAN MARTINEZ TRIBUTE

December 8, 2002- September 3, 2022



Jacob was known for his big heart, respectful manner, and contagious smile. Jacob's family was a priority for him. If he wasn't working towards his goal as an electrician, you'd see him with family. He was known as a hard worker. His schoolmates described Jacob as kind and helpful. He was a brother to Jose Jr. and Sienna Martinez, loving son, dedicated uncle, cousin, and friend to all. He had a promising future as he was placing as a union electrician

and his immediate future goals was working for an electric company.

Jacob was a passenger in a vehicle whose driver was intoxicated and crashed the vehicle, resulting in Jacob being ejected from it. Jacob died upon impact. We are left to pick up the pieces where Jacob left off and to continue his legacy.

His one-year memorial was celebrated by close loved ones on September 3, 2023. He was a caring person and loving son who will be missed but never forgotten. May we all remember Jacob Juan Martinez today and every day.

Written by Jacob's Mother

Maria Glover

I Went to a Party Mom

I went to a party,
and remembered what you said.
You told me not to drink, Mom
so I had a sprite instead.

I felt proud of myself,
the way you said I would,
that I didn't drink and drive,
though some friends said I should.

I made a healthy choice,
and your advice to me was right
as the party finally ended,
and the kids drove out of sight.

I got into my car,
sure to get home in one piece,
I never knew what was coming, Mom
something I expected least.

Now I'm lying on the pavement,
And I hear the policeman say,
"The kid that caused this wreck was
drunk,"
Mom, His voice seems far away.

My own blood's all around me,
as I try hard not to cry.
I can hear the paramedic say,
"This girl is going to die."

I'm sure the guy had no idea,
while he was flying high,
because he chose to drink and drive,
now I would have to die.

So why do people do it, Mom
Knowing that it ruins lives?
And now the pain is cutting me,
like a hundred stabbing knives.

Tell sister not to be afraid, Mom
tell daddy to be brave,
and when I go to heaven,
put "Daddy's Girl" on my grave.

Someone should have taught him,
that its wrong to drink and drive.
Maybe if his parents had,
I'd still be alive.

My breath is getting shorter, Mom
I'm getting really scared.
These are my final moments,
and I'm so unprepared.

I wish that you could hold me Mom,
as I lie here and die.
I wish that I could say I love you,
Mom
So I love you and good-bye.

Author Unknown

THE TANYA McDONOUGH TRIBUTE

June 26, 1983 – June 26, 2016



June 26, 1983 was an amazing day in my life. My sister gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. I was only seven years old at the time. This precious child was named Tanya. We would grow up together, talk about boys, do each other's hair and makeup, share clothes, and eventually babysit each other's children. Tanya became my best friend. The one I could tell anything and everything to. She wasn't only my niece, she was like a sister, like my own child and half of my heart and soul. Life was amazing because she was in it.

June 26, 2016, will always be one of the worst days of my life. On this day I learned someone's selfish choice to drink, and drive stole Tanya's life. Tanya had been home celebrating her birthday with friends and family and decided to go for a walk.

Tanya never drove, as it scared her beyond words. She would have never willingly gotten into a vehicle with an intoxicated driver. A very intoxicated person that she knew went to look for her and put her in their vehicle. The driver proceeded to drive at a high rate of speed and flew up an embankment into a tree, causing Tanya to be ejected from the vehicle. The driver on the other hand wasn't ejected from the vehicle and lived. His selfish choice caused Tanya to lose her life; it wasn't his to take. His choice has left me in a million pieces, which can never be put back together.

His choice took a mother away from her then 6-year-old child. This choice had left a little girl without a mommy. No mommy to tuck her in at night, no kisses, hugs, or teaching her how to bake. No mommy to take her shopping for her first dance, graduations, first boyfriend, or for her wedding day.

THE TANYA McDONOUGH TRIBUTE

Every morning I look into Ila's eyes and I see Tanya in them. I hear Tanya in her daughter's voice and see her in everything she does. Tanya was proudest of being a mother and she was an amazing one. She loved Ila so much. Her daughter is so strong it amazes me. She has decided that we should celebrate her mommy's birthday and not mourn the loss of her because that's how her mommy would want it. Now every day I feel my heart break because she's no longer here to fulfill her dreams of watching her daughter grow.

It's been seven years since my niece was ripped away from this world. Seven very long, heartbreaking, and sad years. Every month there was a court date; every month I faced the person who caused this tragedy. This person hurt my family and took away a mother, daughter, niece, sister, and best friend. Seven years of watching a precious child grow up without her mommy. Seven years of seeing Tanya in her daughter's eyes.

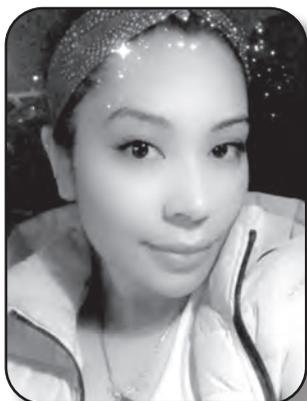
I honestly hoped that after the trial we could get peace. The defendant received six years. We relive Tanya's death over and over again; the day he made a choice that took Tanya's life. This case is back in court, apparently due to the trial court judge violating the defendant's rights. The judge didn't allow him to change his lawyer of four years to a different lawyer for sentencing. Due to this violation of his rights, we have to go through the sentencing process again....what a joke.

There hasn't been a day that goes by that my heart hasn't hurt. I still fall apart completely all the time; I still pick up my phone to call her. I'll never be complete without her. I'll never heal or have a day that I don't love and miss Tanya.

I'll forever be grateful for AAIM and Kelly because God knows what I would've done without her.

**Written by her loving aunt
Kristi Kunish**

THE IDANIS NAVAS STORY



On April 6, 2022, my life completely changed. I am a survivor of a rollover vehicle crash. The last thing I can remember is my car swerving off the expressway. Everything goes black after that. Later that day, I miraculously awoke, in the ER with a neck brace on. I could barely talk or move. I was told some details of the crash at the hospital, and how the EMTs at the scene weren't anticipating anyone in the vehicle to be alive due to how bad the crash was. This was very scary to hear, since I didn't know what happened, or if the driver of the vehicle I was in was alive or not.

I was in the ICU because I sustained many life-threatening injuries: a neck fracture, two lumbar spine fractures, shattered right arm, broken left collar bone, broken ribs, heart and lung contusions, and lacerations to five of my organs. Due to complications from my injuries, I developed a blood clot which then traveled to my lung. I now must take blood thinners daily. I had surgery on my right arm the next day and unfortunately, I still have issues with my arm. I don't have the strength or endurance in my arm that I'm used to. I'm also still going to physical therapy. I have multiple permanent scars. I was left unable to work, and drive for months. I lost my independence for what felt like forever.

The aftermath of what transpired the night of the crash has been the hardest chapter of my life so far, and I am only 28 years old. The emotional aspect of it all is still a work in progress. Some days I feel like I can keep pushing forward, and other days I feel like I want to give up. Having to watch everyone around me move on with their lives, while I was stuck at home by myself because I physically couldn't do anything, was devastating to me. In the blink of an eye, everything was taken away from me. At the same time, I realize how blessed I am to have a second chance at life. I realize how blessed I am to be able to walk and move around now. It really is a miracle. God has been good.

I couldn't have asked for a better support system from my family, friends, doctors, physical therapist Caroline, all the wonderful staff at Lutheran General Hospital. None of this would be possible without each one of them, and I will forever be grateful. I also want to thank AAIM, and my wonderful Victim Advocate, Kathleen. I connected with her instantly, and she regularly checks on me.

What AAIM does for people is really such a blessing.

I fully support AAIM and what they stand for

Idanis Navas

THE NANCY NOZICKA TRIBUTE February 1, 1958 – July 10, 2022

My mother, Nancy Nozicka, was killed by a negligent driver on July 10, 2022. It was a sunny summer day, and she was riding her bike to meet up with my children, my husband and me at a local street festival in downtown Libertyville. The road conditions, the weather, her favorite local celebration- it was the perfect day- until it wasn't. Now, in the aftermath of her senseless death, my father, my brothers, my sister, my uncle, aunt, 90-year-old grandmother, and the countless people that my mom touched throughout her life are struggling to tell her story.



February 1, 2023 was supposed to be a big day for Mom - her 65th birthday and her last day of work before retirement at Lake Forest Hospital, her professional home for nearly 40 years. We should have been eating cake (and ice cream, of course) and listening to her colleagues tell stories of her time with them. Instead, we are trying to condense a rich, loving life full of wonder into a few short anecdotes in order to humanize this tragedy. Mom loved stories and often pondered who would tell her story once she was gone, however her tale was cut short by a careless driver.

We could start with the story of my mom as a nurse, as this should be her first week of retirement. Mom truly touched so many during her 38 years at Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital. She started her career at Lake Forest in the Emergency Department as bedside and charge nurse and then was the ED educator. She achieved her master's degree and became the Clinical Nurse Specialist in the ED for several years, impacting the lives of patients and staff. After her father suffered and recovered from a heart attack, her passion for heart failure ignited and she became the first Heart Failure Coordinator for Lake Forest. According to a tribute in memoriam by her colleagues, Mom expanded this role to include an accredited chest pain program through the Joint Commission. She had incredible successes with implementing several performance improvement projects which heightened the high-quality care offered to patients. As a colleague and friend to many, Mom's warm personality, inspiring leadership, and collaboration are severely missed. Her colleagues say that NLFH was truly a better place because of her.

THE NANCY NOZICKA TRIBUTE

We could tell the story of my mom as a daughter and sister: born in Cicero, Illinois. A little girl who loved to roller skate and play cards with her parents who then grew up to be a pillar of her family. To her brother, sister, and mother, Mom was a rock. She was the one who nudged you into a difficult workout in the basement workout center with the dreamy instructor on video, or who chatted late into the night across a four-hour time difference just to “talk story”. Mom and her sister Amy ordered the biggest cake they could find for their mother’s 90th birthday last March and laughed until they cried at the cake to people ratio. More than that, for her family, my mom was the person you called. Aging relatives need to put their estate in order? Call Nancy. Need a ride home from the airport? Call Nancy. Want to go for a walk on a gorgeous day? Nancy is already lacing up her shoes. Mom was a person who showed up for others in every sense of the word: to host a party, to listen to a story, to rub your head and tell you everything was going to be okay. Her mom, brother and sister will never have that again.

We could also tell the story of my mom as a wife. Mom and Dad were married forty years, they met at Loyola University of Chicago. Dad says he remembers seeing her the day she moved on to campus, and they reconnected a few years into their studies. Their song was “You Make Loving Fun,” Mom and Dad embodied that together. Whether they were discussing their shared passion for the medical world, road tripping down to Florida each winter, or just quietly taking their ritual after dinner walk around the neighborhood- Mom and Dad were a team- often calling each other their “pals.” Their example of love, loyalty and commitment was a powerful constant for my siblings and I.

The part of Mom’s story that has shaped my life most directly is that of her as a mother. My mom had four kids within just under seven years. During my childhood, Mom continued to work at Lake Forest Hospital, serve as a part time school nurse at our grade school, and manage a household of four often lively and opinionated kids with grace and patience. Mom always urged us kids to “take pride in our work”- meaning to do something well and to the best of our abilities: never was that more evident than in how she mothered us. My mom always had enough food for any extra guest that came her way: she attended to details both of big holiday dinners and the bestowing of the great day plate on a family member at a weekday dinner with equal aplomb. As we got older, Mom often looked around at all of us together and noted that all she needed was us in the same room to be happy. She viewed works of art by her grandchildren with reverence, and was constantly inventing games and rituals with them. She was a mom to far more than her four kids- it wasn’t uncommon to come home and find my friends sitting at our kitchen table, deep in conversation without me.

THE NANCY NOZICKA TRIBUTE

More than her roles in relation to others, Mom was very deeply her own person. My mom was endless love and the ability to make anything better. She was sharp advice and a soft lap. She was accordion playing in the driveway in her scrubs, or the initiator of a completely competitive challenge using everyday objects. Mom was a compass when you lost your way, and a safe harbor when you needed a place to rest. It was impossible to meet my mom and not to love her. She had the uncanny ability to make you feel like she was waiting all day just to see you—whether you were the grade school custodian, the patient in the heart center, or one of “her people.” She was the grandmother who walked in to greet her three (now four!) grandchildren with her arms wide open and a joyous call of “my pals are here!” She was two handed hugs and hushed silence for sunsets. She was a joyous observer and celebrator of the day to day. The void we are left with in her absence is immeasurable. She was love.

My mother was killed by a careless driver while riding her bike on a route she has ridden hundreds of times in her 32 years living in the area. The man who took her life walked away from the scene of the accident with a verbal promise to return to the sheriff’s station the next day for road testing. After a lengthy investigation, my mother’s killer was issued a traffic ticket for “failure to yield”— a common traffic misdemeanor. To my knowledge, he retains the privilege of driving today. To my knowledge, no improvements in safety or increased enforcement of the speed limit on this road heavily populated with bikers has occurred. We are not aware of any plans for a dedicated bike lane.

My mother was an amazing woman. To try to capture in words the hole she has left in our hearts, the granddaughter she never got to meet, the retirement she never got to have, or the joy she never got to spread is a heavy, heavy task. Thank you for reading her story; the life lost, the memories lost and the stories Mom never got to write.

Written by Nicole Nozicka Gas

THE ERIN ELIZABETH OLMSTED TRIBUTE

August 6, 1979 – March 2, 1997



The day was August 6, 1997. A bouquet of flowers had been delivered to the maternity ward at Palos Hospital. Each new mom, on that day, was to receive a flower with the “remembrance card” I had made and carefully attached with a purple ribbon to the stems...my gift to Erin. I headed to the cemetery where I replaced the flowers in the vases on her headstone, trimmed the grass and straightened up, as I did this the tears fell, with all the memories of the days and years we had together.

That day would have been Erin’s 18th birthday. Most people acknowledge their children’s “special day” with a card or gift...a phone call...dinner or maybe even a party. That is what we SHOULD have been doing. Instead, I think about the life we SHOULD be having... what we SHOULD be doing today. We should be celebrating with dinner or a party...with her boyfriend or maybe even a husband. Children? Most of Erin’s friends are married and have children. My heart breaks each time I think of the children that will never be born. Our oldest daughter, over the past 26 years, became our youngest child.

I can still see as clearly as if it were yesterday, the look on Erin’s face the evening we celebrated her 17th birthday. We were in Arizona on a family vacation. At dinner, we toasted her and sang the traditional Happy Birthday Song. She had a huge smile on her face and said “NEXT year, I’ll be 18!” Little did any of us know that we would never celebrate another birthday with Erin. Erin died 5 months short of the birthday, she thought would mark the beginning of her journey into adulthood. On March 2, 1997, not only was Erin’s life cut short

THE ERIN ELIZABETH OLMSTED TRIBUTE

and that journey never taken, but I feel that we began a journey of our own -- serving a life sentence for something we had no control over...all because someone ELSE chose to drive drunk.

Life goes on. We've all heard it and we all know it to be true, but unless you've "been there, " you couldn't possibly EVER imagine just how difficult it is for...just that...life to go on. The challenges that each day brings, the milestone events in our family, everything has a level of sadness that prevents us from being totally happy. There is a hole in our hearts that will never be filled, an emptiness in our lives that can never be restored.

As I left the cemetery, I kissed Erin's picture, told her I loved her and miss her...and, as the tears fell, silently whispered...Happy Birthday, Honey.

That birthday was 26 years ago. I no longer send flowers to the hospital where Erin was born, but I still think of that day we celebrated her 17th birthday in Arizona. The look on her face. Such anticipation for the future. She couldn't wait to graduate and begin her new life as a college student, getting ready for the life she envisioned.....
.....a job she loved and a family she loved even more. I think back on the dreams we talked about during our Mom/Daughter chats. I watch the sister and brother she loved so much living their adult lives and think, Erin should be part of all this. She should be part of all the joy and love they are experiencing and sharing in their lives. It's heartbreaking that she is not.

So on this day, August 6, 2023, all I can say is HAPPY 44th BIRTHDAY, ERIN! Your family misses you more than you could ever have imagined.

Written by Sandy, Erin's loving Mom

THE MICHELLE DENISE PARKER TRIBUTE

January 6, 1959 – August 22, 2013



Rebuilding Our Family

It was 10 years ago on August 22, 2013, that we lost my beloved younger sister Michelle Parker in a dreadful drunk driving tragedy that devastated and changed the life of every member of our family.

As I reflect over our lives the past 10 years, it has been painful. It has been the most painful during the holidays, her birthday, or those special times when she was part of family celebrations, time spent on summer vacations, or simple

telephone conversations. There are several songs that I sometimes hear on the radio, particularly songs from the 70's and 80's that remind me of her life, joy, peace, and relationship with God. Her son Marko, now 27 resembles his mother when he smiles. It brings back to my memory how much she adored and loved him. Rebuilding our family has become a primary concern for all of us.

As we continue to rebuild our family, many of our family members have gone into therapy, bereavement counseling and support groups. This has assisted us as we continue to move towards healing, traveling aimlessly upon this journey known as life.

Rebuilding our family has immersed many of us in diverse healing sessions. Healing through prayer, our affiliations with church, neighborhood support groups, counseling or sometimes just speaking with a friend or family member who has prayed with and for us. This

THE MICHELLE PARKER TRIBUTE

has given us an opportunity to express our emotions and release us from some of the pain.

Rebuilding has been especially strong in Michelle's son Marko's life. He blessed our family with the good news this year of finishing high school by obtaining his GED. It was a goal that he set many years ago with his mom, but was too broken from his mother's death to even think about completing his GED until recently. It has always been difficult for Marko to go to his mother's gravesite with the family on August 22nd. This year, he was able to go to share the good news with her at her gravesite that he had finished his goal and now is employed with the Salvation Army. Michelle was probably singing and shouting in heaven as he shared this good news, with his mother about completing high school; a dream they both shared together.

Rebuilding is hard work and it's not easy. Sometimes the process of rebuilding will seem obvious, but other times it won't seem so obvious. Why? Because we're still wearing "the mask". Behind those masks are dark days, tears of pain, sorrow, and grief.

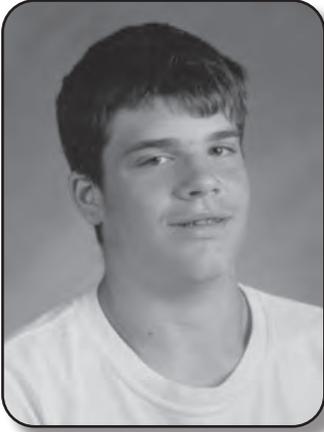
Our family has taken great steps of faith through this journey of rebuilding and realize that we've made some good progress in the past 10 years since our loss. For some of us, we have slowly drifted away from God; and for others, we have developed a stronger and faithful relationship with God.

Regardless of all we have been through, we have seen God's amazing love, grace, compassion, and tender mercies each day. As we'll continue to praise God for all that he's done for each of us in helping to rebuild our family, may we continue to cast our burdens upon the Lord. He shall sustain us. May we continue to make peace with our past and seek God to help us walk in love and peace. This is what Michelle would have wanted for each of us. To walk in love, forgiveness and peace!

Authored by April L. Holland & Parker Family

THE JONATHAN PETIT TRIBUTE

September 2, 1998 – June 17, 2005



My son, Jonathan, was blessed with a wonderful sense of humor. He loved to make people laugh and smile. Jonathan enjoyed playing Texas Hold 'Em with all of his buddies. It wasn't uncommon for a dozen or so of his friends to get together for a few hands. The card games were perfect settings for Jonathan to give and take with his friends and crack jokes.

On a hot summer night, in June, my beautiful son left our house with his friends with the understanding that he was to return home by 11:00 pm. Jonathan's mom, Yvonne, called him at 11:15 pm because he was late for his curfew. He was a teenager pushing the envelope of parental authority. He told Yvonne he was coming straight home. She made a second call about 30 minutes later. The phone rang once and was shut off. Jonathan never made it home.

The Carol Stream Police Department called to ask me if I was prepared for some tough news. He told me Jonathan had been seen at a party extremely intoxicated. He'd been abused by some of the people at the party and then tossed out of the party because he was trying to wrestle and was knocking things around. At this moment I got scared. I knew Jonathan wouldn't put up with hazing of any sort unless he had no control of the situation. The madness was now front and center and I could do nothing to stop it. My son was out there somewhere and I was helpless to do anything about it.

The decision by a parent to provide alcohol to a minor is a terrible and illegal decision. This parent chose to cover up her duplicity by tossing my son out of her house and next to a large body of water. She washed her hands of the problem once he was ejected from the party she held in her home. The police had been called to the home that night because of a noise complaint. She denied them access. She tried to cover her tracks.

THE JONATHAN PETIT TRIBUTE

My son died alone; most likely confused, disoriented, nauseous, and afraid. His final moments were not pleasant. Jonathan was our first-born child. He was 16 years old.

Doug Petit

I could not complete my comments without mentioning Jonathan's Garden. It started out as my dedication to our son. One day sitting next to the garden it came to me there are so many of us who have lost a child. I began growing the garden. I began adding perennials into the garden to honor young folks I likely never met. I have met parents through AAIM, through podcast interviews, and through my life who have suffered this horrible loss. I thought the rebirth of the perennials each year would be a fitting reminder that they are never really gone; and certainly not forgotten. It just seemed like the right thing for this dad to do.



THE DANIEL “DANNY” RAUNER TRIBUTE October 6, 1980 - January 21, 2019



Today as I sit and write the memories I have of our beloved son, Daniel “Danny” John Rauner, I see them so clearly. However, they do come to my mind with unbearable sadness knowing the way his life was taken from us.

I'd like to take a moment to say thank you to AAIM. This organization was founded in 1982 and is made up of many people – Board of Directors, Executive Director, Court Monitors, Victim Advocates, office staff and volunteers, that have brought hope on the horizon to many people like our family. The hope of love, justice, support, strength, courage, and survival while walking through a very lengthy process in court. Walking with us through an emotional journey that just seems to engulf you. You think that maybe this time it's coming to an end, only to find out it isn't.

A year after our son was tragically taken by one man's selfish choice, my husband, my beloved soulmate of 45 years, died tragically from COVID. All the numbness of the tragic death of Daniel came raging back. Not finished battling in courts with Danny's horrific death, I found my life spinning out of control. Talk about not being able to function once again... I couldn't work and AAIM stepped in and helped me financially so that I was able to try and find some solid ground. Thank you AAIM for everything!! Thank you, Kelly Krenzer, my victim advocate for always being there and walking alongside us.

Daniel was born on October 6, 1980. He was born with the gift of love and his purpose in life was to spread that love to bring people in any circumstances a feeling of self-worth. He was a very caring young man who loved life and people. He had a charismatic charm about him, he could sell an ice cube to an Eskimo! He adored and loved his wife Anna, Dad, Mom, and his brother Jeremiah and family. Daniel, like many young men, wasn't perfect. He made mistakes, but for the most part, he had a huge heart and would do anything for anyone, from a king on his throne to a bum on the street. I painfully miss Daniel's funniest little laugh and grin. He'll never call me on the phone or come to our home and say, “Hey Momma”. Daniel loved life, no matter what was thrown his way. He was always able to withstand the test of time, no matter what the obstacles in life

THE DANIEL “DANNY” RAUNER TRIBUTE

were. He'd always rise to the occasion and make it work. If it was a bridge, he'd cross it, he'd always find a way to get to the other side. If it was a mountaintop, he'd somehow find a way to the top of the mountain.

January 21, 2019, changed our lives forever because the drunk driver was selfish and made a horrific choice to drink and drive. We received a phone call from Anna, Danny's wife, that Danny had been killed in a car crash due to a drunk driver. That was the beginning of a series of events that play over and over in my head. Until the day we went to the coroner's office I kept telling myself that someone was just playing a horrible trick. There are no words that describe the emotions of seeing your child's lifeless bloody body his head wrapped in towels. It's something a parent should never have to witness. Danny suffered a broken leg, arm, pelvis, ribs, blunt force trauma to the head, and other injuries due to the crash. How do you move forward with a heart that has just been annihilated? Grief is an explosion in your head and floods your heart and soul. It's the horrific disturbing mess your life becomes after losing a child, that was taken from you due to a selfish and irresponsible choice. The loss of your child doesn't just change who you are, it demolishes you! How do you go through life because your life now is lived on another level. No matter how hard you try the pain from this tragic loss floods over you again and again. There's a heavy numb feeling in your chest when you feel no desire to speak or even move. All you want to do is close your eyes and go to sleep. The process of being so broken is excruciatingly exhausting. The horror of our son's death and the fact that the defendant was so selfish in his choice, really is too much for one person to bear.

Please share with people that lives are precious, and we all have a choice to save lives! Our lives are changed forever, and we'll forever grieve and miss him. We hope that when people read our story, Danny's memory will live on in them, as it does in us, until the day we meet him again. As we ask the Lord to continue helping us to continue our lives on earth, we hope and pray that you will remember that there is "hope on the horizon" "hope for a new tomorrow" and that the awareness of NOT drinking and driving or driving impaired, will become a reality.

Love you, Doolittle,
Love, Mom, and Beloved Dad

THE PAYTON RICHMOND STORY

Injured January 12, 2018



On January 12, 2018, I was involved in a serious crash that left my world torn apart. My family's lives were changed and turned upside down that night by a very selfish impaired driver.

The memories of that night still haunt me. At the crash scene I remember very vividly, the impaired driver hovering over my face yelling. She claimed she wasn't under the influence. I remember being placed on the cold gravel road, waiting for a paramedic to find out where my pain was coming from. I was trying to catch

my breath to tell someone I could not feel my legs but couldn't breathe. I was rushed to Mercy Hospital where the doctors in the trauma center said I was pale and cold to the touch.

I had a breathing tube and catheter inserted. My older sister was the first person at the hospital. I remember her wiping blood off my face; it was very scary. The doctors told me I had an injured kidney and spleen, shattered pelvis and collapsed lungs. That night my family didn't know if I would ever be able to walk again or even worse if I would die.

I remember asking my family "What happened?" I was told a drunk driver was driving on the wrong side of the road and crashed into the driver's door. I thought - not me. How? I've never even broken a bone before.

During the two weeks I spent in the hospital I had surgery, countless drugs pumped into my system, shots in my stomach and physical therapy to regain my strength. I have scars all over my body from my injuries from the crash.

I missed my little sister, my family, my puppy, and my life. I finally made it home where my mom and family took care of me 24/7. It's been a long, painful road to get to where I am now. I graduated from a wheelchair, to walker, and then cane. I still have ongoing medical issues.

THE PAYTON RICHMOND STORY

Injured January 12, 2018

My advocate Kelly Krenzer has helped my family and me through this trauma. I'm grateful for AAIM and my family who've been by my side through this tough time. I want to tell people that getting behind the wheel impaired by alcohol and/or drugs that it has dire consequences that reach far beyond themselves; it affects many, many other people.

The woman who hit me got two years in prison and one-year supervision. Her family tried to bully me in the court room, as if the crash was my fault. I'm the victim here. I'll most likely be in pain and have a slight limp for the rest of my life due to the crash.

I'm no longer able to do the work I love. I don't want to think about the crash every day, but I am because of the physical pain I am in.

Sadly, I have been hit again by a careless driver distracted driver who ran a red light, all she got was a ticket. She told police she was distracted. I am so traumatized, I was injured again with a sprained ankle, had to go to physical therapy again, could not work for a while, again. Out a car, again. My body hurts so bad from the first crash and now from another.

I am lucky to be alive. Life should never be taken for granted. I thank God every day that I got a second chance at life.

I am lucky to be alive. Life should never be taken for granted. I thank God every day that I got a second chance at life.

Written By: Payton Richmond

THE VERONICA ROJAS TRIBUTE
June 27, 1992 – June 28, 2010



On June 27, 2023, my daughter Veronica would have turned 31 years old; it's her angel anniversary passing date. Veronica's life was taken by an intoxicated driver 13 years ago, one day after she turned 18 years old. Veronica's family, mother, son, four sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins and the rest of her family are still in great pain. The sadness we know that is the pain in our hearts will never go away; we'll have this pain until our dying day.

Veronica is in our thoughts daily. Emmanuel, Veronica's 15 years old son is a freshman in high school now and Veronica's youngest sister Jasmine will also graduate next year. Her niece Jaylean, who is Alicia's daughter, Jennifer, and entire family are still in pain. Veronica's sister Marisol and her children always think of her and look at pictures of their aunt. Marisol's youngest daughter Ava dreams of her aunt and wakes up crying about her missing. She loves to sing happy birthday to her aunt; she also likes to make videos and sing to her Aunt Veronica.



As for myself, I cry daily. Veronica is always on my mind. My wonderful friend always makes me amazing graphics of my angel. I still cry every time we sing happy birthday to her and on the holidays because she is always missed.

Love Mom, Emmanuel, her sisters and family

THE HEIDI ROSEEN TRIBUTE

September 16, 1960 – July 8, 2012

This story has two parts – life with Heidi and life without her.

This year should have been our 40th wedding anniversary. My wife Heidi was a registered nurse at Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn. She was the mother of our three children. She was a faithful member of the Ashburn Baptist Church and loved helping with the Awanas Club at church. Heidi loved boating and most of all water skiing. She always wanted to participate in the Tommy Bartlett Water Ski Show in Wisconsin; she was an excellent skier.



It's been 11 years since Heidi's life was taken from us. Not a day goes by that we don't think of her.

On July 8, 2012 while on her way to work at 6:30 am she was killed by a driver who was drunk and high on drugs. As she entered the intersection at LaGrange Road and 95th Street she was struck by an impaired driver at a high rate of speed. This selfish and spoiled young man had a history of trouble with the law. The parents of this senseless person spoiled him his entire life by bailing him out each time he was in trouble. It's no surprise that they hired two lawyers to defend his careless acts once again, when they should have let him pay for his own foolish choices. I assume after his release that he went back to his childish and foolish ways. You know what they say, spare the rod and spoil the child; and look what it gets you, a useless fool.

She was taken without warning and that's no way to say goodbye. The family and I are doing our best to patch our broken dreams.

Rest In Peace Heidi,

Written By Your Loving Husband.

THE RICHARD SEYLLER TRIBUTE

March 1, 1945 – October 25, 2005



October 25, 2023, will be 18 years since Dick Seyller, husband, and father, was killed by a drunk driver. He has missed so many family holidays, birthdays, graduations, weddings, grandchildren's births, and just everyday life. We miss him dearly and tears still come when we talk about Dick and the wonderful memories, we have of him. Below is our story...

October 25, 2005 was a beautiful fall day, sunny and warm. I was at work and my husband, Richard "Dick" Seyller was planning his day. He was a realtor with Coldwell Banker-Primus in Elgin. At 11:12 a.m. our lives were torn apart and will never, be the same. Dick was on his way to Marengo at the time and was hit head-on by a drunk driver. The crash occurred on Route 20 in McHenry County. Dick was killed instantly. There is a blue Illinois Roadside Memorial Marker at the crash site in memory of him.

The woman that hit Dick was 49 years old, had three prior DUI convictions, lost her license for almost 14 years, and had gotten her license back in 1999. Two hours after the crash, her Blood Alcohol Level (BAC) was more than three times the legal limit.

Dick and I had been married for 31 years. We have three children, Andrew, Laura, and David and two daughter-in-laws, Lauren, and Casey. Our family was the most important thing in Dick's life.

Our family has been devastated by the crash. The drunk driver ripped Dick from our lives and we continue to struggle to find a "new normal". Dick has missed many important milestones in our children's lives. Andy, Lauren, Laura, and David all graduated from Western Illinois University and have jobs in their chosen professions. Their Dad is never far from their thoughts each day. Our sons have married and we have six grandchildren. It hurts so much to know that these grandchildren won't know their grandpa. They are old enough to start asking "Where is Grandpa Seyller?" Dick would be so proud of his children and grandchildren.

————— *Resilience* —————
THE RICHARD SEYLLER TRIBUTE

In July of 2023, our daughter, Laura, got engaged and will be marrying Steve in July of 2024. She has always worried about her Dad not being there to walk her down the aisle and that worry has continued. She has asked her brother, Andrew, to escort her. Once again, 18 years later, the drunk driver is still causing us pain and sorrow because of her actions!

The emotional and mental toll the crash and Dick's death have caused our family is indescribable. We hope the woman that killed Dick wakes up each day and thinks of him and the pain and suffering she has caused our family.

We would like to thank AAIM for all their continuing care and support.

We know we have to keep moving forward but, it's still difficult almost 18 years later. We miss you, Dick, each day and every day.

*Debbie, Andrew, Lauren, Laura,
Steve, David, Casey, Ryan,
Charlotte, Joseph, Finley,
Poppy, and Olive*

THE CARLOS SERRATOS TRIBUTE

April 8, 1973 – June 22, 2022



Seventeen years ago, a 20-year-old drunk driver changed our lives forever. Carlos and I had a newspaper route and on weekends when I worked my regular job, he worked the route with his dad or my brother. The morning of the crash, our car stalled about a block from our apartment. Carlos went to get our van and tried to jump-start the car. Suddenly, he heard squealing tires and saw a car coming around the corner at him. Carlos pushed his dad out of the way of the car and Carlos tried jumping out the way. It was too late. The driver pinned his leg between the bumpers of both cars.

The year following the crash, Carlos was in and out of the hospital five times. Since the crash, he hasn't been able to work. Our daughter was nine-years-old and our son was two-years-old at the time of the crash. Our daughter never got to attend daddy-daughter dances. Our son only knows his dad going in and coming out of the hospital. Carlos was never able to teach our son how to ride a bike or how to play soccer. They were robbed of doing all the things a dad can do with his children.

After the crash, Carlos had many medical issues arise stemming from depression that causes a lack of interest in daily living. It was if his will to live was taken from him after the crash. He always suffered from depression. Who wouldn't? He felt he wasn't a good husband, father, or even a man because he couldn't work. Definitely not true!

Seventeen years after being hit and going through countless surgeries, my kids lost their dad. We miss him everyday.

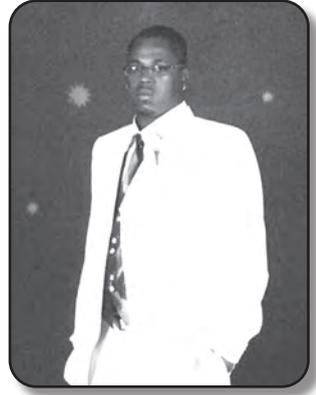
In loving memory

The Serratos Family

THE PIERRE L. SHELTON TRIBUTE

December 31, 1988 – March 17, 2019

Pierre was a tough little boy as he was growing up. When he was eight years old, he would continuously get in trouble at school and, as a punishment, he would have to go to church with his older cousin every Sunday. The first couple of months were rough, but because of who Pierre was, he eventually started participating in the programs and services. Pierre joined the Metropolitan Drill Team, where he had to stay out of trouble and keep his grades up. Joining the drill team helped guide Pierre to be not just a better person, but a better leader.



After graduating from grammar school, Pierre went on to high school and still participated in church and as a leader on the drill team. He joined Metropolitan's Young People Auxiliary and started traveling more, performing with the drill team, and doing various activities with the YPA. After graduating from high school, he worked many jobs in order to get by and help take care of his family. In 2011, Pierre had his first-born child, LaKenya, and in 2014, he had his little boy, LaMarion. He loved his children very much. He enjoyed watching them grow and being a part of their lives. He was so happy when his daughter joined the same church that he did as a kid. Pierre had a suitable job and a very special friend, who he adored so much. Life started out rough for Pierre, but he overcame whatever he could and became better. A better father, son, brother, uncle, friend, and leader.

On Saturday, March 9, 2019, Pierre and his girlfriend, Joy, were involved in a fatal car crash. This crash left both families devastated. Pierre was placed in the ICU until Sunday, March 17th. On this day, Pierre departed this life due to intensive injuries from the crash. This careless act claimed Pierre's life at the early age of 30. Pierre leaves behind many unbreakable bonds and an honorable legacy.

Loving Mother,

Deborah

THE SHAVON SMITH TRIBUTE

September 14, 1985 – April 17, 2016



This time of year is very hard for me; Shavon's birthday was in September. We would like you to know about the beautiful soul that was taken from us and about the life of a grieving family. Shavon was the oldest of five children, and although the smallest, she had the biggest, bravest heart. Her smile always made her stand out. She was always the life of the party and a hard-working lady. Shavon always made sure family was her priority. We spent every single holiday, weekend, and birthday together, and, sadly, those special days were taken away all too soon from us. Now we live with the uncertainty of not knowing what happened to our loved one. So many unanswered questions about that day that our family will never have answers to. How did the crash happen? What were we doing at the time she was taken from us? Did she suffer? What was going through her head when this was happening?

From a mom's perspective, I would like people to know how it feels to be woken up by two police officers at 6:30 in the morning and being told your daughter was in a crash and that she didn't make it. Then going to the coroner's office and my other children asking if they could see their sisters' finger or toe to have some sort of closure. Having to go to the crash site where my child suffered after being struck and then being burned and partially cremated in the vehicle is something that is excruciatingly painful- it's indescribable. My heart ached to go to her house and clean it out after her death. The offender took my daughter's life away as he was distracted by his phone while behind the wheel of a semi-truck. I had to bury her not knowing if it was her in the casket. Life will always go on no matter what happens but the life I live, involves me crying in my car. My daughter was supposed to bury me not the other way around.

Shavon's daughter doesn't have her mom anymore to go to parent-teacher conferences, take her to her favorite restaurants or do simple things like making frequent trips to the mall with her. She will never see her go to dances at school. We sadly hid our grief from Shavonna when she was a child as much as we could.

THE SHAVON SMITH TRIBUTE

It's so hard to know we will never fill the emptiness of Shavonna's heart. The emptiness caused when her mother was killed and taken away from her. Our hearts ache because of a selfish distracted drive. He never expressed remorse; this makes us very angry. We will always remember Shavon as our "SMILEY" daughter, mother, sister, and friend. This is one thing she always did, no matter what, even if she had a face full of tears!

Shavonna is grown up now, working, and going to school to become a nail technician. She has her own place. It's very hard when you lose a child, life will never be the same for me, her mother.

Love,

Sharon Smith – Mom

Shavonna Smith - Daughter,

Shaneil Starks, Kenneth Geiger, China Shaffer

and Katrina Smith – Sister and Brothers



THE MIKEY STEINES TRIBUTE

June 12, 1978 – August 29, 2012



It has been 11 long, painful years since Mikey was stolen from us. How could I possibly summarize his life? Mikey will forever be remembered as a kind, and gentle soul. He had a huge heart, and he was loved by everyone. He was a favorite uncle to his nieces and nephews. He was a great brother, friend, and most importantly, a dad.

For the past 11 years, I have written articles to share who my brother was. Although I tried to speak for everyone, it just wasn't the same. This year, I wanted to change the article and share the memories of a few of his loved ones. His presence is and will always be greatly missed.

Tressie

“I still get lots of hugs, but none of them are as warm as dad’s.”

Losing my dad in such a traumatic way, and in the formative years of my life has given me a twisted, not understood, lack of understanding of what I'm feeling. I've never been able to put that into words.

Susan Steines

One of my greatest memories of my Uncle Mikey was prom night. I was ditched and I had no way to get home. I called him late and without any questions, he showed up to get me. He bought me comfort food and drinks and then we went back to his place. We sat for hours just talking and listening to music. While we talked, his girlfriend Dani took out the million and one bobby pins from my hair. That was the first time I ever truly felt that I had someone in my corner. That was the moment that I knew he was not only my uncle, but he was my best friend. Our bond only solidified and grew. He always had my back.

I miss you, Uncle Mikey.

Until I can join you at the beer waterfall, Your “Punk Ass” niece,

Shirley Mahurin

What I remember most about my uncle Mikey is that he absolutely loved his kids. They were his world! He was such a free spirited, loving, understanding, friendly, funny, and hardworking man! I think about him all the time and wishing that my kids gotten the opportunity to meet such a great uncle!!!!

I miss you, Uncle Mikey,

April

THE MIKEY STEINES TRIBUTE

I met Mikey through my parents when I was a kid. I soon learned that behind that tough exterior was a soft and caring guy who would end up meaning so much more to me than I could have imagined.

He was always around to support and mentor me. Mikey took the time to explain things to me growing up. He was there to teach me about cars and to yell at me when I bought one without letting him look at it first. But that didn't stop him from coming to save me when it broke down at 2 a.m.

I became a mom at a young age, and I thought he would be upset with me. Instead, he was one of the first ones at the hospital when my daughter was born. He became like a father figure to me. He gave me a lifetime of memories that I will never forget.

After Mikey passed, I gave birth to a son. Ironically, my son was born on Mikey's birthday which was June 12th and I named him Michael. I couldn't have asked for a better gift! I only wish he was around to meet, mentor, and watch him (and his own children) grow up.

Mikey was loved by many people and unfortunately, he was stolen from us. It's devastating that there has not been justice for Mikey. I cherish every memory I have of him. I can never explain how much I miss him, and how blessed I feel to have known him. It's been 11 years now and still seems surreal. Every June 12th, both Mikeys are celebrated.

Forever missed and never forgotten.

Elizabeth

When Mikey was around four years old, I would go to visit, and his mother Sue would always make him sit at the table and eat all his veggies. So being a good aunt, I would eat them when she wasn't looking - lol.

One day he had beets on his plate, and he asked me to eat them. All I could remember was my mom trying to get us to eat them. I hate beets, so I had to tell him no. Sue made him sit there and eat them until I reminded her, "Remember when we were little, and Mom made us eat them? We didn't like them either." She let him leave the table without eating them. I may not have eaten the beets, but I did help him, so he didn't have to eat them either.

As we grow up and have families of our own, we don't always see our loved ones as much as we would like to. I cherish the memories I have of my nephew. Sometimes I walk by someone who reminds me of him, and realize it isn't him. I know he is with his mom and his brother, Jason. One day we will all be together again.

With love,

Aunt Tammy

This tribute is sponsored by Illinois State Representative Maurice West

THE THERESA “PEANUT” STANLEY TRIBUTE July 7, 1978 – March 3, 2001



It has been more than 20 years since our beloved daughter Theresa was killed by a drunk driver on March 3 of 2001—the worst day of my life. Theresa was a beautiful young woman. At 22 years-old she was just entering adulthood with her entire life before her. Theresa was the youngest of our seven children. She had many close friends and she was adored by her nieces and nephews. She was very athletic and played three sports in high school. Because she was always the shortest person on the team, she acquired the nickname “Peanut”. Theresa really enjoyed high school and participated in many other activities besides sports. Her varied interests carried over into college and she had difficulty deciding on a major. She changed majors several times and as a result was still in school when she was killed.

My wife Cathy and I were devastated by Theresa’s death. For several months we had trouble functioning. Within a year we both quit our jobs. I retired and Cathy began working with special needs children as a teaching assistant. We both began volunteering with AAIM in the hope that we could prevent other parents from experiencing the pain we had gone through.

Today I can’t honestly say that I think about Theresa every day, but most days something will trigger a memory of her and I continue to use some variation of her name, nickname or birthday in my rapidly multiplying computer passwords. For me, this is one way of keeping her memory alive. Our first great-granddaughter was born last January and our grandson and his wife gave her the name of Gloria Theresa. I can imagine Theresa beaming with pride.

We love and miss you,

Dad

THE ROBERT STROBL TRIBUTE

July 26, 1951 – August 1, 2021

Unlike sweet Alice in Wonderland who slipped down a rabbit hole and found magical adventures with a White Rabbit and the Queen of Hearts in a classic English children's book (and the classic Walt Disney movie), this tale is about a "Bad Alice." Bad Alice partied through the night, snorted cocaine, drank way more than a nightcap, got blazed on weed, and then made the very bad choice of hopping into her car to drive herself and a friend home around 6 a.m. on a Sunday morning. Not surprisingly, she drove wildly fast, then lost control and crossed the center line to crash into an oncoming car.

The other car was driven by my only sibling, my younger brother Robert, or Bobbie as we called him when he was a kid. He survived a few minutes to speak briefly with a policeman, but then succumbed to his extensive chest and limb injuries. Emergency responders pronounced him dead-on-arrival and took his body directly to the coroner's office. Robert's life ended tragically, and all his dreams for the future disappeared.

Bad Alice and her friend were taken to a hospital for confirmatory toxicology testing; both had only minor injuries. Alice was then jailed, and she remains jailed today. Two years have passed, and the legal case drags on without resolve. There have been dozens of continuances yet still no legal plea, no opportunity for the judge to give a sentence, and no plan for a jury trial. This time Bad Alice has not made bad choices; she has slowed the wheels of justice by making no choices.

I continue to struggle through sorrowful stages of adjustment—denial, anger, bargaining, and extreme sadness. All this suffering occurs because a careless Alice blundered into terrible choices, behaved badly, put herself and others in great danger, killed another human, and is now hiding from taking responsibility for her actions. Such behavior and bungling should never happen for anyone and should certainly never happen again for Alice. I don't feel vengeance, I just call for an end. I would like to hear her remorse, reckoning, and a refreshed moral compass with a shift from Bad to Good. I hope this happens, though it may not. But more than ever, I look for closure and peace. Enough is enough.

Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists (AAIM) has been a steady support system for me. I fully appreciate their help, especially the help from my special representative and counselor. AAIM works to prevent future tragedies from happening. AAIM is helping make my heart smile again.

Submitted by Cecilia Alice,

Big Sister to Robert

THE JESSE C. WALKER III TRIBUTE
December 20, 1961 - October 13, 2019



On September 3, 2010, we met and fell in love. On September 3, 2011 we married and shared a magical life together. On October 13, 2019, my heart was shattered into a million pieces when I answered the door to four state troopers. I knew you were gone... taken from me by a drunk driver... how irresponsible to drive while drunk and of course, she walked away without a scratch. If GOD granted me one wish, it would be for a stairwell that reaches up to Heaven so that I could bring you HOME!

Remembrance of our last anniversary on September 3, 2019:

For My Wife, My One and Only Love

“I love my wife and I know that she loves me. We’re best of friends. We’re just lucky to have found each other. It takes a lot of work but I just feel very blessed that I FINALLY found the right person. It’s a very fortunate situation and not everyone has it. Being married to you has been the finest thing that’s ever happened to me. You have been my partner, my lover, and my very best friend. Knowing I have your love lets me face life’s challenges, secure in the knowledge that there is a special person who thinks about me, supports me, and cares for me more deeply than anyone else. I’m thankful to be able to share my life with you.”

My Husband, My Everything

“I’ve always believed in love. I just felt that somehow, somewhere, I would find my soulmate. And when I did, it would be amazing and you know what I discovered? Amazing doesn’t even begin to describe what being in love with you is like. And it certainly doesn’t come close to describing you as a man, a father, or a husband how incredible you are, how generous and caring, how strong and loving. Everything in life means more to me because of you.”

I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER TO NEVER FORGET YOU!

Your loving wife... Gwen

THE DIMON WILLIAMS TRIBUTE
January 16, 2002 – August 26, 2020



My name is Arlecia Threbits and I'm the mother of Dimon Williams. August 26, 2022 will mark two years that I've been forced to live without my baby, my sunshine.

Dimon was a beautiful, intelligent, hardworking, and respectful young lady. Unfortunately, she was killed on her way home from work by a drunk driver.

The offender has the nerve to want to go to trial instead of taking the plea offer by the State. This tells me that he has no remorse for what he's done.

Not only did he kill my daughter, but the court has allowed him to take me through a long, devastating, exhausting, horrible two years of going to court with no progress.

My first year of going through this process, I had overwhelming anxiety, and literally would get sick.

The second year of going through this process, I'm angry! I want him, and his family to feel what I'm going through. If I have one wish, it would be that he never gets out of prison; so he could serve a life sentence like he gave me.

Just having to write this is overwhelming and devastating. My prayers are that we finally go to trial, so we can get justice for my baby girl, Dimon A. Williams.

Written by her loving Mother.

THE JORLYCE "JOY" WANGE TRIBUTE
February 10, 1948 – December 30, 2002



December 30, 2002..Twenty-one years ago, you, “Mamado,”my mother met up with the Lord. You left early on that day for work because you were anxious to hear everyone’s holiday stories, instead you were killed by a 17 year old boy that left you on the side of the road, two blocks from the house. I still am not comfortable driving through that intersection.

Everyday I think about you, I listen to music -Beaches, Armageddon - those soundtracks; and there are memories of ours in them. I miss having you as my biggest cheerleader, my fighter, always believing me - that I can make it in this crazy world.

Being the youngest daughter, I carry the qualities of my hard-working parents. Going to school with students of many different abilities; working at Target, and pet sitting to earn more money. I have a great guy, Jordan. I wish you could have met him, he makes me happy.

Your oldest daughter, Dawn, also carries the same hard-working qualities, too. She works with patients at the hospital. Dawn has a great guy, Jim. He makes Dawn so happy, he makes her smile everyday. They have a dog, Kai. I know you would loved to have met him.

Dadio, my father, keeps the memories alive. We talk about you daily. You were never forgotten. You are always in our hearts forever. We all know you are our guardian angel.

Love you always

Your “little Joy” - Kara

THE STEVEN R. WASILY TRIBUTE

October 9, 1983 – July 18, 2008



It's been 15 years since Steven was tragically taken from us at the hands of his "friend" Mike, who was three times the legal limit. It seems like yesterday when the detectives were at our door to tell us there had been a crash involving our son.

Steven had come home from work and had Chinese food with his brother Wayne. He said he would be gone for a couple hours, as he knew they had plans the next day. He was going to go to Mike's house after dinner. Steven would never come home again. As his mom, I ask myself why Steven would have gotten in the car with Mike. Didn't he know Mike was drunk? Maybe he didn't; we'll never know.

Steven got in the passenger seat and put his seat belt on, and Mike got behind the wheel of the car. He drove at a high rate of speed and before they got to the end of the subdivision, Mike lost control of the car. It rolled over, sliding across the intersection, and ending up in the parking lot of the condominium complex. Steven died instantly from craniocervical injuries.

Mike was prosecuted and went to prison. He was released from prison in November of 2016. We recently heard that he's engaged to be married for the second time. Steven will never get married.

We see Steven's other friends getting married, having children and wonder what Steven's life would have been like. Would he be married with children? Would they have his blue eyes and sense of humor? We'll never know.

With each passing year, it doesn't get any easier. A part of us died with Steven that day. Our lives have never been the same. Not a day goes by that he's not in our thoughts.

Steven, we live our daily lives, but not without knowing at the end of the day our family will not be together. Steven won't be coming home or ever having dinner with us again. We'll never hear from him how his day went. We'll go to bed and wake up to another day without him.

Praying that one day we'll be united with you for all eternity.

We love and miss you, Steven!

Mom and your brother, Wayne

THE CAITLIN ELIZABETH WEESE TRIBUTE

June 15, 1985 – May 24, 2003



“I hope it’s a girl”, I said as my small hand pressed up against my mom’s big pregnant belly. “I want a sister”. I felt the baby wiggle around beneath her white maternity shirt that was covered in tiny blue flowers. I was hardly three years old and unaware of the amazing bond, a dearest friend and most precious gift of a sister I would be privileged to love and to share for the following seventeen years of my life.

Caitlin lit up every room she entered. She was like our mom in that way. Her smile was warm and genuine, and she had the prettiest blue eyes I’d ever seen. After having a bad day, she’s the friend that would have you laughing so hard your stomach hurt. She’s the sister that cleaned your room and did your chores, so you wouldn’t get in trouble. Together, we endured our parents’ divorce, going back and forth from mom’s house to dad’s house. We witnessed our single, yet phenomenal, mom work so hard to support and raise us on her own. My mom referred to us as the three musketeers. We did everything together and kept a really special bond. Caitlin and I joked that we were meant to be twins. Our connection was like nothing I’ve ever felt before.

The six a.m. flight to Chicago was the longest hour of my life. I hadn’t slept, my body was shaking, I was scared, fighting back the tears and wondering when I was going to wake up from this awful dream. I was supposed to drive up the following weekend for Caitlin’s high school graduation and party. Those plans changed when Caitlin’s car was struck in a head on collision while on her way home from the mall. Caitlin was air lifted by helicopter to a trauma center. The man in the vehicle that hit her was drunk. He had a blood alcohol level of .163, marijuana in his system, driving on a suspended license and was also

THE CAITLIN ELIZABETH WEESE TRIBUTE

a repeat DUI offender. His careless choice sent Caitlin to the surgical ICU bruised and unconscious, with broken arms and legs, a ruptured spleen, a fractured pelvis, a lacerated liver, and her brain too swollen to keep her alive. Instead of attending my sister's graduation party the following weekend, I was inside a funeral home kneeling before her casket, saying goodbye to her forever.

My mom described her loss as a "Caitlin sized hole" in her heart. How does a mother function with her child no longer on this Earth? It's not natural. Your children should never leave before you do. The stress and the pain of losing her baby physically affected her own heart. My mom died of a massive heart attack in August of 2006. Let me rephrase that, my mom died of a broken heart in August of 2006.

This selfish, irresponsible and destructive decision stole the future of a bright and beautiful young woman. It left my poor mother with more heartache than she could bear, left my children with an aunt they will never know and took away an amazing friend to so many people. The impact of her death caused a trickle-down effect. The decision that killed Caitlin consequently, put a lot of holes in a lot of hearts.

Love doesn't die.

The love I have for my sister, the pain and sadness of her loss is something I continue to carry with me each and every day.

Cassi

(Caitlin's sister)

THE WILLIE JAMES WHITE TRIBUTE
October 28, 1978 - March 26, 2016



On October 28, 1978, I gave birth to a baby boy. A healthy seven-pound, seven-ounce and nineteen-inch-long bundle of joy. The minute they gave him to me, he opened those beautiful brown eyes and flashed that heartwarming little smile. It was love at first sight. The doctors and nurses said that it was just gas, but I knew it was a bond that would last a lifetime. We named him Willie James White. He was a heart breaker from the start. Those bright shining eyes, like two stars in the sky; a smile that would light up the room. You couldn't help

but love him; he was a sweet and gentle soul.

Willie was also a prankster. I remember when he was cleaning his room, I heard the vacuum running for a long time. I opened the door and there he was, sitting on the edge of his bed playing with his toys. The vacuum was just on and running. I said, "Willie, what are you doing?" He just looked at me and smiled. That smile, those eyes, how could I be angry? I just smiled too! He was a brother to four sisters; a role he loved. Willie told his sisters that they were talented and beautiful. He told them that they would have to learn to protect themselves. That they should never start a fight but be able to defend themselves. So, he taught them how to box.

Willie had a paper route when he was younger. He would rise early to roll newspapers and place them into plastic bags. Some mornings it was a family affair, and we would help him. Despite the cold, ice and snow, Willie would always place the paper by the front door. His customers would thank him for being so kind. Willie would try to help everyone he could. He was a natural-born athlete, and he excelled in sports. He was the captain and the quarterback of the football team. He placed third in wrestling and also played basketball.

THE WILLIE JAMES WHITE TRIBUTE

Karen, Willie's sister, was so happy to have her first-born son's birthday on Willie's birthday. Now it's such a bittersweet day.

Willie's younger sister is disabled. We always have birthday parties for her and one year Willie's friends came to the party. His sister was so excited and happy. They ate pizza, gave her presents, and they even flirted with her! By far this was her best party ever! I personally thanked each one of them for making her party so special. All of them said "Anything for Willie!". Our son was surrounded with light and energy. Like all of us, he wasn't perfect. Willie was an amazing person, loved and cherished by his family and friends.

On March 26, 2016, my only son was found in the street, face down. The person who hit him left the scene but eventually came back. He admitted to drinking and driving and hitting Willie. Willie's injuries were fatal. At his funeral, one of his friends stood and shared a memory with us. Many years had passed since he last saw Willie. He stated how happy they were to see each other. He asked Willie how he had been, and if he needed anything. Willie said, "As long as I have my mom, I'm good". To this day, each time I think of this, tears fill my eyes. My heart skips a beat to think my son loved me that much. What more could a mother hope for?

This year will be 7 years that we've been waiting for justice for Willie. Each day that passes without answer's feels like the first day we lost him. It's sad because before Willie was killed, we were living and loving life, never wondering what life would be like without each other. Fast forward seven years since Willie was last with us. Now, we're NOT living life. Now we're existing and learning daily how to navigate without Willie in our lives. Everyone misses Willie so much and there's still no justice. We still haven't had a trial; its so frustrating. After all the defense delay's, changes in attorneys, and judges, we are patiently waiting for justice for our son, so that Willie can finally Rest in Peace.

We saw the best in you, Willie. We'll continue to fight for you, until justice is served. We'll always love you, Willie. To say you are missed is an understatement! You'll never be forgotten. You live on in the hearts of your family and friends that love you.

Written by Willie's Family

THE ARIC WOOLEY TRIBUTE

August 25, 1982 – June 16, 2000



It hasn't gotten any easier after 23 years to write Aric's tribute. I seem to always wait until the last minute, thinking it would be easier to write it after so much time has passed since he was taken from us. But it hasn't gotten easier to write this tribute or look at photos and remember a young man taken too soon. The memories come rushing into my head that bring joy, then heartache and tears. Time doesn't stand still...life goes on...all we have left of Aric are photos and fond memories. I have photos of Aric on display in the loft where my office is located, but not in the rest of the house as it's too painful for my husband

to see photos of Aric. The photos bring me comfort and remind me that we'll all be together again someday...it shows me **RESILIENCE**.

Due to the senseless act of carelessness by an impaired driver 23 years ago, our lives have changed forever!!! Remember that driving impaired is **against the law!!! Driving is a privilege, not a right...so make the choice not to drink and drive impaired**. Making the wrong decision can ruin the lives of many, taking all on a heartbreaking journey.

As a family—we have shown **RESILIENCE!** Our family keeps Aric's memory alive by honoring him in our own special ways. Aric will always be remembered as his dad's "right hand man". His dad has a tattoo on his right hand of a cross with Aric's initials across it and his birth date and date of death above the cross...his "right hand man" forever. Nick, Aric's younger brother paid tribute to his brother by naming his first-born son Aric, to honor the memory of his brother. I pay tribute and honor Aric's memory by volunteering for AAIM throughout the year and working to raise money and silent auction items for the annual benefit. I've found strength sharing Aric's story whenever possible. My goal is to tell Aric's life story and our story on the sudden tragic loss of Aric and how it's changed our lives forever. If I can reach just one person and save them from making a deadly foolish decision of driving impaired, then I'm honoring Aric's memory. Our lives will never return to "normal", but we find hope in the future in our **RESILIENCE!**

My husband will have the memory of that dreadful day etched in his mind forever, as he was approaching the intersection at the time of Aric's crash. He saw Aric's car at the intersection and was going to honk his horn as they

THE ARIC WOOLEY TRIBUTE

passed each other...he never got the chance. He looked away for a split second and then heard the sound of crashing metal. When he looked back, he saw Aric's mangled car on the parkway after being hit by a semi. He quickly made his way to Aric's car and I'm positive that Aric knew his dad was with him during his final moments on earth. I know Aric took great comfort in hearing his dad's voice and feeling his dad's love surround him. Thank you for being the pillar of our family by giving us the love, support, hope, strength and **RESILIENCE** to face each day.

We haven't taken this long, difficult, and painful journey alone over the years since Aric's death. For my dear friend Rita Kreslin, a special **THANK YOU** for her love, support, friendship and showing me how to be **RESILIENT**. We share a "special bond" as our lives were changed forever due to a senseless decision by someone to drive impaired. **THANK YOU** seems like such a small phrase for the strength, love, hope, understanding and support we continue to receive from our **AAIM** family. We've made friendships that will last a lifetime with people who understand our pain and the road we're travelling in life. The common bond is one we wish we didn't share in life, but glad we have each other to lean on...we show **RESILIENCE!!!**

Aric, thank you for leaving us with so many fond memories of your short time here on earth...we love and miss you every day.

We little knew that morning; God was going to call your name.

In life we loved you dearly; in death we do the same.

It broke our hearts to lose you; you did not go alone.

For part of us went with you, the day God called you home.

You left us beautiful memories; your love is still our guide.

And though we cannot see you, you are always by our side,

Our family chain is broken, and nothing seems the same.

But as God calls us one by one, the chain will link again.

We love you, Aric,

The Wooley Family



to save lives

www.aim1.org

AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

Offender Stories

CALEB'S STORY

Marijuana ruined my life from the very start. I started smoking because of sports and to cope with some of my feelings. If I had manned up and gotten the help I needed, it would have saved a girl's life. In 2019, my life changed forever when I was the cause of a fatal car crash.

My actions and choices leading up to the crash were dumb. One of my choices was to smoke marijuana, which can cause poor physical health. Smoking made me sleepy all the time, even if I hadn't used it in days. I had school and work that day so, I was already tired. Having marijuana in my system only made it worse. Knowing now that if I smoked it would take someone's life away, I would never have started.

My day started as a regular high school senior student would. It was a Friday. I woke up at 6 am, did my regular routine and proceeded to go to school. I remember I was pretty happy that day. The day before I got accepted into the University of Missouri (Mizzou). I got a text from both my parents during the school day saying how proud they were of me. Life felt like it was so good. I was enjoying each last day that I had of high school. Spending as much time as I could with my friends because I knew once we left for college our relationships would change.

I worked at a car dealership on Fridays after school as an attendant. That day was busy, so I was just trying to get my work done so I could go enjoy the rest of the night with my friends. I had stayed an hour later than I was supposed to, I felt very tired. I got to my car and started it so it could warm up because it was very cold. I sat there for the next 10 minutes texting my friends and seeing what the plans were for the night. I played my music loud as I have always done. The speed limit was 55, but I was probably going between 65-70 mph. I was trying to get home as soon as possible. I was tired and not 100% focused on the road.

While I was driving, it seemed as if a car appeared in front of me out of nowhere. I swerved to avoid hitting it, crossed the median and hit another car. I remember it all. My car was destroyed. Even the inside. It did not look the same as it did five minutes ago. A man appeared to the driver side window and I remember him saying "I don't even know how you're alive right now." I told him, "I don't care about me go check on the other car." I felt fine because of all the adrenaline that had hit me from the crash. We waited for help to arrive.

CALEB'S STORY

When the firefighters arrived, they tried to open my door, but it was slammed shut. I crawled over the center counsel and got out the passenger door. Once I got out, I tried to walk but I collapsed. That's when all the pain hit me. I couldn't feel my legs and my neck hurt really bad.

What was going on? I was so confused and didn't really understand why this was all happening to me. All I was trying to do was go home and be with my friends. I guess God had other plans.

When I got to the hospital, I was sent to the emergency room. I asked the nurses to call my parents and let them know what happened. They arrived immediately. There were tears on my mother's face and my father looked surprised and confused. Nothing was making sense. At this time, they put me in a neck brace. I just wanted to fall asleep and wake up from this terrible dream. Unfortunately, I couldn't... this was my reality.

I was in the hospital for five days. Numerous CAT scans, x-rays and learning how to basically walk again. I was in so much pain. Watching all of my family and friends walk into the ICU room crying...that hurt me but not as much as finding out a 16-year-old girl had died from the crash. I cried uncontrollably as my parents told me that we grew up in the same area and knew some of the same people. They said that there were other victims in the car, too. Luckily, they would survive. Words can't describe how I really felt even still to this day.

After the hospital, I transitioned to a psychiatric care facility for 6 days where I received therapy. My high school was still on spring break by the time I got home so I had time to rest before I returned to school when classes resumed. All the teachers and classmates supported and helped me. I went on to finish the rest of the year and graduated in May 2019.

The crash had scared me. That summer, I would occasionally drink alcohol with my friends, but I was scared to use marijuana. I did not drive. I never wanted to get behind the wheel of a car again. Even now, every time I get into a car, I feel like I can't breathe.

The summer came to an end and we were all getting ready to go off to college, I was so excited to start this new chapter in my life. However, three weeks in, right after my Thursday class, my mom called me. She told me that I had been charged with reckless homicide and aggravated DUI.

CALEB'S STORY

You're probably thinking how was I charged with a DUI? That's because I had marijuana in my system. You see, I was a chronic user, so much that I had a bowl and grinder in my car. I used the excuse that because I had siblings in my house, I was protecting them.

I turned myself in on September 3rd. I can tell you it is something I would never want anyone to go through. Jail is a scary place and you can't really describe it until you've gone through it. I felt worthless and couldn't sleep. I spent my nights crying myself to sleep with my mind racing about what was to come and what will happen. To keep myself busy and my mind healthy, I would read books and write letters to people who had written me. It was an experience I'll never forget.

In jail I learned how to live a different life. I was able to watch television, participate in group activities and go to church. Luckily, I got a Bible and became closer with the Lord. He's the one that got me through everything. Calling my parents and friends through a recorded call and seeing my family and friends on a video chat broke me down more than anything ever had before. I prayed it would be over every single day.

At the first court date, I saw the victim's family for the first time. My attorney told me where the family was sitting. I looked at them and I broke down. I don't know what the feeling was. I just felt like very sad, I can't put it into words. I don't think I could imagine myself in their shoes. She was very young and her life was just beginning. It wasn't right that I took that away from her. I pleaded guilty because I just wanted everything to be over with. I wanted to go home. I wanted to see my family. I didn't really know what all the circumstances were going to be. I was speechless because hearing the victim's impact statements hurt. They called me a monster and said I deserved everything.

After the crash, I just didn't want to think about her life because I didn't know how to feel, process or what to do about it. I was lost. Now I want to try to live out her legacy and do something great in honor of her.

I feel sorry that I put my family and friends through all of this. Every day I feel horrible for the family of the girl. It's hard knowing the victim was only 16. She was so young and had her whole life ahead of her. She won't have high school experiences like prom and graduation. She won't go to college, get married or have children.

CALEB'S STORY

There were times when I have questioned what will become of me or my life. Why did I survive, and she did not? I feel so guilty because she did not deserve to die. No one does. Not like that. Not as young as we were. I caused a situation I would not wish on anyone.

I want people to think about all the choices they make and really consider every possible outcome, especially with drugs. You never know what can happen. Take my story and learn from it. I made poor decisions and every night I'm praying that the young girl is in heaven and can forgive me. Even if she doesn't, I still pray for her to be at peace.



ANDY'S STORY

I've always been considered the "good guy" and was well liked by all. I've never been in a fight in my life and I abhor the thought of violent actions. I tried to live a good and decent life. Yet with these positives in my twenty-six years I never realized that I had a problem.

I don't drink anymore. But when I did, I'd go out on the weekends with friends and go to the bars, and occasionally during the week. I knew that drinking and driving was wrong, yet many times I would do nothing about it. I would still get behind the wheel or get into a vehicle with someone who had been drinking. This was my drinking problem. Many of us have this. We drink and then get into a vehicle without ever realizing that this might be a serious problem, that we might endanger others with our actions. I always thought that people who were termed "drunk drivers" were full-blown alcoholics with a complete disregard for human life - a group of people that I would never fit in with. I was a social drinker; I didn't have problems like those regular alcoholics did.

I was a social drinker until the night I got in my Jeep and killed my friend's twenty-year-old sister. This is how bad my drinking problem had gotten. I killed my friend's only sister. I ended the life of an innocent and ruined the lives of so many other people. All this could have been avoided. But I was stupid and didn't think. Now I have to live with what I did. PLEASE THINK BEFORE YOU ACT.

Andy S.

RAFAEL SANDOVAL STORY

Growing up in Chicago I was able to experience the good and the bad of life in the city. I was born to Mexican immigrants that arrived in the United States with a dream of a better life. Both my parents worked hard all through their lives, including their childhood. They had very humble beginnings in the countryside of Mexico. I thank God that they gave my siblings and me the chance to live an easier life, full of opportunities. Throughout my childhood, my father worked many hours but he always made time for us. Whether it was for sports or school events, he was always there. My mother was the backbone of the family. She was the family chauffeur, but she loved it. She wasn't employed throughout my childhood. She was always there for me growing up and still is to this day. Whether it was for a laugh or a shoulder to cry on, she was always there.

I grew up on the southwest side of Chicago. I've had many friends throughout my adolescence I saw take the wrong path in life and the good path. The gang life was an outlet for many of my peers. I looked straight ahead to think about the future and never chose that path. I also avoided associating myself with gangs. I stayed involved with school clubs and sports. This was also the same throughout high school. In high school, I was involved in about six or seven clubs and also played baseball. One of my fondest memories was being named the captain of the baseball team in my senior year. We weren't the best, but we gave it our all. I felt proud that many of the younger guys looked up to me as a role model. I did well in class also. I graduated with a 3.3 GPA on a 4.0 scale.

My bad habits began during my junior year of high school. This was the year that I started dabbling with alcohol. At first, it was only a few drinks here and there. Then it became a weekly routine. Every weekend we would figure out whose parents would be out of town, so we could find a place to party. Buying the liquor was never a problem. We would wait in front of the store and get someone to buy the alcohol for us. After a while, it became a must to drink every weekend. We did not know how to do it in moderation. I have to, regretfully say, it was in excess. We were young kids that thought this was the "cool" thing to do. I look back and know that we just wasted time, money and moments of clarity. This continued all through college without slowing down.

I began working at the age of 16 and have been working ever since. I worked and went to school for seven of the last nine years. In some way, alcohol was my way of getting out of hectic reality I lived in. This kept going until my 24th birthday.

RAFAEL SANDOVAL STORY

I am currently employed at a hotel, I worked all types of hours, being that the hotels never close. It is typical to go out to drink on the weekdays in the hospitality industry. My birthday fell on a weekday that year. I was celebrating my birthday with coworkers and ended up having approximately eight beers, maybe more. I didn't keep count because a lot of people brought me drinks because it was my birthday. I had developed such a high tolerance of alcohol that I would act and seem more sober than I really was. I didn't show the usual signs of being drunk. But in fact, I was a person that was not able to function 100%. It never crossed my mind that I would cause harm to anyone or myself. I had made it a habit to drink and drive. I regret that night over and over again. Every morning and every night I have to think of what I did.

I was going home late that evening. I remember leaving the bar then driving away. The next thing I remember was waking up at impact. I was mortified after I crashed. I panicked and drove away. I made it a few blocks and pulled to the side of the road. My truck was pretty much totaled. It was too late to change any of my choices and I just waited for the police. When they arrived I got out of my truck and surrendered peacefully. Under the influence of alcohol, I was the most selfish person in the world. I drove away from a person that needed help. I caused her great bodily harm when I crashed into her car. I can say that if I was stone cold sober I would never in a million years have driven away. When a person is sober they always make better choices.

She was a young grandmother that takes care of her grandchildren. I felt so shameful and empty inside that night. My selfish acts changed the course of this person's life and her family's life. When I was at the police station, they informed me the extent of the harm I caused. At that point, my heart dropped. Never would I wish harm on anyone and to be the cause of it just killed me inside. I was in lock up for a while and could not stop thinking of what had just occurred. Did I just kill someone? All the articles you read in the newspapers, all the news clips you see on television, all the new laws being passed for drinking and driving, has a reason. It shows it is a chronic problem that needs to be addressed. I became a statistic. Every day I wish that it was me that was in Northwestern Hospital and not Cynthia. It should have been me in the emergency room...not her. I deserved what she got.

Will she be able to care for her grandchildren the same way she did before the crash? Will she be able to attend games? Is she always going to need assistance to do the simple tasks in life that we take for granted? Not being able to move as a person once did can be a terrible thing to go through and live with.

RAFAEL SANDOVAL STORY

People know not to drink and drive but we do it anyway. Why is it? Do we think, “Oh that’s not going to happen to me.” Well, that is what I said while sitting in the back of a squad car. Good things happen to good people just as often as bad things happen to good people. But when a good person is drunk, is that person still good? The answer is yes. The decisions that made while intoxicated are what is not good.

I sit here with good health, but mentally hurt at what I have done. The first thing I did when I was released from the police station was to look at the infractions that I received from the police officers and I saw that the victim was taken to Northwestern Hospital. I called the hospital to check her status for the next few days. I wanted to know how she was doing. I have tried to be a good person my whole life.

My parents instilled that in me. A person can do good deeds their entire life, but drinking and driving can change all the good they have done with one mistake. That day has been repeated in my mind over and over. I have not, and will not forget the harm that I have caused. I cannot touch alcohol without that day repeating itself. I currently abstain from alcohol and try to advocate the harm drinking and driving causes my friends and family. Even though it isn’t many people that I tell but it's one more person that didn’t have someone telling them the harm that driving under the influence can cause. I made a grave error and have caused harm to another human being. I will attempt to be a person that prevents the horrors of what drinking and driving can do.

My father hardly drinks and my mother has never touched alcohol. Alcohol abuse was a choice I made and a choice everyone makes when they pick up that drink. This abuse has an effect on your family and friends, as well as your body. The abuse of alcohol has so many harmful effects on your body you don’t even realize it is slowly weakening. But all of those adverse effects are by choice. Another choice that everyone has is getting behind the wheel while intoxicated and putting everyone at risk. Is it worth it? I can tell you No! I have been there and I saw the damage I have done.

I wish that I would never have caused harm to another human being, but what I did and what I went through made me a better person. Hopefully, I can influence those around me to make better choices when it comes to getting behind the wheel after drinking alcohol.

Rafael Sandoval

THE NICK C. STORY

The Day that Changed My Life

February 11, 2007 is a day that changed my life. Before that I was a big partier. Typically what some 21 year olds do. I would go out, drink all night and still drive home. There were quite a few times that I don't even remember driving home. I had no intentions of ever stopping. I always thought that I was invincible and nothing bad was ever going to happen to me. If I kept on drinking the way I was there was a very good chance that I would be dead before I hit the age of 60. I was going to school and working full time.

One night all of my hopes and dreams came to end. It was February 11, 2007 and I would do something that I will always regret. I went out partying all night and still drove but I never made it home. I went head on with another car on Interstate 55. I didn't remember what I did that night or even the week before it. I continuously had dreams about everything. Once the dreams stopped I woke up in the hospital learning I was in a bad car crash. I was told by a nurse that I had a broken collar-bone, broke a tiny bone in my neck, three ribs, my elbow, my femur, shattered my knee-cap and had a traumatic brain injury. What that brain injury means is that my cognitive, memory and motor skills are all gone. I needed one month of in-patient therapy and three months of out-patient. I was 100% within five months. A lot of people said that I was very lucky and fortunate to be where I was because when someone goes through that kind of injury they are never the same again. So I thought I was lucky but still didn't know what happened and how I got there.

I got picked up at the end of April by mom and asked "What happened?" She didn't say anything at first. So I asked again, "What happened?" She told me that I hit a car head on - on the expressway. She then told me that no one died. I said "Good." She then said "Nick, you paralyzed someone from the waist down!" "No! I didn't - it wasn't my fault!", I said. So I believed what I said. I went to court for the first time and understood what was going on. I had seven indictments (all felonies six for aggravated DUI with great bodily harm and one for reckless driving. All carried a prison sentence of three to seven years, serving 85% of the time. In March, I pled guilty to aggravated DUI. The sentencing date

THE NICK C. STORY
The Day that Changed My Life

was set for June 11, 2010. My victim and her entire family said how hard her life is now thanks to me. They also said “He should go to jail for breaking the law and ruining a life.” I agreed with everything they said. I got up and looked at my victim and said “I’m truly sorry for what I did. I don’t expect you to forgive me because I don’t deserve it.” The judge gave me four years of probation and four hundred-eighty hours of community service. For the next two years I worked to pay all my bills off and made sure I spread the message about drinking and driving.

I got word that my victim wanted to meet me face to face. I didn’t know what to expect but when she told me “Nick I forgive you.” That was the most unbelievable feeling ever. We talked for three hours straight about anything and everything. I told her that there isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t think about her and pray that she can walk again. We exchanged phone numbers and are friends to this day. I never thought that I would ever talk to her. When we did it felt absolutely amazing. She gave me something that I never expected from her. I still can’t believe that she forgave me and better yet that we are actually friends now. I want her to know that she is always on my mind and I pray for her every day. I’m extremely lucky going through what I did and having my victim actually forgive me. I hope and pray we can keep our friendship going. She is the nicest, sweetest person. I’m really grateful that she wants to be my friend. Most importantly that she knows I’m not a bad person, I just made a really bad choice.

THAT COULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ME

“That could never happen to me.” I remember so clearly sitting in a business law class during my sophomore year of college as we were talking about a person who drives a car after drinking and causes a crash. A few years later, 8 members of the cross-country team from the local university were killed in a head-on collision with a drunk driver. Again, I thought, “That could never happen to me.” I wasn’t the kind of person who would get behind the wheel after having too much to drink and I certainly wouldn’t do something stupid enough to risk the lives of others. What I didn’t realize then, is that every time a person gets behind the wheel after drinking, that person is putting the lives of others in grave danger. Tragically, on the evening of September 15, 2005, the decision I made to drive a car after drinking resulted in the deaths of two of my very good friends.

Trying to put into words the emotions involved with this crash and the events that have followed is one of the most difficult things I have had to do. There is simply no adequate way to describe the sorrow and regret that I feel for the thousands of people who have been hurt by the selfish decision I made. There is also no way to express the gratitude that I feel to the families of Jared Cheek and Matthew Molnar.

Before telling some of the events of the evening of the crash, I need to share something of the lives of the two men that were killed. Jared, Matty and I were all students at Mundelein Seminary discerning the possibility of becoming ordained priests in the Catholic Church. Both Matty and Jared were from the Archdiocese of Kansas. Matty was 28 and Jared was 23. Matty was an excellent musician who used music to share his experience of God with so many. Jared was an athlete and a key player on the Seminary basketball team. They both had an incredible ability to connect with young people helping them to see God at work in their lives. It is not an exaggeration to say that Matty and Jared have touched the lives of thousands of people in a very profound way. In many ways, their goodness has made dealing with their deaths all the more painful. “I know that for the rest of my life, I will meet people who have been deeply touched by their lives and tragically wounded by their deaths.

The night of the crash was a Wednesday evening of the second week of September. We had all just returned from summer and did not have classes the following day. At 8:30 that evening, I accepted an invitation to go with a friend to a nearby bar and grill for a beer and some time to catch up from the summer. We took his car to a place on the corner of Hwy 45 and Hwy 176 called Emil’s. While we were at Emil’s a group of four other students, including

THAT COULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ME

Matty and Jared, arrived. After about two hours, two from the second group decided to return to campus, leaving, Matty, Jared, my friend who had driven and me. While we were at Emil's, we had all been drinking and during the time I was there I had two Long Island Iced Teas. As we got up to leave, my friend who had driven looked at me, handed me the keys to the car and said, "Rob, you're going to have to drive." There were so many things I could have and should have done that night. I could have called any one of the 200 men back on campus, I could have called for a cab, it was a beautiful September evening, and we could have walked back to campus. Unfortunately, I didn't choose any of those options. I had been drinking and I was drunk. Not only were my reflexes impaired that night, but my thinking was clouded as well. A truth that I have learned is that when you start drinking, you stop thinking. When I decided to drive the car that night, I did not have the courage to do what I knew was right and with the alcohol in my system, I didn't have the sense to realize the danger of what I was doing.

As we left Emil's, we drove headed back to campus and were parked in the lot, ready to go inside when the suggestion was made to go for one last drive around the lake. We were four guys out having fun, not wanting the night to end and by that point I had convinced myself that I was just fine to drive. As we headed around the lake my friend started yelling to go faster and stupidly, I did. The last thing I remember is going too fast around a right-hand corner as the front left tire slipped off the asphalt into the grass. I felt so helpless as we were heading for a row of trees and it was too late for me to do anything. The next memory I have is standing outside of the car talking to the 911 operator trying to explain why we needed an ambulance. In the crash, Matty had been thrown from the car and was killed instantly, Jared had hit his head on something inside of the car which injured his brain so badly that he would never recover and two days later his parents would have to make the decision to end life support and to gift someone with his organs.

As a result of what happened that evening, I was charged with 10 felonies and faced a possibility of 28 years in prison. During the next months, I had a lot of time to think of what I had done that evening and each day the realization of how many people were hurting became more and more intense. After investigating the crash, in February of 2006, the prosecution amended the charges to two felony counts of reckless homicide and one count of aggravated DUI. In fact, this is what I had done and two days later I pled guilty to these charges knowing that I still faced a possibility of 14 years in prison.

THAT COULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ME

On May 2, 2006, I was in the court room in Waukegan for sentencing. On that day, a truly remarkable thing happened. The families of both Matty and Jared were present at the hearing and after telling the court some of the pain that they had experienced because of the deaths of their sons, they asked the judge not to impose a prison sentence. Thankfully, the judge honored their request and instead sentenced me to 18 months of house arrest, 30 months of intensive probation, 250 hours of community service, and to make a \$5000 contribution to AAIM.

The gift given to me by the families of Matty and Jared is more precious than anything I can imagine. They have given me not only the chance to move forward with my life, but much more importantly the opportunity to share this story with others to try to prevent drinking and driving. They have shown me how reconciliation and forgiveness can happen. Their example is now a standard by which I must live my life.

Working with AAIM has given me the chance to speak to thousands of young people and adults. I believe that every speaking engagement is a chance to share the message not only about drinking and driving but about two wonderful young men; Jared Cheek and Matty Molnar. Knowing what I do now and having experienced the pain and suffering that my decisions have caused, I cannot imagine how I ever could have been foolish enough to make the statement that, “this could never happen to me.”

Rob

AN OFFENDER'S STORY

I am 29 years old and I have three more DUIs than I ever thought I would. I remember visiting my mother in rehab in third grade. They always had free fruit roll-ups and I thought that was awesome. I would go into my mom's work and help open the store because she woke up late from drinking the night before. I sat at a bar waiting for my mom, who was passed out in the bathroom.

I started drinking in tenth grade. I was the new guy in high school, and I wanted to fit in. This spiraled into three minors, three violations of drinking on campus, two tickets for driving with a suspended license, and four weekends in jail. I spent thousands of dollars on fines. I justified my actions by telling myself that drinking is what my youth was for.

I got my first DUI in the fall of 2012. My colleagues were grabbing drinks, but I had to stay late to finish a project. When I got to the bar, I took two shots and slammed a gin and tonic. I then drank a double IPA. As we left, I offered to drive two friends' home. I crashed into a parked Range Rover. Luckily, they walked away with only bruises. I spent a weekend in jail. My grandma had to cash in her quarter collections to pay for my bond. I paid a small fine, completed community service, and attended a victim impact panel.

In December of 2015, I was heading home after a night of drinking on my birthday. My cousin and I grabbed several beers before my first tattoo. I crashed my car into a car, which then hit another car. There was a female in each car, and one was pregnant. Luckily, no one was hurt.

On January 12, 2018, I knew the moment I crashed that this DUI was different. On that day, I left a funeral and drove back to Chicago. I had a beer with lunch. When I got home, I had a beer in the shower, and another beer before attending a dinner party. I remember feeling nervous and slamming my gin and tonic. I quickly consumed three more drinks.

I told my girlfriend that I was fine to drive. Fifteen minutes later I was turning left and crashed into an oncoming car. I failed the sobriety test, blew a .13, and spent the weekend in jail. Luckily, my girlfriend wasn't injured. Since then, I've spent thirty days in treatment, and seventy-five

AN OFFENDER'S STORY

hours in the classroom. Dealing with a curfew and weekly meetings with probation has been difficult. Wearing an ankle monitor is a daily reminder of the mistake I made.

My DUIs have cost over \$20,000. I wasted time preparing for court, being in jail, missing events due to my curfew, sitting in classes about alcohol, and completing community service hours. I've watched my grandmother, brother, and girlfriend cry.

I don't have a story of killing another human being, but I could have killed my girlfriend, a pregnant mother, a close friend, a mom, and a wife. These are just the times I got caught. I wasted a majority of my youth hurting others. I'm grateful for that last DUI because it helped me realize that every bad moment in my life started with one drink.

I shared my childhood with you in the beginning to show that I believed I would never drink and drive. It happens in the blink of an eye. Don't start the process.



AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

Other Stories

AN OFFENDER'S MOTHER'S STORY

My story is from a different side. I'm an offender's mother. February 12, 2005 would change our lives forever!!! My husband and I went to dinner with our friends for Valentine's Day. We arrived home about 1:00 am. A few hours later the phone rang, it was my son Jason's friend calling. He stated they were at the hospital and there's been an accident. We headed to the hospital and on the way I called Jason's father to meet us there. When we arrived, my son's friends were gathered outside the ER crying. They stated there were fatalities. We rushed into the ER fearing the worst. Nothing could prepare me for what the next twenty-four hours would entail. I saw my son in an exam room crying with two police officers by his side. I felt the life sucked right out of me. He sustained a fractured ankle and was lying there crying and saying I'm sorry I did something stupid!

You see my son who was twenty-four years old at the time was at his girlfriend's house for dinner and was then going to meet his friends. She said be careful and "I Love You". Apparently my son went to three different bars that night and after the last bar made the poorest choice to get behind the wheel and drive! It would change his life and ours forever! He was driving back to his girlfriend's house and went through a busy intersection and killed two teenage boys, Ahmad and Mohammed both seventeen and in high school. They were in another car going through the intersection. The next eleven months were harrowing and very emotional. There were monthly court dates that were draining both emotionally and physically. This was a high profile case, so the news media attended each court date. It was very emotional for our family as well as the victim's family. Each time my son would say "Mom I did something wrong and I have to pay, I'll be OK". When my son was sentenced to twelve years in prison it broke my heart as it would break any mother's heart, but from the beginning my son took responsibility for his actions. His sentence was reduced to ten years. My son was never a partier. He was a good kid who made a horrible mistake and it will affect his life forever! There is not one day that goes by that my son doesn't think about what has happened and neither do I. Dave Perozzi approached me from AAIM after the sentencing and he asked if I would like to speak for AAIM, I stated, "When do I start". I have been speaking

AN OFFENDER'S MOTHER'S STORY

since February, 2006, trying to reinforce that drinking and driving don't mix! I know we can never bring those boys back, but we can get the word out so hopefully other families don't have to endure what we have had to endure.

Jason served his ten years in prison and was released in July 2014. I know he will never forget the pain and grief he has caused. Jason is trying to turn his life around and has attended and helped with the "Lockport Road to Reality" and has spoken for AAIM. He has also been involved with an organization I'm also involved in "In the Blink of an Eye" and speaks to get the word out about drinking and driving.

So I beg anyone reading this

"DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE, WE'LL ALL LOSE!!"

Tami

THE ANTONIO SANCHEZ STORY

At age seventeen, I started making bad decisions regarding beer, drugs and associating with the wrong people. I started working at age twenty as a spray painter at a car plant in Mexico. For fourteen years, I worked twelve-hour shifts. Smoking, drinking, and using drugs was an accepted part of the day. At some point the want of alcohol and drugs became a need. The drug use increased in frequency and I needed to smoke marijuana every two hours during my shift.

After moving to the United States, I continued using drugs and alcohol, trying to escape from what I created. My life revolved around using and acquiring the drugs and alcohol. I blamed everyone and everything as I made excuses on why I couldn't stop using. This cycle of use, blame, excuse, despair was repeated by me for many years until December 31, 2008.

On that fateful night, my life changed forever. My wife left me, taking our children and I realized the high price I had paid for my drug and alcohol abuse. I saw the reality of my choices; I woke up and made the decision to make a change.

In my house, alone, depressed and feeling no hope for the future, I attempted suicide. In the hospital, I realized that I had been running from responsibility and blaming others for my failures. I realized that if I wanted to be a meaningful part of my children's and hopefully my grandchildren's life, I needed to step up and be a man.

During treatment, I started to attend Alcohol Anonymous meetings. I realized that stopping the use of drugs and alcohol was an end to the only life I knew. Now I needed to make a life that was drug and alcohol free. As I started to make better decisions, I want to help others make better decisions. I started to tell my story at an outpatient treatment center, at AA Meetings and for AAIM. I appreciated that as I helped others, but I was the one that was helped the most.

I reflect often on where I am, where I have been and where I am going. As I look back at my years of using, I see an empty bag of drugs, an empty bottle of alcohol and an empty me. I see what I lost because of my addiction; being a loving husband, an involved father, a supportive son, and I lost my dreams and hopes.

Today I focus on the positive changes I have embraced. I am proud to say that every day I am sober, I become a more loving husband, a more involved father, a more supportive son, and I am ready and willing to help others make better decisions.

With the support of my wife, family, friends, the fellowship of Alcohol Anonymous and through the grace of God, I am honored to speak for AAIM. I am hopeful that others will make better decisions after hearing my story.

AAIM 2023



Resilience

Sunday, October 22, 2023

Letters of Gratitude

Thank you for this excellent program. I went through the online Victim Impact Panel on March 14, 2021 and received my certificate. It has been 525 days since my accident, and I have not had a drop of alcohol and have NO desire for it.

Thank you for your website and your help to me!!! May God Bless All of You and Everyone around you in Jesus' name. Amen

I am going through the process to have my license reinstated and praying that it will happen.

Thank you!!

John P. Wagner

2022

Happy Holidays, Rita!!

Enjoy these special days.

I hope you can take a few days off just to relax & have fun.

Stay warm!! ☺

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH FOR ALL YOUR WONDERFUL SUPPORT over all these many years. I/we are so, so, so grateful to you!

Take good care. GOD BLESS!

Best personal wishes

Craig & Eileen Ochoa

Victim Impact Panel
Mark Owen

You have done an amazing job on the Victim Impact Panel (VIP). You actually brought a real-life story that is local. It brings everything into perspective.

Thank you!

January 26, 2023

Dear AAIM:

Thank you, a million times. We are so very thankful and grateful for you guys.

May god bless you all a million times over.

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!



Gina Vargas & Family

May 10, 2023: Victim Impact Panel

Alfred Petties

I am out of the program and have a city job with the Safer Foundation. I have completed the DUI Program and am aware of any means to continue working and making progress to better others.

I want to thank you for assisting me to live a better and more rational lifestyle.

- ❖ Thank you, Carrie, for all your help throughout this process. As Wednesday grows nearer, the emotions seem to be never ending of pain, sorrow, grief, shock, and anxiety. I'm so grateful for you and all that you have done for us! Thank you just doesn't seem to be enough.
- ❖ Dear Carrie, Thank you so much for taking the time and talking with me today. It truly helps to know I'm not alone in my feelings and I truly appreciate your encouragement.
- ❖ As hard as this has been, I don't think I could've gotten through it without you. Thank you for everything you have done for me and my family. Carrie, You are now a part of MY family and I love you.
- ❖ Hi Carrie, I admire your strength and how you've turned a tragedy into something meaningful, even though I know it can't be easy for you. You've been such a help to us, thank you!
- ❖ Thank you so much for calling; Somehow you always call right when I need you. Your support means the world to me!
- ❖ Thank you so much for everything you've done for me, I couldn't have made it this far without you!
- ❖ I just wanted to thank you for everything that you have done for me. I am glad the universe made our paths cross. You have been a true rock through this process.
- ❖ Good morning Carrie, I wanted to let you know that I did receive the gift cards last week. Thank you so much to AAIM for doing this, for my kids, and to you also for being so thoughtful.
- ❖ Thank you for the gift cards, this helps more than you know; I can't thank you and AAIM enough for all your support and generosity.

2023 - Fenwick High School Parent and Student Night

All of the speakers had something important to share, and my heart broke for the mother who lost her child. I can't imagine. That being said, I think the students were riveted by the young offenders' words. You could hear a pin drop, so I knew they were listening and imagining themselves in his shoes. He was so courageous to share his story.

The young offender's story was so important. We had a lot to discuss on the way home and afterward. The students around me were silent as he spoke the case for the other speakers. Thank you for sharing this message with our students and families. Too often, underage drinking and drugs are normalized- this should be mandatory for every grade level.

I would love for this to be presented to the entire student body EVERY year.

January 17, 2023

Dear AAIM,

I want to thank you very much for the gift cards for our children this past Christmas. What a nice surprise! It was a huge help to our family.

We have been blessed to work with Carrie and Linda and are so appreciative of their help and understanding. The death of our son has been the hardest thing our family has been through, but we are glad to have come to know our advocates, and that there are many people working so hard for justice and help to put an end to these crashes.

With much appreciation,

Love,

Danielle Madison

Hi Samantha,

Thank you to you and Carrie for coming! I think the kids really enjoyed your presentation!

Katie Tarczynski
Health/Driver Ed/Literacy Teacher
Dekalb High School

Samantha,

Thank you so much for coming and speaking to our health classes. Your presentation was very impactful.

Thanks again,
Jenny Swanson
Bremen High School
Physical Education/Health Teacher

Samantha,

Thank you so much for coming and speaking to our summer school classes. This was a great and meaningful experience for our student community.

Thank you again!
Sarah Douglas
Highland Park High School

Getting the attention of the students with a real-life experience from Rita was very powerful. The students seemed to understand the impact and seriousness. The information on marijuana and the new fad of vaping and dabbing is a key for young people to hear. They are growing up with new ways to use drugs and be tempted. They certainly need to understand how it affects them as drivers. Thank you for coming in.

Jake Burke
Rockford Jefferson High School

I am very sorry for your loss, and I would like to thank you for opening my eyes to such valuable information.

-East Aurora HS Student

I like the fact that they took the time out of their day just to talk to us and let us know what not to do on the road and warn us about other drivers. Thank you so much.

-Rockford Jefferson HS Student

Rita, Shannon, and Task Force Members-

I wanted you to know it's been my honor and privilege to serve as Chair for the Illinois Impaired Driving Task Force (IIDTF); Being Chair was one of the highlights of my career.

I can tell you this is an exceptionally well-run organization that benefits all member agencies that belong to it. There's a well-placed structure already developed, and I wholeheartedly believe IIDTF will continue to thrive in the years to come.

I want to thank Rita Kreslin, AAIM Executive Director, and the Board members for their support over the years. I also want to make special mention of Shannon Alderman, from the Illinois Department of Transportation, who is an outstanding individual and has always treated me with kindness, professionalism, and compassion. People such as Rita and Shannon make your life a pleasure.

Again, thank you to the Task Force, and I want you to know that I am always available. I just wanted to thank you and let you know exactly how important each of you are; You were also important to the development of my personal goals in life, and when it came to the police profession.

I retire from Riverside on Thursday, May 20th.

Respectfully,

Thomas Weitzel
Chief of Police

Governor JB Pritzker
Cynthia Berg, Chair
Lisa Gardner, Executive Director



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ILLINOIS LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

50 West Washington Street, Suite 209 Chicago, IL 60602
300 West Jefferson Street, Suite 300, Springfield, IL 62702

Date: December 15, 2022

Media Contact: Nicole Sanders
Office: 312.814.4459
nicole.sanders2@illinois.gov

Greetings Samantha Gallagher-Gannon,

The Illinois Liquor Control Commission ("ILCC") would like to thank you for your participation at our December 14, 2022 Commission meeting. The Commission found your presentation to be extremely informative as well as thought provoking. The ILCC appreciates your commitment to the community, and we look forward to partnering with Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorist ("AAIM") on future endeavors.

On behalf of the Commission, I want to thank you for the positive impact that your organization makes on the community. Again, thank you for presenting at our Commission meeting and being a valued partner.

Nicole Sanders
Industry Education Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Sanders", is written over a horizontal line.



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