

ALLIANCE AGAINST INTOXICATED MOTORISTS

Victim Stories



The Chris Owens Tribute

September 24, 1969 – April 13, 2017

Chris and Daryl were hit by a drunk driver on April 13, 1997. It still hurts just to say the date. The night that I got the phone call about the crash, I felt like someone just squeezed my heart until it wasn't there and today that feeling is still there. You never forget moments in your life that hurt so bad that you don't really know where you are or what is going on in your life. You have to make decisions so fast that you look back and wonder how you could have possibly gone through that night. The news was devastating. My boys were taken to two different hospitals and it was impossible to be in both places at once. At each hospital, I was met by a chaplain so I knew it was really bad. I had to leave Daryl and go to the other hospital for Chris. Every second seemed like an hour. When they came and told me that Daryl had passed away in surgery I kept begging them to let me see Chris.

Chris was in the hospital almost all of 1997. The doctors gave him six months to live. He had many injuries and was in a coma. I had given up my job to stay home and take care of him. I was a paralegal for the court system and a few local attorneys told me that if I could get a computer they would hire me to work out of my house.

I heard about AAIM from a woman at the Attorney General's Office. I was hesitant to call because so many people shy away when you mention money. Chris needed so much extra medical equipment and I needed help. I called AAIM and this wonderful lady, Pat Larson, welcomed me. She was so nice and very comforting to talk to. AAIM gave us funds to buy medical equipment and the computer that I needed to work from home. What a wonderful organization!

Chris was in a coma for three years and on a ventilator, he needed twenty-four-hour care. He achieved so many things that the doctors thought would never happen. We were given a chance to take him to the rehabilitation center in Chicago. Again, I called Pat to see if she knew a place that Chris's girlfriend and I could stay while he was in Chicago. Pat told me that she would make the arrangements. Again, AAIM stepped in and took care of us. They helped with our food and parking as well as a place to stay. When Pat came to the hospital to visit Chris, I felt as though we had met our Guardian Angel.

Continued on next page...

When I brought Chris home from the hospital I put his bed in my living room. As the year went by we needed more space for Chris and his equipment. The people of Chatham had fundraisers and raised enough money to build a room to my house. My oldest son is a union carpenter and a lot of his fellow workers donated their time. Many construction companies donated supplies. Again, AAIM made a generous donation to help build this room that Chris so desperately needed.

We live in the country and have a well. Since we had the new room and a drought that summer we were running out of water. It was astounding how much money it was costing to have water hauled into our home. Chris and I lived on very limited income and of course needed to have water. Again, I called AAIM to see if they could help me with the water bills. They made a suggestion that perhaps I needed a deeper well and asked that I call around to see what a new well would cost. Charlene Chapman talked to a well digger and they worked out a price. AAIM paid for a new well for Chris and me.

Chris lived for his television. He watched it every day from the time his eyes opened until they shut at night. When his television went out, you would have thought that the world had come to an end at our house. Chris prayed and cried; cried and prayed. I called different local agencies to see if they could help us fix the old television, but was told it wasn't worth fixing. Chris' eyesight had deteriorated through the years which was one of his only ways he stayed connected to the rest of the world. I called AAIM, and once again his Guardian Angels had taken care of his problem.

I used to speak at local Victim Impact Panels hoping to touch at least one person so that someone else would not have to go through all of the heartbreak and pain that our family has gone through. The drunk driver that ran my boys off the road has never been found, but I know that it is she who has to look in the mirror every day and live with herself.

She did one good thing that night...she went to my neighbor's house and called 911. She did, however, give a phony name. I used to always ask Chris before I went to give my speech if there was anything he would like me to tell the attendees. His most frequent answer was, "Please don't drink and drive. Remember to call your loved ones and tell them that you love them because that might be the last words they'll hear."

For twenty years Chris had to live with the constant reminder and the daily consequences of a DUI crash. Living as a quadriplegic brought many challenges and heartaches for Chris, but he never lost hope or his sense of humor. On April 13, 2017, Chris's journey on earth came to an end. No more suffering.

Thank you AAIM for your kindness and generosity to help fund Chris' funeral. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done for Chris and me. We never know what lies ahead for us, but you know that God will be there and He will send you His Guardian Angels like AAIM to help you when you need it most.

May God bless each of you at AAIM and give you the strength to continue your wonderful work.

Many blessings,

Joyce Owens