



AAIM 2020

Together We Rise

Virtual Benefit

Friday October 23rd, 2020

7:00 pm

<https://aaim1.ejoinme.org/togetherwerise>

Welcome to AAIM's
30th Annual Benefit

Cover Artwork: Created by Heather Fischer

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Contents	Page
----------	------

ADMINISTRATIVE

Welcome Letter – Jessica Zinck	1
Mission Statement.....	2
AAIM Philosophy	3
Guest Speaker – Jesse White, Illinois Secretary of State.....	4
Guest Speaker – Jason Blatter	6
Benefit Committee.....	7
Victim Story Sponsors.....	8
Benefit Donors.....	9
Silent Auction Sponsors.....	11
Special Thanks	12
Your Donations at Work	13
Cathy Stanley Retirement.....	17
Help AAIM Fund Raise	18
AAIM Board of Directors.....	20
AAIM Staff.....	22
Angel of AAIM Award.....	23
Sheila Forsner Award.....	24
Sheila Forsner Award Recipient – Meg Garcia	26
Sheila Forsner Award Past Recipients.....	27
The Diane Mains Award	28
Recipient of the Diane Mains Award – Patricia Burns	33
Outstanding Assistant State’s Attorney – Mary Cole.....	30
Outstanding Assistant State’s Attorney – Desirée Sierens	31
Outstanding Assistant State’s Attorney Past Award Recipients	32

AAIM’S STORY

Ann Brierly	36
Robert Kalin	38

PROGRAMS

AAIM Programs	40
AAIM DUI Pin Award Program.....	42
Victims' Bill of Rights	44
AAIM Victim Advocates	45
Court Monitoring Program.....	46
AAIM Prevention and Education Program	48
AAIM's Public Awareness Campaign (DrunkBusters) Program.....	49
AAIM's Youth Victim Impact Panel.....	50
Top Cops Honored	52
Peer to Peer – Online Fundraiser for AAIM.....	54

PARTNERSHIPS

Roadside Memorial Markers.....	56
Roadside Memorial Markers – Village of Hampshire.....	57
Jesse White Candlelight Vigil	58

ADVERTISING

AAA Chicago	Inside Back Cover
American Family Insurance – Matthew Harrold.....	Outside Back Cover
Retired Circuit Court Judge Bob Anderson.....	62
Buffalo Grove Police Department.....	68
Cindy Cebzynski Tribute	72
Chicago Title.....	64
Childress Automotive.....	72
Law Offices of Couri & Couri	68
East Dundee Police Department.....	69
Elmhurst Police Department.....	65
David Finkelstein – Allstate.....	69
John's Plumbing	Inside Front Cover
Patrick Kenneally – McHenry County State's Attorney	72
Kramer Photographers	66

ADVERTISING (Continued)

Lisa Lily	72
Mike Nerheim – Lake County State’s Attorney	70
Our Lady of Hope Church.....	70
Paton's Auto Repair.....	73
Piotrowski & Associates	73
Restaurant Stainless Solutions, Inc	71
Tricia Smith – Boone County State’s Attorney	63
Joe Sosnowski – Illinois State Representative	73
United Industrial Supply	73
Vanguard Security	74
Jesse White – Illinois Secretary of State.....	67
Wizard’s Storage	74

VICTIM STORIES

Jenni Anderson Tribute	76
Michael Bell Tribute.....	77
Marti Belluschi Story.....	78
Kevin William Benes Tribute.....	80
Jason Blatter Story.....	82
Tony Borgia Tribute.....	83
Thomas Burleson Story	84
Frank S. Caruso Jr. Tribute.....	87
Cindy Cebrzynski Tribute	88
Nadia Chowdhury Tribute	89
Paul Conrad and Sheryl Andreasen Tribute	90
Alexis Symone Danley Tribute.....	92
Stephen Dewart Story	94
Troy Evers Tribute	96
Tanessha Gates Story	97
James Ali Harris Tribute	98
John Hauptman Tribute	100
Leeslyee Huerta Story.....	102

VICTIM STORIES (Continued)

Beata Janulek Story	105
Andrew Keating Tribute	106
Nicholas Kilpatrick Tribute	107
Christopher Krenzer Tribute.....	108
John J. Kreslin, Jr. Tribute	110
Francis and Helen Lilly Tribute	112
Ashley Marie Lopez Tribute.....	113
Manuel Lopez Story	114
Juan Samuel Lozano, Jr. Tribute	122
Tanya McDonough Tribute	116
David Newell Tribute	118
Erin Elizabeth Olmsted Tribute.....	120
Adelaida Otero Tribute.....	123
Jonathan Petit Tribute	124
Payton Richmond Story	126
Veronica Rojas Tribute.....	128
Brian Schmidt Tribute	129
Carlos Serratos Story	130
Richard “Dick” Seyller Tribute	132
Pierre L. Shelton Tribute	134
Theresa Stanley Tribute	136
Mikey Steines Tribute.....	138
Maurice “Moe” Torres Tribute.....	140
Jesse C. Walker III Tribute.....	142
Jorlyce “Joy” Wange Tribute	143
Steven R. Wasily Tribute.....	148
Caitlin Elizabeth Weese Tribute.....	144
Aric Wooley Tribute	146

OFFENDER STORIES

An Offender’s Story.....	150
Julio A. Story.....	152
Caleb R. Story.....	154
Ernie S. Story	157

OTHER STORIES

Tami O. – An Offender’s Mother’s Story	160
The Antonio Sanchez Story	162

LETTERS OF GRATITUDE

Anonymous.....	164
Kristy MacKenzie	164
Connie Onley & Family.....	165
Narao	165
Marianne Caron.....	165
Rachel Venlos	166
Anna Marie Caruso	166
Mary Ellen Smith.....	166
Meg.....	167

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Administrative

————— *Together We Rise* —————

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this year's AAIM benefit! Our benefit committee wanted this year's theme to honor 30 years of advocacy and outreach. Many meaningful relationships have been formed as we have worked side by side with victims, law enforcement, attorneys, and judges to make something beautiful from the pain and destruction caused by impaired or distracted drivers. Our drive to keep fighting has been fueled by partnerships that have spanned the last three decades.



Jessica Zinck
Director of Victim Services

After COVID-19 struck in March, we dealt with added challenges and extra stress. Our entire team had to adapt amid sudden isolation and intense feelings of grief, anxiety, and depression. Throughout the past year, the theme we had chosen in January began to give us a feeling of hope as we continued our work with other employees, victims, volunteers, and court staff. Together We Rise.

I am grateful to have seen firsthand how the AAIM family provided excellent support to those in crisis. The advocates focused not only on victims with open cases, but also reached out to families with closed cases who had moved forward from their tragedy. The advocates supported victims who were on the front lines of COVID-19 and those who lived alone. AAIM was able to provide financial assistance to those who had lost their income during quarantine.

All of this would not be possible without your generosity and commitment to helping us on our mission!

Thank you to our advocates, board members, committee members, donors, sponsors, volunteers, and guests for your role in allowing us to continue helping others during their darkest times. Your donations and support have been instrumental in uplifting others.

Please enjoy our new online format! We hope that you are moved by the videos from our partners and that you also feel the sense of hope that comes from working as a team to impact change! Please consider using your gifts to help us save lives by reducing the senseless tragedies that occur on our roads and waterways!

My heartfelt thanks,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Zinck".

Jessica Zinck
AAIM 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.

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www.aaaim1.org

THE HONORABLE JESSE WHITE

Illinois Secretary of State



Jesse White is Illinois' 37th Secretary of State. White was first elected to the office in 1998 and won landslide victories in 2002, in which he won all 102 counties, and again in 2006 and 2010. On November 4, 2014, White was re-elected for a record-breaking fifth term, winning another landslide victory by a 2-to-1 margin in which he earned over 2.3 million votes statewide – more than 230,000 votes than any other statewide constitutional candidate. White became Illinois' longest serving Secretary of State on May 30, 2014.

The Illinois Secretary of State's office is the largest and most diverse office of its kind in the nation, providing more direct services to the people of Illinois than any other public agency. White's office issues state ID cards, vehicle license plates and titles, registers corporations, enforces the Illinois Securities Act, administers the Organ/Tissue Donor Program, licenses drivers and maintains driver records. As State Librarian, Secretary White oversees the State Library and literacy programs, and as State Archivist, he maintains records of legal or historic value.

Under White's leadership, customer service has been improved through the use of technology as well as modernizing and streamlining operations. Wait times in facilities are shorter than ever before. Illinois has become a national leader in road safety as White strengthened DUI laws, reformed the CDL program and overhauled teen driving guidelines. As a result, traffic fatalities have decreased, with drunk driving deaths down nearly 50 percent and teen driving deaths reduced by 51 percent. In 2014, White was inducted into the Illinois High School & College Driver Education Association Hall of Fame.

THE HONORABLE JESSE WHITE

Prior to his election as Secretary of State, White served as Cook County Recorder of Deeds – a job to which he was first elected in 1992 and re-elected in 1996. Before that, he served 16 years in the Illinois General Assembly, representing the most culturally, economically and racially diverse district in Illinois.

In 1959, White founded the internationally known Jesse White Tumbling Team to serve as a positive alternative for children residing in and around the Chicago area. Since its inception, more than 17,500 young men and women have performed with the team. White has spent 58 years working as a volunteer with the team to help kids stay away from gangs, drugs, alcohol and smoking, and to help set at-risk youth on the path to success. The program has received international praise. This year the team will have more than 1,500 performances using seven units, consisting of 225 young men and women. Currently, there are 51 members enrolled in college. In 2014, the Chicago Park District opened the Jesse White Community Center and Field House in honor of White's lifelong contributions to the community. In addition, a school in Hazel Crest, Illinois, was recently renamed the Jesse C. White Learning Academy, and a Chicago street was designated Jesse White Way in honor of White.

White served our country as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division and as a member of the Illinois National Guard and Reserve. He played professional baseball with the Chicago Cubs organization, which was followed by a 33-year career with the Chicago Public Schools as a teacher and administrator.

Jesse White earned his Bachelor of Science from Alabama State College (now Alabama State University) in 1957, where he was a two-sport athlete earning all-conference honors in baseball and basketball. In May 1995, White was inducted into the Southwestern Athletic Conference Hall of Fame. He was an all-city baseball and basketball player at Chicago's Waller High School (now Lincoln Park High School) and was inducted into the Chicago Public League Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in June 1995. In 1999, he was inducted into the Alabama State University Sports Hall of Fame. Born in Alton, Illinois, he now lives on Chicago's Near North Side. White has two daughters, Glenna and Lorraine, and two grandchildren, Jesse and Susan.

GUEST SPEAKER JASON BLATTER

Jason Blatter was born in Hinsdale, Illinois. At birth, Jason was diagnosed with Long QT Syndrome, the heart's electrical system disorder. He spent almost two years in the ICU until they regulated his medication. Every day, his parents had to administer his medication every six hours until he was five years old. Doctors told his

parents that Jason would be deaf and couldn't play sports. Years later, the doctors were unsure why or how Jason recovered, but he did and was cleared to resume regular activity - Jason is not deaf, and he still plays sports today.



Jason Blatter



Jason and Ollie

He grew up in North Riverside with his parents and brother Tony. His brother lives in Minnesota with his fiancé and their dog Ollie. His parents live in Westchester with their three cats. Jason met Meg, his girlfriend, four years ago, and they live in Chicago, IL. They have a yellow lab named Toby that they love to take on walks, go to the dog beach, and spend time outdoors.

On February 2, 2019, Jason was on his way home near I-55 when a drunk driver ran a red light and struck his car. Jason was severely injured and suffered head trauma,

broken ribs, knee damage, and lost sight in his left eye. He also lost his sense of smell and taste.

Jason is an amazing man with the strength and resilience to overcome this tragedy. He looks forward to his future with gratitude to be alive. In the future, Jason would like to help people who have been in a car crash and pay it forward for all the help he received from AAIM and his advocate Cindy Huerta, who continues to support him through his recovery.

AAIM BENEFIT COMMITTEE



Benefit Chairperson:

Samantha Gallagher

Silent Auction Chairpersons:

Meg Garcia and Carrie Kilpatrick

Committee

Maxwell Cody
Meg Garcia
Cindy Huerta
Carrie Kilpatrick
Kelly Krenzer
Michael Krenzer
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SPONSORS

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

Patti and Allen Gustafson

Sponsoring: Leeslyee Huerta

Sally Hoffman

Sponsoring: Nicholas Kilpatrick

Wetoska Packaging Distributors

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DONORS

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

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Our additional thanks to donations received after the printing deadline.

2020 SILENT AUCTION SPONSORS

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

AAIM Court Monitors	Lake Geneva Cruise Line
AAIM Victim Advocates	Lake Geneva Zipline & Adventures
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Ellen Johns	Samantha Gallagher
Fried Green Tomatoes	Schaumburg Boomers
Fuji Film	Stockholm Inn
Gobbie's	Studio KSybaris
Heather Lopez	The Hampton Inn & Suites Schaumburg
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Joe Sosnowski	Writers Theatre
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Kramer Photographers	

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

Special Thanks

- *Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White as AAIM guest speaker*
- *Jason Blatter, victim of a drunk driving crash for sharing his personal story in the face of tragedy by serving as Guest Speaker*
- *Reverend Nena Bell Fellger for today's invocation*
- *Samantha Gallagher for donating her time and talent for serving as benefit chairperson*
- *Meg Garcia and Carrie Kilpatrick for serving as silent auction chairperson*
- *To AAIM families for all the beautiful video tributes*
- *Heather Fischer for her cover design on the invitations and program book*
- *To the benefit committee and all the volunteers for making our virtual event a success— we could never have done it without you*

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

Since 1991, through the generosity of our donors, over \$817,912.00 has been donated to families who are in a financial crisis as a result of uninsured and underinsured impaired drivers. Below are some examples of families the AAIM's Victims Assistance Fund assisted financially in the 2020 fiscal year:

- **January 2019**, an impaired driver traveling over 100 mph rear-ended a 38-year-old man who was stopped at a red light, killing the man instantly. The victim was the sole source of income for their household, as his wife hadn't worked in more than eight years. She was unable to afford funeral expenses, as they had no savings. A Go Fund Me account was set up to pay funeral expenses. She took a job part-time after her husband was killed until she would be able to work full time. She is overwhelmed with grief and has started attending the grief group with her mother-in-law. Her in-laws have been trying to assist her with daily living expenses the best they can. She has been having trouble paying her utilities, as well as having money for daily expenses such as food and toiletries. This has added a heavy burden on her, at a most difficult time. ***The 2020 AAIM*** Fund paid for utilities for three months and provided a gift card for food and necessities.
- **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 impact of the crash. 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 causes her to not 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 prior to COVID-19. Since the pandemic, she has lost her daycare and waitressing jobs. She has a dream to get her GED, which would help her get a decent job. She suffers from depression since the crash and needs counseling. She's struggling to pay rent, buy groceries, toiletries, simple necessities, winter clothes, is behind on utility bills and other expenses. ***The 2020 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.)

- **February 2019**, a 33-year-old was on his way home when his car was struck by a vehicle that ran a red light. The victim was injured badly with broken ribs, knee damage, loss of smell and taste and he lost sight in his left eye. Due to his injuries from the crash, he's had to take extended time off from work. Since the beginning of this summer, the victim *The 2020 AAIM Fund* paid for physical therapy and Uber gift cards for transportation.
- **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 getting 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 social security and food stamps for her granddaughter but was denied. Her granddaughter's father was paying for daycare but decided he doesn't want to pay any longer. She is working full time to support her family and trying to do the best she can. Her granddaughter can't start kindergarten this year, due to her birthday being in October. The government pays a portion of the daycare, but there still is a portion left unpaid. *The 2020 AAIM Fund* has paid for the portion of the daycare costs for 12 months that the government doesn't cover.
- **September 2019**, a 17-year-old-young man who had autism, was walking home and while crossing the street was struck by a vehicle that didn't stop. Witnesses saw the vehicle hit the young man and called 911. Meanwhile, a second vehicle struck the young man causing him to die at the scene. The young man lived with his grandmother, who was his legal guardian and caretaker. She had adopted him and received money for his care from the State. His grandmother is disabled and unable to work. She has lost half of her income since her grandson's death and is unable to pay her monthly rent in its entirety, get housing assistance or get her car repaired. *The 2020 AAIM Fund* paid to have her car repaired, new tires and gift cards for necessities.
- **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

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK (cont.)

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 2020 AAIM Fund* paid for past due utility charges.

- **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 striking her and lastly a traffic signal pole. The victim suffered head, neck and leg injuries and was taken to the hospital. 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. 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 try to get caught up on her bills, but her doctor limits her to how many consecutive hours she can work. Her job hasn't been accommodating to her constraints and 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 is fearful of 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 currently seeing a counselor for anxiety and depression as a result of the crash. *The 2020 AAIM Fund* paid the past due phone bill and provided a gas card.
- **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 that she received is in trust for her long-term medical care. She is driving a van with 100,000+ miles, and it recently needs 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. *The 2020 AAIM Fund* assisted The Y-noT Project who donated a large amount of funding to purchase 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

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK (cont.)

- **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 travelling 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 2020 AAIM Fund* has paid for counseling sessions.
- **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 travelling 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 for working 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 semester. She is currently renting a room, but is unable to afford groceries, cell phone bill and the rent. She wants to attend counseling, but her situation makes it difficult. *The 2020 AAIM FUND* has paid for rent, cell phone bill and counseling.

CONGRATULATIONS



Cathy Stanley

On behalf of the AAIM Board of Directors and your colleagues, thank you for thirteen years of outstanding leadership! The years you have worked at AAIM have been marked by unsurpassed efficiency and excellence. You have been an inspiration to us all.

You have taken this organization and the Court Monitoring Program to new heights in traffic safety. Your effort to save lives in the memory of your daughter, Theresa, has not gone unnoticed. You have been a mentor to all of us; even more important though are the friendships you have developed over that time. Thank you for all you have done and all you have taught us; we send our very best wishes for a happy retirement!

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.

HOW DO FUNDS AAIM RAISES HELP VICTIMS?

- **\$33 Buys A CTA/Pace 7-Day Pass For A Husband To Visit His Injured Wife In The Hospital**
- **\$114 Buys Gas For A Month Of Visits To A Rehab Facility 15 Miles From A Victim's Family's Home**
- **\$499 Buys A Wheelchair Ramp For A Van**
- **\$852 Covers A Month's Groceries For A Family Of 4 Whose Primary Wage Earner Was Killed**
- **\$1,100 Covers A Month's Rent For A Family Whose Wage Earner Lost Her Job Due To Grief-Related Depression**



2020 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.



Terry Vandergrift
President

Lake County Investigator
AAIM Governmental
Affairs Committee



Kathryn Fischer
Vice-President

Investment Banker



Charles Nozicka
Vice-President

Physician



Rita Kreslin
Secretary

AAIM Executive Director



Chet Stanley
Treasurer

Retired Manufacturing
Engineer

2020 AAIM BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEET THE BOARD



Shelly Anderson
Retired Insurance Executive



Bob Cebczynski
Retired IRS Agent



Elizabeth Earleywine
Attorney
AAIM Governmental
Affairs Committee



Patrick Finlon
Law Enforcement
Officer



Ron Harper
Retired Law
Enforcement Officer



Glenn Kalin
Retired Teacher
AAIM Co-founder



Tami O'Brien
Business Office



Dan Groth
Attorney

AAIM STAFF



Executive Director

Rita Kreslin



Director of Victim Services

Jessica Zinck

Executive Assistant

Anita Huvaere

Administrative Assistant

Marlene Schwerzler

Victim Service Advocates

Cindy Huerta

Carrie Kilpatrick

Kelly Krenzer

Kristina Lawler

Rosemary Woods

Court Monitor Program

Cathy Stanley, *Director*

Court Monitor Program Successor

Lisa Rogers, *Director*

Court Monitors

Crystal Beltran

Kay Rivera

Barb Cutro

Carol Russell

Doug Petit

Joyce Synek

Prevention and Education Specialists

Samantha Gallagher

Rachael Stewart

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 Krashesky	2012
Cathy Stanley	2018



*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

This quote from Charles Dickens sums up, for me, the power behind those who have been severely challenged by life, maybe feeling “less than” or “less able” due to a physical limitation, pain or grief and who, in spite of everything, not only move forward but reach out to others along the way to help lighten a burden. I am reminded about my sister, Sheila, her strength, compassion and determination to help others even while she herself faced overwhelming challenges. I am reminded about the people we met while working with AAIM and the amazing capacity they have to offer help, hope and support in ways that may seem small to others but mean the world to survivors and their families. I am reminded about the award given each year in Sheila’s name and all who have received it. Sheila, AAIM employees and volunteers, the award recipients and the many survivors about whom we read in the AAIM book...have all embraced, at one time or another, the spirit of Dickens’ quote simply by being who they are, the inspiration they’ve inspired, the comfort and compassion they’ve given even in the midst of their own pain and, in doing so, have provided immeasurable comfort to those experiencing their own heartache.

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

SHEILA FORSNER AWARD

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 parents' first grandchild and our first nephew (in a family of six girls!). Alex 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; including 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)

Meg Garcia

Recipient of the Sheila Forsner Award

This award is given in memory of Sheila Forsner who rose above her own tragedy and triumphed in educating and inspiring others.



Meg Garcia lost her 19-year-old nephew, John Kreslin, in an impaired driving crash just four days after he started his sophomore year at Butler University. John was a passenger in a car, along with three girls in the backseat. The driver hit a tree traveling over 65 MPH in a residential area; everyone in the car was severely injured, John was the only one that lost his life.

Meg and her family were devastated. She was heartbroken for her sister, Rita Kreslin, and sad that John would never fulfill his dream of becoming a pharmacist.

For over seventeen years Meg has supported her sister, driving with her to countless high school and college prevention programs to aid in moral support and help spread AAIM's Mission. Meg continues to volunteer and work at local AAIM events in support of other families who have lost loved ones to an impaired driver.

Meg's desire to give back is endless. She has served on AAIM's benefit committee for fifteen years and has chaired the silent auction for eight years. Her time and talent to create gift baskets for AAIMs annual fundraiser and silent auction is unmatched. Her willingness to go the "extra mile" is well known to the AAIM family, and we are fortunate to benefit from her contributions.

Meg's continued support of victims and lifesaving efforts make her a worthy recipient of this award. Congratulations!

Past Sheila Forsner Award Recipients

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



From left: Chet Stanley, Gerry Olmsted, Bob Cebrzynski, Shelly Anderson, Charlie Wooley, Sandy Olmsted, Rita Kreslin, and Lisa Lilly



Doug Petit

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.

PATRICIA BURNS

RECIPIENT OF THE DIANE MAINS AWARD 2020



**Victim Witness Specialist
Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Markham Court House**

Patricia grew up in the Chicagoland area. She went to College of DuPage, where she graduated with an Associate of Applied Science degree and then went on to the University of Illinois at Chicago, graduating with her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology. Patricia has been working in the Victim Witness Unit at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office for the last 13 years, working with victims and witnesses of violent crime as well as their families. She mostly works with families on felony cases, including homicide, reckless homicide, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Patricia is happily married and enjoys traveling and hiking.

We are proud to award Patricia with the Diane Mains Award.

Respectfully submitted by AAIM Victim Advocates

OUTSTANDING ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY



Mary Cole

**Lake County Assistant State's Attorney
Lake County Court House**

In 2013, Mary received her undergraduate degree in Paralegal Studies from Southern Illinois University. During this time, Mary served as a Domestic Violence Victim's Advocate for the Williamson County State's Attorney's Office. After three and a half years as a Victim Advocate, she returned home to Lake County. She

worked at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office from 2015 – 2016 in the Special Prosecution Bureau Gang Crimes Unit and the Domestic Violence Unit. Mary graduated from John Marshall Law School in 2016 and began working as an Assistant Public Defender in Dekalb County. Since 2018, Mary has worked at the Lake County State's Attorney's Office in the traffic and misdemeanor division.

Mary quickly gained the respect of many in Lake County by her professionalism, calm demeanor, and genuine dedication. Mary is a diligent but fair prosecutor who believes that "one-sided compassion is just as dangerous as no compassion."

Mary Cole deserves this recognition for her hard work; she is an asset to the Lake County State's Attorney's office. Our community and our streets are safer because of her.

Congratulations from AAIM's Court Monitors!

OUTSTANDING ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY

Desirée Sierens
Boone County Assistant State's Attorney
Boone County Court House



Desirée Sierens is an Assistant State's Attorney in Boone County, Illinois, where she primarily prosecutes felony offenses under the Illinois Vehicle Code. Desirée graduated from the University of Illinois in 2002 and graduated Cum Laude from Northern Illinois University College of Law in 2006, where she was Managing Editor of Law Review. In 2006, Desirée started her career as a misdemeanor and traffic prosecutor in Boone County, Illinois. She left for a brief period of time to prosecute in Winnebago County, Illinois but returned to Boone County in 2016. Desirée has prosecuted a wide variety of crimes throughout her career, from ordinances to murder, but her passion is prosecuting felony traffic offenses. In so many of those cases, peoples' lives are turned upside down due to the selfish decisions of those who drive while impaired. She is honored to work with victims, their families, advocates, law enforcement, and fellow members of the Boone County State's Attorney's Office in bringing justice to impaired drivers.

***We are proud to recognize Desirée with the
Outstanding Assistant State's Attorney Award.
Respectfully submitted by AAIM Victim Advocates***

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

Outstanding State's Attorneys

2007 - Paul Chevin – 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

Outstanding State's Attorneys (continued)

2011 - Mohammad Almad – Rolling Meadows Courthouse
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 Falagario – 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

AAIM 2020

Together We Rise

Virtual Benefit

Friday October 23rd, 2020

7:00 pm

<https://aaim1.ejoinme.org/togetherwerise>

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, 36 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 2020

Together We Rise

Virtual Benefit

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<https://aaim1.ejoinme.org/togetherwerise>

AAIM's Programs

AAIM PROGRAMS

Victim Services

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

Advocates provide support to all ages, gender, colors, disabilities, language barriers, and undocumented immigration status. Since 2007, AAIM has provided victim advocacy to 140,093 victims. Last year, we served 2319 victims, and we project we will serve 1900 or more in 2021.

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 being 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 by way of AAIM's Victim Assistance Fund, established in 1991, to aid those families that face financial devastation due to death or serious injury caused by an intoxicated driver. Today's benefit, which is now in its 30th year, raises money for the Victim Assistance Fund. Since 1991, through our donors' generosity, over \$817,912.00 has been donated to families who are in a financial crisis as a result of uninsured and underinsured impaired drivers. AAIM is the only organization in the state of Illinois and possibly the nation to give direct financial assistance to victims of impaired driving crashes.

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 lead to a DUI arrest. In 2019, AAIM gave \$23,900 in rewards. We have awarded \$729,000 has been paid to 8,071 tipsters. 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.

AAIM PROGRAMS

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 panels in Cook, Dekalb, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, Will, Ogle, Jo Daviess, and Winnebago Counties every month. Panels are also presented in Spanish in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, Will, and Winnebago Counties.

School Presentations – 3D Program: Dangerous Driving Decisions

AAIM understands the changing world in which we live, where impaired driving is becoming far too normalized. Whether it be alcohol, drug, or technology impairment, we want to encourage drivers to be safe on the road and believe change begins with our youth. Our 3D Program, Dangerous Driving Decisions, focuses on choices and making the right choice when we get behind the wheel. There are many choices that we have to make every day that can either benefit or harm us. When driving on the road, the choices we make are on a life or death basis. We at AAIM are continually working to promote the choices that keep drivers alive and safe. **AAIM TO SAVE LIVES** by choosing never to make dangerous driving decisions. Teachers and administrators influence the lives of their students, as well. Make it a positive influence by inviting AAIM to speak at your school.

Community Outreach Program

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

AAIM PROGRAMS

influence on the lives of their students. Help prevent underage drinking and work to change the environment that encourages risky alcohol and drug use in your community. AAIM's Community Outreach Program will provide you with expert advice designed to help middle and high school students. 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 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 on a regular basis. 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 that 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.

AAIM PROGRAMS

The award package consists of a lapel pin; a letter of appreciation, and a 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.

Prevention and Education Specialist

The Prevention and Education Specialist educates the public about the devastation caused by underage drinking, drug misuse, impaired and distracted driving. AAIM Personnel are passionate and have a strong desire to work with youth, the community and positively impact others' lives.

AAIM Prevention and Education Programs work to reduce substance misuse, underage drinking, impaired and distracted driving crashes.



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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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:



Jessica Zinck
Director of Victim Services



Kelly Krenzer
Victim Advocate



Cindy Huerta
Victim Advocate



Carrie Kilpatrick
Victim Advocate



Kristina Lawler
Victim Advocate



Rosemary Woods
Victim Advocate

COURT MONITORING PROGRAM

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



***Court Monitor Director
Cathy Stanley***



***Court Monitor Program
Successor
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 account-able 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:



Crystal Beltran



Barb Cutro



Doug Petit



Kay Rivera



Carol Russell



Joyce Synek

PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

AAIM Prevention and Education Specialists service the Chicagoland Communities. They increase public awareness and knowledge about alcohol, drug misuse, impaired and distracted driving in the community.

They promote alcohol and drug-free events throughout the year, particularly in high schools, with appropriate emphasis on high-risk events, such as homecoming, spring break, prom, and graduation.

Our staff present alcohol and drug prevention and education programs, encouraging healthy behaviors in children, their families, and other adults.

Dedicated Staff:



Samantha Gallagher



Rachael Stewart

AAIM's PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

AAIM's DrunkBusters Program

AAIM initiated the “DrunkBusters” program in 1990 to encourage drivers with cellular phones to report erratic driving to police. Tipsters receive \$100 for 9-1-1 calls that lead to DUI arrests. To date, the AAIM DrunkBuster Program has paid out over \$705,100 to concerned citizens resulting in the arrest of over 7,837 impaired motorists. AAIM's goal is to promote and expand this program in more counties and to encourage citizens to alert police to erratic drivers.

AAIM has partnered with IDOT and the Pace Suburban Bus Company to promote and advertise this life-saving program through awareness posters placed on selected buses throughout the Chicago Metropolitan area.



AAIM'S YOUTH VICTIM IMPACT PANEL

A Word About Youth

If you are a parent of a teenager or someone who works with teenagers, you have done your share of worrying about the potential risks in their lives. Underage drinking, illicit drug use, dangerous driving, and other risky behaviors are just a few of the challenges facing our youth.

Many adolescents are making positive choices and thriving in their community. They are more involved in school, volunteering and even exploring their spirituality. In years past, society looked at underage drinking as a rite of passage. Today we know better, we understand the long-term health risks and the devastation one wrong decision can make in someone's life.

That being said, the risks facing teenagers are real. They are also different for every individual. Among 12th graders, around six (5.8) percent continue to report daily use of marijuana, which corresponds to about one in 16 high school seniors. Among all grades, perceptions of harm and disapproval of marijuana use have trended downward in recent years. One in four 12th graders report that regular marijuana use poses a great risk (26.7 percent, which is less than half of what it was 20 years ago), and disapproval among 12th graders remains somewhat high, with 66.7 percent reporting they disapprove of adults smoking marijuana regularly.



Rita Kreslin



Doug Petit

AAIM'S YOUTH VICTIM IMPACT PANEL

Past-month use of alcohol was reported by 8.2 percent, 18.6 percent, and 30.2 percent of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, respectively, compared to 10.2 percent, 25.7 percent, and 39.2 percent in 2013. Daily alcohol use and binge drinking (defined as consuming five or more drinks sometime in the past two weeks) also decreased significantly among all grades between 2013 and 2018.

In cooperation with the Department of Probation and Court Services of the 18th Judicial Circuit Court of DuPage County, AAIM began its first YVIP in 2014. The program targets individuals twenty-four years old and younger. This age group attends a YVIP in place of the court-ordered adult Victim Impact Panel.

This program is an important tool in the prevention of recidivism. It's needed for individuals who are facing penalties for DUI, underage drinking, and related offenses. Our goal is to empower young adults and teenagers to make good choices and decisions in their lives. To better communicate with their parents to help ensure a positive future. We encourage judges, state's attorneys, and local prosecutors to consider having this age group attend the YVIP.



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 2019 are:

Aurora Police Department for making the most DUI arrests in Illinois (517)

Carol Stream Police Department for making the most arrests per officer in Illinois (5.30).

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 at last year's Benefit. They include municipalities, sheriff deputies, and state troopers

2019 TOP COPS

The following officers are recognized at AAIM's 2020 Benefit for making 100 or more DUI arrests in 2019:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Arrests</u>
Trooper Lucas Sniady	ISP District Chicago	196
Trooper Eric David	ISP District Chicago	176
Investigator Andrew Hartman	Rockford PD	161
Officer Elliot Tupayachi	Chicago PD District 19	134
Officer Jeffrey Kriv	Chicago PD District 12	127
Officer Pawel Kozaka	Chicago PD District 12	118
Officer Brandt Parsley	Bloomington PD	118
Investigator Emilio Marquez	Rockford PD	114
Officer Mark Januszewski	Chicago PD District 24	110
Officer Alberto Zayas	Chicago PD District 10	108
Officer Paul Dublinski	Elgin PD	103
Trooper James Knaperek	ISP District Chicago	103

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. In just a few clicks, you can create, share and collect support for your online fundraiser.

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 AAIM.



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

AAIM 2020

Together We Rise

Virtual Benefit

Friday October 23rd, 2020

7:00 pm

<https://aaim1.ejoinme.org/togetherwerise>

AAIM's Partnerships

ROADSIDE MEMORIAL MARKERS

In August 2007, the Governor signed HB 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 Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for the installation of a memorial marker sign to be placed at the location of the crash. 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 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 VILLAGE OF HAMPSHIRE

September 19, 2018, a roadside marker bearing the name Nicholas Kilpatrick was unveiled and serves to remind people of the tragedies caused by impaired drivers. Nicholas was 17 years old and riding a skateboard when he was struck and killed by a drunk driver on September 9, 2014.

Carrie Kilpatrick, Nicholas' mother, has waited a long time for this memorial marker. "The pain and grief of losing a child will never go away; this marker gives some comfort knowing that Nicholas' memory will live on and bring awareness to the pain that comes from this senseless crime."

Roadside DUI Memorial Markers have appeared on state highways since August 2007, when HB 1900 was signed into law, creating the roadside memorial.

For many years, AAIM has been working with local agencies to install signs where a fatality occurred as the result of an impaired driver. Family and friends of crash victims often erect temporary makeshift memorials which are often removed because they can become a distraction to other drivers.

Thanks to the Village of Hampshire this sign was erected and will be maintained by the village. AAIM is pleased that the village supported this program and worked hard to make it come to fruition.

This program acknowledges the victims in a dignified manner. The uniform, easily-recognized signs also create awareness of the dangers of alcohol and drug-impaired driving and will help prevent these tragedies.



JESSE WHITE CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY

For the Victims of Impaired and Distracted Driving Crashes

A candlelight memorial ceremony for the victims of impaired and distracted driving crashes was held on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, at Our Lady of Hope Church, 9711 W. Devon Avenue in Rosemont, IL

Remarks were given by Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, Mayor of Rosemont Bradley A. Stephens, and Donald E. Stephens III, Rosemont Superintendent of Public Safety.

Reverend John Clemens, Retired Pastor of Our Lady of Hope Church, gave the Invocation and Benediction.

Personal stories were be shared by victims whose lives were forever altered by impaired and distracted driving.

Impaired Driving – Heather Lopez story. Heather’s husband, Manny, was severely injured in a drunk driving crash. Manny had been working for the Breath Alcohol Section of the Illinois State Police at the time, making this ironic. Little did they know, that day, their lives would be drastically changed by a drunk driver.

Distracted Driving – Connie Onley story. A moment of distraction led to a personal tragedy that took the life of John Hauptman. John lost his life because of a driver TEXTING... Because of this one second in time, he will never be able to see his children grow up. The fact that he died at the hands of a young man that had to respond to a text message is just unbelievable.

This ceremony was held to honor victims and their families



Secretary of State Jesse White



Heather Lopez

JESSE WHITE CANDLELIGHT CEREMONY



Reverend John Clemens



Mayor Brad Stephens



Donald E. Stephens III



Ebinger Elementary School Treble Choir

The warmest thanks to:

Pastor Wojciech Olesky,
Our Lady of Hope Church
and the Ebinger Elementary
School Treble Choir



AAIM 2020

Together We Rise

Virtual Benefit

Friday October 23rd, 2020

7:00 pm

<https://aaim1.ejoinme.org/togetherwerise>

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—————
Thanks for your
important work, AAIM!

Best Wishes,
Retired Circuit Judge Bob Anderson





Boone County State's Attorney Tricia Smith



**Salutes AAIM for their efforts to
end impaired and distracted
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Best wishes on AAIM's efforts to help DUI Victims

————— *Together We Rise* —————

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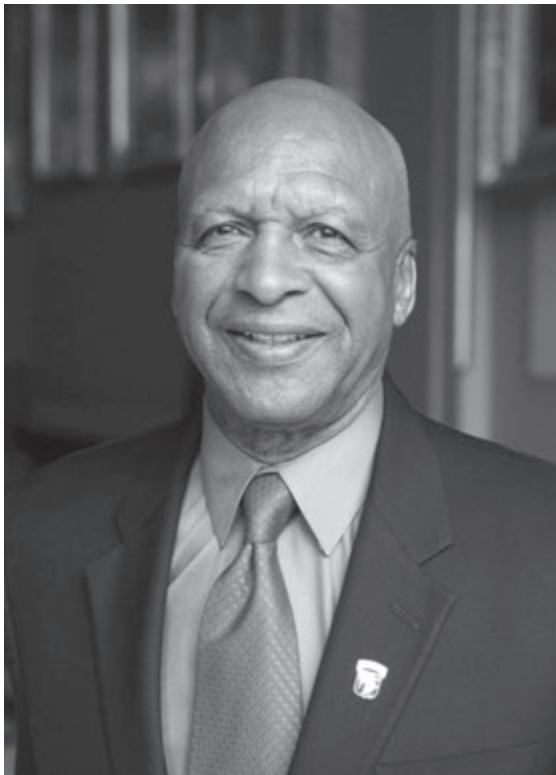
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Jesse White
Illinois Secretary of State

Salutes AAIM for your work
in the fight against
intoxicated motorists.



Together we are making a difference.



*A Partnership Dedicated to the Education and Enforcement of
Intoxicated Motorists*



The men and women of the Buffalo Grove
Police Department commend AAIM for
their efforts against drunk and impaired
driving, and wish them continued success
in their efforts to assist DUI victims.



*Steven R. Casstevens
Chief of Police*



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The East Dundee Police Department is proud to partner with AAIM. We greatly appreciate the recognition AAIM gives to our top DUI Officers, and pledge to continue this strong partnership.

Chief George E. Carpenter
the men and women of the
East Dundee Police Department

*Thank you, AAIM for making
Illinois roadways safer for all of us!*

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Thank you AAIM for all the
Love, Hope and Strength
you give to those affected
by impaired and distracted
driving crashes.

May God continue to bless you all!

Our Lady Of Hope Church
Rosemont, IL





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you more than ever"*
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Tyler and Avery



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THANK YOU AAIM
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commitment and dedication.

McHenry County State's Attorney
Patrick Kenneally



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William G. Piotrowski, CPA
E-mail: wpiotrowski@piotax.com





JOE SOSNOWSKI
State Representative

Proudly supports AAIM and their efforts to assist victims

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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 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. With Jenni's death, we were given 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 twenty-three years since Jenni passed, but still it seems like yesterday that she was here with us. I 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.

We now have two beautiful grandchildren, Austin 14 and Emma 10. We often wonder if Jenni were still here how many more grandchildren we would have. We will never know, because of the selfish choice of a drunk driver.

Your loving Mom, Dad and Sister

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



It takes away faces ...

As a miracle recovery crash victim, I have had the enormous privilege and the heavy responsibility to be a spokesperson for other crash victims, particularly teens, who have not survived or who have incapacitating injuries. In my impaired driving prevention presentations, I always tell that "this is not my face" because of damage done by a drunk driver. And, I ask listeners to always remember what impaired driving does ... "it takes away faces and it takes away lives!"

Although the crash was years ago, my story is still too familiar today.

When I was fifteen years old, my father and I were hit head-on by a drunk driver, who was going 90 miles per hour. I was in the passenger seat, not wearing a safety belt - this was before safety belt laws. I was gravely injured. My face went through the windshield and I whiplashed back. The glass slit my throat from ear to ear and severely lacerated my face - this was before windshield safety glass. The force of the crash shattered part of my skull, knocked out my front teeth and broke my femur. I was thrown under the dashboard and trapped in the car.

In the ambulance, I was bleeding so badly that the paramedics did not have enough clamps to stop the blood loss. They had to also use the bobby pins that were holding a ribbon in my hair to clamp some of the blood vessels.

THE MARTI MULL BELLUSCHI STORY

At the hospital, the doctors performed a tracheotomy, so I could breathe, and spent six hours trying to stop the bleeding and put my body back together. I was wheeled out of the emergency room with even my face covered by a sheet. The nurses told my mother that if she wanted to know I was still alive she could touch my hand, but they did not want her to see what I looked like. I was in a coma for five days and immobilized in traction in a hospital bed for 2 1/2 months.

My father suffered serious physical injuries, a shattered kneecap, broken hand, broken arm and facial lacerations. But sadly, his most significant and most painful injury was that what happened to me broke his heart.

I have never seen Arthur, the drunk driver, who was also seriously injured. He was 21 years old. He was uninsured and unemployed. He never spoke to my family. He never said he was sorry. The only consequence of his unconscionable actions was losing his driver's license for 90 days.

Although some injuries and difficulties continue all these years later, many blessings have also come to me. One very important positive result of being a crash survivor is my involvement with AAIM as a volunteer, spokesperson, Board member and friend. Today, of course, the sanctions for the impaired driver would be much more severe - due in part to the dedication and efforts of AAIM. Today, of course, many teens do not have a story like mine to tell - due in part to the dedication and efforts of AAIM.

Thank you AAIM for all of your good works.

Together we are saving faces and saving lives!

Marti Mull Belluschi

THE KEVIN WILLIAM BENES TRIBUTE

June 8, 1990 – December 11, 2009

December 11, 2009, Friday, two weeks before Christmas, our lives changed forever. My 19-year-old son, Kevin, was on his way home from work when his life was tragically taken by an impaired driver. Kevin's plans and dreams for a bright future were taken from him. Kevin got out of work early that December day. He was waiting at the intersection of 143rd after exiting I-355, waiting for the light to change. The light was green now, Kevin started to turn onto 143rd street when, CRASH! A white pickup truck went through a red light going 70 mph, t-boned Kevin's car, hitting his driver's side door and crushing Kevin in the car. This occurred right in front of the Homer Glen fire department, the rescuers heard the crash and were on the scene immediately to try and help Kevin. The EMT's worked diligently to cut the crushed car that surrounded Kevin. Kevin was rushed to Silver Cross Hospital where doctors tried to save him, but they were unable to save Kevin, he was dead! Killed by an impaired driver.



Kevin was killed because a repeat DUI offender, CHOSE ONCE AGAIN to get behind the wheel of his truck while intoxicated and violently crashed into Kevin's car at a high rate of speed, instantly killing him. The DUI offender made a plea deal in April 2011 and was sentenced to six years in prison. On April 13, 2016 the offender was released from prison; he was able to go home to his family. Kevin was not given that chance, he was taken from his family. We are serving a life sentence without Kevin.

It's almost eleven years since that tragic day Kevin was taken from us, yet each day is still a challenge. Although time has gone by, the pain is still the same. So many feel the loss of Kevin, our bright boy, our hope for the future. Kevin's death leaves a painful hole in our lives. We are still trying to learn "how" to live without Kevin. Living without one of my children is painfully hard. No matter how "good" life seems at times, I always wonder how much better it could be if he were here with us. No matter what, he is always missing. No matter what, my heart will always ache for my son. No matter what, life will only be as good as it could possibly be, minus Kevin. To me that's not good enough, yet, somehow, I have to accept that's as good as it's going to get. This I know: I love

THE KEVIN WILLIAM BENES TRIBUTE

more deeply than I ever dreamed possible, and I cry more than I ever dreamed possible, too.

We were blessed to have Kevin in our lives for nineteen years six months and three days. During this time, I, along with everyone who knew Kevin had the chance to watch him grow into a loving, kind, responsible, man, brother and son. Kevin was a big brother to Matthew, Amy and Jillian. Everyday our family had together I witnessed the love abound and laughter galore. Kevin was an encouraging, supportive big brother, who loved to play practical jokes and make everyone laugh. Kevin was a family man and generously shared his love with all his family and those close to him. Kevin was not only a caring man, but a responsible man. He graduated from Lockport High School in the top ten percent of his class. He was an Illinois State Scholar and a two-sport athlete. Kevin had already shown us how hard -working and responsible he was. He then went on to become the third-generation electrician in his family. We were all so proud of Kevin! He was well on his way to grasping and living his dream.

What I can say is I'm better for knowing him, loving him, and missing him. He makes me the best me. Our love does that. When I think I can't do it anymore, our love reminds me I can do anything. I've already done the hardest thing there is, and no matter how much my heart aches for Kevin during the holidays, or any day of the year, I am thankful for Kevin, extremely grateful, that I got to be Kevin's mom.

*On days like this,
When the ache is visceral,
And I fall deeply into the hole you left behind,
I try to remind myself that nothing, absolutely nothing,
Can ever take away the MEMORIES we made,
The JOY we shared, and the LOVE we have still.
Our love is FOREVER.*

Angela Miller-author

Kevin, we love you, you are in our hearts forever!
Marilyn Benes (mother)
Thank you AAIM for your continued support!!

THE JASON BLATTER STORY

November 18, 1986



On the night of February 2, 2019, our lives forever changed when our son, Jason, was struck by a drunk driver. Around 2:30am on February 3rd, we received the phone call all parents' dread. The voice on the other end asked if I knew Jason Blatter and I stated, "Yes, I am his mom." She asked me to remain calm, but to get to the hospital, and to call family. We were in shock and scared. All I could do was ask, "God, please let us keep our son. He has so much left to do."

I don't remember a lot of what was being said. I heard he was alive, but he had little brain activity, and his prognosis was not good. There lying in

this bed was our son, draped with tubes and hooked up to so many machines. His head was bandaged and had staples in it. His left eye was bruised and swollen shut. He had an incision all the way up his abdomen. He was on a ventilator and sedated. He had simultaneous surgeries, a splenectomy, and a craniotomy, due to the impact of the crash. He suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury, and his left bone flap had been removed due to brain swelling. He also suffered three rib fractures, a severe knee injury, an orbital fracture and sinus injuries.

We were living hour to hour. As time passed, we sat bedside hoping for any sign that Jason was still with us. We were told not to have any expectations, but every movement or sound, gave us hope. I would hold his hand and whisper to him, that he is strong, that we love him, and that the waiting room was full of people praying for his recovery.

Jason started responding to short verbal commands. This road would be a long one, but he was with us, and we would do whatever needed to support him. Two weeks after the crash he was transferred to Shirley Ryan Ability Lab. During his almost four-week stay. He attended physical, occupational, and speech therapy daily. Once he was released, he participated in outpatient therapy until his graduation on July 3, 2019. The bone in his skull was replaced on May 17, 2019, using 50 screws and plates. He endured a seven-hour knee surgery in December of 2019 and is currently finishing physical therapy. Jason has lost vision in his left eye, and partial vision in his right eye.

As his mom, every day, I wish there were something I could do to take away all the pain he has endured. The most important thing is that Jason is here with us today! We are so grateful to our family and friends that have walked this journey with us. A special thank you to AAIM for their support.

J.J. and Diane Blatter, Tony Blatter, Meg Chrisman, and Kathleen Sulikowski
#blatterstrong

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 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 eight years since Tony died and my family is still struggling everyday to deal with this loss.

There is not enough time or words to describe Tony. He was an 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 piggy back 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 backwards) as a tribute to him. The Y-noT Project is dedicated to stopping intoxicated boating. Driving a boat is one of 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 11:02pm, 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. 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 of 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 was 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 breath.

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 would have checked to make sure Dallis, Tiffany and Daniel were wearing their seatbelts, then Dallis would have survived. 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 me and my new wife 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 my mom dying on the second anniversary of the crash.

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 21st. 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 that wants to know my family; that enjoys hearing my stories. 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 a.m. for me to celebrate. I called in to work telling my manager; “Mollie is pregnant. I am drinking champagne and I am not coming into 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 grief is

THE THOMAS BURLESON STORY

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 is when Elijah, my son, 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, that 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 everyday 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



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. Something inside me died the day my son was killed. I'll never have another opportunity see his beautiful smile, hug him, or tell him I love.

Frankie, (my son Frank, Jr 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.

We're grateful for the good times that we shared and the fun stories that were 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



This past November 2019 marked the fifteen-year anniversary of our daughter's death, Cindy, at the hands of a drunk driver. To commemorate this sad occasion, we offered up a mass for Cindy's intention. Gathered for the mass, were our family members and many close friends. To celebrate the mass, we asked our close family friend, Fr. Pat Murphy, who more than consented. Fr. Murphy was there and participated fifteen years ago during the funeral mass for Cindy. During his homily, he recalled how shocked everyone was when the news of Cindy's passing reached them. He also brought pleasant memories to everyone as he recalled seeing Cindy and Chris with us in church as they were growing up. In addition, he gave everyone the hope and understanding that while we will never be able to comprehend why tragedies occur, God is always with us to grant us the love and strength to make it through daily life as difficult as it sometimes may be.

Fifteen years, a long time? Yes, and too often in a memory. No! Cindy's passing has transformed our family in ways never imaginable. Almost every family occurrence corresponds with a thought of what the event would have been like if Cindy were here. The birth of our two grandchildren begs the question of how much love they are missing from Aunt Cindy who never got to see or hold them in her arms. Birthdays and holidays are always framed with the belief that they would surely be different if Cindy were still alive.

It is difficult and sometimes almost impossible to put down on paper one's feelings after having lost a child. Days turn into weeks, weeks turn into years, yet no matter how many years pass the hurt of losing a child is always there, a constant loss in our hearts. God, as well as our family and friends, have helped us to learn over these many years how to get through the loss of Cindy. We'll never be able to get over the loss.

God, please keep Cindy close to you in heaven as we await the day, we will be able to join with her once again.

Cindy, we love and miss you,
Mom and Dad
Pam and Bob Cebzynski

THE NADIA CHOWDHURY TRIBUTE

May 14, 1983 – February 21, 2004

It has now been more than sixteen years since our beloved daughter, Nadia, was snatched away by drunk and reckless drivers at the UIUC (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) campus in 2004. Nadia went to UIUC for higher studies after graduating from Naperville Central High School in 2002.



Nadia's life was as short as a rainbow in her family's and friend's lives. To keep the memory of Nadia and her dream alive we established a Computer Literacy Center (CLC) in collaboration with Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB) and their Computer Literacy Program (CLP). In Nadia's name, we promote education and the usage of computers among the very underprivileged youth, especially girls, in Bangladesh. The CLP is a way to bridge the 'digital gap' between underprivileged students in rural Bangladesh and their counterparts from developed nations as well as well-to-do families.

The CLC is a humble endeavor, by her family and friends, to materialize Nadia's goal of making a difference in the lives of others in the multicultural global societies. We believe that through adequate, training, tools, and technologies the underprivileged are more likely to create a more balanced socio-economic structure and a just society in Bangladesh and elsewhere. Since inception of the center more than 75 students have been trained each year.

*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 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 laid 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. 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 talk with me. I remember every painful minute 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 single 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 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.

THE PAUL CONRAD AND SHERYL ANDREASEN TRIBUTE

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 at trying to live. 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 two 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.

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"*

Unknown

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 ALEXIS SYMONE DANLEY TRIBUTE

June 26,1990 - June 30, 2017



Alexis was a bibliophile, a bookworm. She loved to read as a child, especially Harry Potter. Alexis owned every Harry Potter book. Alexis was a social butterfly with a strong, big personality, but with a gentle caring soul, heart, voice, beautifully infectious smile and laugh. Alexis was a loyal, dedicated friend, with strong family values, whose love for family should never be underestimated.

Alexis enjoyed family gatherings, hanging out with her friends, TV date nights, going out to eat, shopping and going to the movies. Alexis took on motherhood valiantly. She loved and adored her little “Nugget”, her daughter Alyanna. Alexis was always trying to help, feed, and lift someone up. She never looked down on anyone. Alexis would give everything she had away and everything I had away also. That included her time.

Alexis’ daughter Alyanna, our granddaughter, 10 months old, was also in the car on the fatal night of June 30, 2017. Alyanna survived the automobile crash without an injury or scratch (THANK GOD FOR CAR SEATS!) even though Alyanna lost her mother Alexis and baby sister A’maia. Alexis was six months pregnant at the time of the crash. In the blink of an eye and five minutes away from home, Alyanna became a motherless child and we lost our beloved daughter Alexis and her unborn child/granddaughter A’maia. That night, Alexis went to the movie theater and never made it home.

Our life is forever changed. My emotions go full circle from shock to anger because Alexis did not have a chance to survive and she does not get a second chance at life. Alexis died at the age of 27 with so much love to give and so much more life in her. Words cannot express how much we love and miss our daughter Alexis. There isn’t a day that goes by that I, as Alexis’s mother don’t think about Alexis, or cry.

In Loving Memory of
Alexis Symone Danley and baby A’maia

PLEASE...

Please, don't ask me if I'm over it yet.

I'll never be over it.

Please, don't tell me he's in a better place.

He isn't here with me.

Please, don't say at least he isn't suffering.

*I haven't come to terms with why he had
to suffer at all.*

Please, don't tell me you know how I feel.

Unless you have lost a child.

Please, don't ask me if I feel better.

Bereavement isn't a condition that clears up.

*Please, don't tell me at least you had him
for so many years.*

What year would you choose for your child to die?

*Please, don't tell me God never gives us
more than we can bear.*

Please, just say you are sorry.

Please, just say you remember my child, if you do.

Please, just let me talk about my child.

Please, mention my child's name.

Please, just let me cry.

Rita Moran

THE STEPHEN DEWART STORY



Disasters strike our world constantly, impacting people physically, mentally, financially, and socially. Rarely can we control natural disasters; yet we often prepare for them diligently, as if to say with confidence, “We’re ready.”

All too often, however, we encounter man-made disasters.

While these events are generally controllable, rarely can we prepare for their consequences. They usually happen in a split second—never enough time to gather our defenses.

Indeed. It was a beautiful sunny Saturday, just past noon. Downtown Chicago felt alive and well—and so did I. A group of us were gathered on the sidewalk, a safe and secure refuge from the passing automobiles filling the roads around us. Then, in the blink of an eye, our cocoon exploded.

Instantly, I saw a white truck barreling into me. I heard its motor accelerate. I recall thinking in a flash, “Why won’t it slow down?” A Ford F150 pickup was about to land on the sidewalk and struck me and six other bystanders. The driver, an on-duty City of Chicago trash collector, was intoxicated at the time of impact; police even found an open bottle of brandy in the city truck he drove.

The horror of seeing, hearing, and feeling such doom was itself toxic. Thankfully, we all survived, but it hurts me to posit that none of us will ever be the same again. I sustained fractures in my right leg, which required surgery to implant a permanent titanium rod. Four of my vertebrae were broken. I had numerous abrasions across my body.

The impact to my life has been indescribable. For months after the crash, I continued to encounter pain daily. I required intense physical

THE STEPHEN DEWART STORY

rehabilitation. A therapist worked with me weekly on my post-traumatic stress. I missed hundreds of hours of work and was forced to defer my admission to law school. My wife, family, and friends became my caretakers in many capacities since that day. I'm certain they must deal with their own issues because of that driver's decision to drive while drunk.

And that's just my story. Each of the other victims has his or her own, too. Make no mistake, the victims of which I speak of are not merely those who felt the truck that day. They're also the spouses, mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, friends, peers. In crashing a car into someone, an intoxicated driver declares war on that individual's entire livelihood.

Drunk driving truly epitomizes the manufactured violence that impacts its victims for the rest of their lives. It is a selfish, cowardly act that destroys, divides, confuses, and haunts. It's not a heat-of-the-moment infliction. It's not a crime of passion. It's a rare case of an entirely premeditated, completely preventable incident. One need only choose not to drive. How simple.

I'll admit: I was among the "most of us" who hear drunk-driving stories from the outside. We pause to contemplate the sadness, and move on. But on May 21, 2011, I became, forever more, an insider.

THE TROY EVERS TRIBUTE
August 28, 2000 - November 8, 2008

It will be 12 years since a drunk driver killed our son Troy. Troy was only eight years old. There is not a minute that goes by that we don't think of him.

As his mother, I know he is in Heaven looking down on us and his brother Chad. There are days, even now, that take our breath away because missing him is so painful. Yet, our faith keeps us strong.



*“As I sit in Heaven and watch you every day.
I try to let you know with signs I never went away.
I hear you when you're laughing and watch you when you sleep,
I even place my arms around you when you weep.*

*I see you wish the days away begging to have me home,
So I try to send you signs, so you know you're not alone.
Please don't feel guilty that you have life that was denied to me.
For Heaven is truly a beautiful place- just you wait and see.*

*So live your life, enjoy yourself and be free-
Then I know with every breath you take; you'll be taking one for me.”*

Troy, we miss you, and love you very much.
Grandpa planted a lollypop tree in his back yard in memory of you.
Auntie Linda does a hero walk against drunk driving in New Jersey.
Your brother Chad has now finished college.
Last year I suffered a stroke and have been fighting an uphill battle ever since.
The Ripple Effect of losing you has taken a toll on all of us.

We will love you always and forever,
Dad, Mom, and Chad

THE TANESSHA GATES STORY

December 4, 2015

A 23-year-old girl's life has been changed forever. A girl who had dream's and was the provider for her children. What I mean to say is, she'll 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 and trying to reach the goals she set for herself. She has four beautiful children who look up to her, but now they'll 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, who was her friend was with her that night and will never see his children and family 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. Due to the crash she had to relearn everything.

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

It took me 5 years to get back to my goals and complete school, but I did it. I never gave up! I am now a nurse.

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

Please don't drink and drive.

*Written by her loving sister,
Latricia Gates*

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.

To say the least, April 22nd 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.”

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.”

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

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 JOHN HAUPTMAN TRIBUTE

May 26, 1971 – June 20, 2018



John was many things to many people, a brother, a father, a friend. He had a close relationship with his sisters, and John's oldest sister, Gail was like a mother to John. Even though John's other sister Lisa was older than him in years, she always said "he's my big younger brother." They shared both laughter and tears with John over the course of his life. Once when he was three years old,

he was going upstairs, eating a plain cheeseburger (he loved plain cheeseburgers), and coming back down the stairs, he fell. Everyone was scared to death; they feared the worst! He got up from the landing and hollered, "my cheeseburger!" He was fine. We all laughed so hard. His only worry was that cheeseburger!

John was an exceptional guitar player. He saved his money when he was a teen, went to a pawn shop and bought a bass guitar. Our family was skeptical he'd learn to play that thing! He went home that summer and played until his fingers bled. As an adult he would gather with friends and family and play his acoustic guitar for us all. We all reminisce, and his music takes us to a special place, but that place also is filled with sadness and pain. We will never again receive that gift of listening to him play his guitar ever again.

John had three children, his son Johnnie 24, Kole 10, and Nyla 6. Although divorced from his wife they remained friends. They talked often and would get together to have outings with the kids, like going for ice cream or a play day at the park. Kole and Nyla thought their dad hung the moon!

On Father's Day 2018 at 8:30am the phone rang, on the other end of the phone was someone screaming and crying. It was John's girlfriend's daughter. She said John had been hit and was on life support. John

THE JOHN HAUPTMAN TRIBUTE

had a traumatic brain injury. The neurosurgeon said he had no chance. His brain stem was severed. We traveled from Iowa and Alabama. John's ex-wife was at the hospital, she was also a nurse, and prepared us for how bad it was. Papers had to be signed to take John off life support. There were ten people in his room. They were all praying for John. They all knew if there was any chance of John waking up, it would be when Gail got there. There was lots of begging John to wake up and come back to us, the tears were uncontrollable, he never moved or even knew we were there. It was the hardest thing we ever had to do.

Court is still in process for us, but John's six-year-old and ten-year-old wrote letters to the judge that would break your heart. How that they are "so sad they don't get to see their daddy anymore;" how they miss their talks, playtime, and the cookies he had at his house for them, and his hugs. John's ten-year-old son wrote to the judge that his dad "won't get to watch him grow up and he missed the fun he had with his dad."

John lost his life because of a driver TEXTING... Because of this one second in time he will never be able to see his children grow up. The sad part about all this is he hated people that use their phones while driving. It made him very angry to see people in today's society looking into their phones instead of socializing face to face. The fact that he died at the hands of a young man that had to respond to a text message is just unbelievable. Had he not been distracted; things might have turned out differently.

Written by John Hauptman's family

THE LEESLYEE HUERTA STORY

Fourteen years ago, a drunk driver caused a crash which left me paralyzed from my waist down.

It has not been easy; every day is a struggle. My mornings have been stressful. Some days I can't get up and I must stay in bed all day due to pain or having to rest from too much time in my wheelchair.

This year has been a crazy year for me. I was involved in a second car crash in December of 2019. My neck was injured so I had to start physical therapy and I couldn't drive or do my daily chores. Since I am already in a wheelchair and not able to walk, having my neck injured made it worse. I have been doing physical therapy for eight months already. Since that first crash, anything else that happens to my body always ends up worse. I try to stay positive as much as I can, but it's never easy. Sometimes I wonder how my life would be if I were never involved in that crash, what would I be doing right now?

Every day I ask myself, "I wonder how my skin is doing?" Since I am paralyzed, I can't feel if my skin is hurt or tired from being in the same position. Each day I struggle with checking my skin going to sleep, checking on my urine, having pain all over, checking my wheelchair to see if the tires are ok, to eating healthy, etc.

I volunteer for AAIM speaking at Victim Impact Panels, schools, or sometimes at churches. I love sending a message to those who think drinking and driving is okay. I love when offenders come to me after panels or find me on social media and let me know how big of an impact AAIM and my story has caused in their lives. Often, they stop driving drunk after hearing my story or they share how amazing AAIM's work to save lives is. It feels very good to know I am part of this amazing family.



Leeslyee Huerta



THE LEESLYEE HUERTA STORY

I forgave the guy that caused my crash years ago, and we have spoken together at panels. We got to meet in September again and we shared how our lives changed after the crash; how after 13 years we are still battling a lot of things due to that bad decision of drinking and driving that he made that night. He still feels guilt. My daughter got to meet him, too. She let him know that she doesn't hate him and that she forgives him.

One thing that has always helped me is the amazing support from AAIM. I don't see AAIM as an alliance, I see them as family! They are always there to help me every time a door closes, every time that I am down, or when I need extra help. They will help me with gift cards or more.

Last year, Margaret Borcia from the Y-Not project and AAIM together, helped me purchase a van so that I could drive safely, speak at Victim Impact Panels and keep sending a message of NOT DRINKING AND DRIVING.

I am so blessed to have such amazing people in my life, I don't have enough words to say THANK YOU!!

Thank you for loving each victim as if we were part of your family!!

God Bless You!



*From left, Leeslyee Huerta,
Amy Rutledge, WGN News,
and Margaret Borcia*

This story is sponsored by Patti and Allen Gustafson

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 BEATA JANULEK STORY

Where I come from, we stress the importance of family. The bonds we form are inseparable, and sometimes we can sense when a close one is in danger. There is a feeling that 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 streams of tears flowing down my cheeks I laid myself down 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 a countless number of 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 2019, the light of justice hasn't shined down on us. The man who caused the crash, who eventually admitted to be guilty of his actions after multiple attempts of trying to deny his fault in court, walks free. By now most of the physical damage has gone away, but the emotional toll is relived every now and then. The friendship between my mom and her friend slowly has 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 very difficult road to be traveled. Although in the back of my head, I always keep in mind that it could have been a lot worse.

Michal Junik, son of Beata and Libor Janulek

THE ANDREW KEATING TRIBUTE

October 26, 1989 – July 2, 2005



Andrew I can't believe it's been 15 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. My heart still hurts.

Andrew, your niece Lily is 8 years old and starting third grade. I can't believe our baby Lily is 8!

Ali, your younger sister graduated Suma Cum Laude this year from Southern Illinois University. I'm so very proud of her, as you would be.

Your sister Amanda is still working as a Dental Assistant and doing very well.

As for me, I just retired July 31, 2020 after working so many years. I so wish you were here so I could have spent more time with you.

Andrew, all your family and friends miss you so much. I can only Imagine the young man you would be at 30 years old.

Andrew, not a day goes by that you're not in my thoughts and heart.

I'll love you forever and ever, 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 sixth-year anniversary of Nick's death. In some ways it feels like forever and in other ways it feels like just yesterday. Nothing has changed; I still miss him just as fiercely, I always will. The emptiness I feel will stay with me forever; there is no way to fill the void of losing your child. Somehow, someday days and years come and go, and I have survived. I've survived because I have children that are my world and need me, even more so now because their father has since passed away. I have survived by finding purpose in my career by helping others. I have

survived because I have the best family and friends that are always there for me and my children. The pain and sadness however are something that stays with me and I just learned to live with, it's part of who I am now.

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 heartbeat 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, skull fractured and a multitude of other internal injuries; my heart was shattering repeatedly as he spoke. 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.

My youngest son, Christian, idolized his brother; he was his hero. They loved to fish and long board together. He wanted to be just like Nick; he is so lost. Keira, my daughter struggles with the fact that the last words she ever spoke to her brother were during an argument. We all carry so much guilt and regrets. We thought we had more time; we SHOULD have had more time. Every day without Nick is harder than the last. One of my greatest fears is that people will forget he existed; forget how Nick was charismatic, funny, fearless, protective and how he loved with his whole heart.

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. 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

This tribute is sponsored by Sally Hoffman

THE CHRISTOPHER KRENZER TRIBUTE

January 20, 1990 – August 26, 2010



This is the year of COVID19. A global pandemic, an unprecedented event in history, whether you believe it's true or not. It has dominated our conversations and affected our lives. But for my family, our thoughts this year are that this is the 10th anniversary of our son Christopher's death at age 20. I must tell you it's so hard to utter those words...he's been gone from this world for ten years! Tears still spring up in my eyes every time I think of him and a sharp pain still hits me in the chest. I struggle to wrap my mind around his death, the words, senselessness of it, and ache in my heart from missing my son. I struggle with the fact that we're back in court battling the defendant's post-conviction petitions for "relief". He felt his prison sentence of twelve years was too harsh. This

repeat drunk driver, who was also 20 years old, had a BAC of .15 and had THC in his system the night he killed Chris, felt his sentence was too tough. OUR SENTENCE IS A LIFE SENTENCE and the world is a lesser place without Chris in it.

Michael, our oldest, is now 32 years old. He recently broke down and had a "moment". He said he wished it were him that was killed instead of his brother. It broke our hearts. He's been carrying this feeling around for all these years. Michael has a form of autism called Asperger's syndrome and has a hard time communicating. Ten years ago, as a young adult, he just didn't know how to deal with the loss of his brother. Chris was his protector and always worried about how the world would treat Michael. The defendant has no idea what the trauma is like; the physical toll he has had on us and depression he has caused. There are no words on earth to describe the emotional and physical pain his actions caused us and so many people connected to us.

Every year I always share something new, something personal about Chris in his tribute. This year I just can't; it's different this year somehow. It feels like the crash is still fresh in my mind. At the same time, it feels like so long since I've seen my son's smile, had a hug and heard his laugh. It's heartbreaking to think of all the things the defendant has robbed us of. Chris was full of life. He had a great sense of humor; beautiful smile and I miss seeing the twinkle in his eyes. I look at his friends and I wonder what would Chris be doing now? Would he have a beard? I know it sounds silly, but you wonder about these things when you see his friends getting older and living their lives.

THE CHRISTOPHER KRENZER TRIBUTE

When the hospital called us ten years ago, little did we know from that moment on that our world would be shattered. Forever changed. It never occurred to us that night that Chris could be dead. We thought he would be in surgery or maybe ICU. The hospital staff put us in a small room when we arrived and a doctor and nurse came in and said “We’re sorry, but there was nothing we could do. His injuries were too severe.” And just like that, a big part of us died too.

The hospital asked if we wanted to see Chris. I prayed it wasn’t him as we entered the trauma room. I nearly fainted when I saw him. I was physically ill, thrown into a chair and vomited in one of those kidney-shaped dishes. A priest came in and gave Chris last rites. Towels were wrapped around Chris’s head to soak up the blood coming out of his ears and head. He had a ton of injuries, fractured skull, bruised lungs that could not be intubated, broken pelvis and ruptured spleen.

The man that killed him was 20 years old. He had a red light but blew threw it at between 93-104 miles per hour. Chris had a green light and was struck on the driver’s side of his Honda Civic. Chris’s car door and seat were crushed two and a half feet into the inside of his car. Chris was trapped in the back seat as there was no longer a front seat. A nurse witnessed the crash and was with Chris doing all that she could for him.

There was only one person that could have SAVED Chris that night, and that was the drunk driver. He could have stayed where he was and slept on his friend’s couch, called a taxi, rideshare program, friend, or even his parents for a ride. Instead, he chose to get in his vehicle and consequently killed our son. He bragged he was a better driver drunk than sober. You have no idea how mad that still makes me.

Losing Chris knocked us all to our knees. It was violent and traumatic. It changed our every breath, thoughts, and the very soul of who we were as people, and parents. I started speaking on AAIM’s victim impact panels one year after Chris’s death. Three years after Chris’s death I became one of AAIM’s advocates. I work in the Winnebago, Boone, and McHenry County Courthouses. I continue to support victims of impaired driving crashes, educate adults, offenders, and teens about the dangers of driving impaired and distracted. There are thousands of us in our state holding our heads in our hands each day with the same story. The story of this was preventable. This was senseless, and it needs to change. Please share Chris’s story and lead by example, don’t drive impaired or distracted; put the phone down while your driving. Going to court and sitting with distraught families isn’t a fun job; it’s a heartbreaking job seeing people suffer. Please, plan on how you are getting home before you start partying. It’s that simple.

Written by Chris’s parents,
Kelly and Art Krenzer

THE JOHN KRESLIN JR. TRIBUTE

August 26, 1983 – August 30, 2002



When I was growing up, I loved the change of seasons. Spring, summer, winter, and fall all have their measure of time and unforgettable memories. Traditionally, Labor Day marked the end of summer. As a young girl, I remember Labor Day's onset often meant that warm summer nights on the front porch would soon be ending. The streetlights would turn on earlier and bedtime wasn't far behind as we anxiously prepared for a new school year.

This time of year many parents are preparing for another school year. Shopping and budgets vary depending on the age of the child. Emotions run high, as our prize possessions are launched off into a world of new experiences, challenges and choices as they start a new season in school. This is true whether your child is going off to their first day of kindergarten or their first year of college. And during this Pandemic even more change is right around the corner.

I'd like to mark this new season of fall in memory of my son John. John lost his life at the age of 19 on August 30, 2002, the start of the Labor Day weekend. John had just started his sophomore year of college at Butler University in Indianapolis, where he was studying to become a Pharmacist. After drinking with friends, John had made the poor choice of getting into a car as a passenger along with three girls that were in the back seat; one of the girls was his girlfriend. The driver lost control of his car and hit a tree traveling over 65 mph. Everyone in the car was injured; my son was the only one that lost his life. The driver's BAC (blood alcohol concentration) was .13.

For years I have had a hard time understanding how something so senseless could happen to my son. I had spent many years talking to both my boys about being accountable and responsible for everything they choose to do in their lives. I was the type of parent that cut articles out of the local newspapers

THE JOHN KRESLIN JR. TRIBUTE

of tragedies that happened in our own neighborhood. I would post them on the side of my refrigerator to remind my boys of what could happen and what does happen if you ignore the choices you make and situations in which you put your self. A poor decision that cost John his life.

My first emotion dealing with my grief was anger. How could this tragedy happen to such a bright young man? A young man who had great plans for his life always seemed to know the difference between right and wrong. John was the type of kid that thought through the choices and decisions he made. This brings me to the realization that the accuracy of a study was done by the American Medical Association in 2003. “Research shows alcohol affects the developing teen brain differently from an adult brain. Alcohol use may impair memory, learning, decision-making and impulse control, to name a few”.

Shortly after John died, my journey through grief led me to AAIM. I had an overwhelming need to speak to high school students and share the story of what happened to my son. To talk about the choices he and his friends had made the night he lost his life.

Eighteen years have passed since my son's death, and this summer, I looked back at who I was before John's death and who I am today. I would not be who I am today without God leading me through this journey.

My goal has been to make a difference in others' lives by assisting parents and others through the grieving process of losing a child or loved one. Educating and illustrating the dangers of underage drinking and impaired driving.

If I may, I'd like to end with a piece of personal advice from a mother's heart. Whichever grade level your child is about to enter, remember, most children/teenagers will never admit it, but the most influential people in their lives are their parents. And when asked who they would least like ever to disappoint? They quickly answer...their Parents! So, when you think your children are not listening, never give up because the odds are they hear you loud and clear.

A mother's heart is always with her children.

Rita Kreslin

This tribute is sponsored by Wetoska Packaging, Elk Grove Village

THE FRANCIS AND HELEN LILLY TRIBUTE

Helen – September 26, 1923 – January 22, 2007

Francis (Frank) – March 22, 1918 – March 8, 2007



A dozen years. That's how long it's been since my parents, Frank and Helen Lilly, were killed by a drunk driver. And that's how long the driver's sentence was. A dozen years.

What happened in a dozen years?

The driver was released from prison.

My oldest brother and his wife are talking about retiring and moving from Minneapolis to somewhere closer to Chicago. That would have meant so much to my parents if they were still with us.

My next oldest brother finished a certification program and now plays his harp at hospitals to help patients relax and feel better. My parents, who so often volunteered at Hines Veterans Hospital (among many other places), would be so pleased about that if they were here.

My oldest niece finished a graduate program in scenic design and makes her living as a designer for stage productions all over the country. One of my favorite photos of my parents is at her college graduation. She's in her cap and gown and they look so proud. I know Mom and Dad would have gone to every production of hers that they could. One of the last things we did together was see the first play Michelle stage-managed at a Chicago theater.

I moved to a new home. One that would have made Mom happy because it's safer – it has a 24-hour doorman. I also started my own law firm, ran it for a decade, and transitioned to writing fiction full time. I think both my parents would have liked all those moves. I published my first novel, and 6 more after that with another coming out this November. My parents never read any of them. I hadn't written them yet.

And then there's everything in the lives of all their grandkids - plus my parents' nieces and nephews. My mom and dad were the ones who always gathered the extended family together for summer reunions or holiday parties. Now that they're gone, everyone feels scattered. My cousins' kids have kids and I don't know most of them.

My parents would have. My parents did.

So much my parents missed. So many people who lost so much; because one person on one day a dozen years ago chose to drink and drive.

THE IZAAH LOPEZ TRIBUTE

February 1, 2011 – March 25, 2019

I remember both days like they were yesterday. The day my son Izaiah Nathaniel Ornelas Lopez was born and the day he was taken from us. He was born at Copley Hospital on February 1, 2011 the day of the big blizzard. I knew he would bring storms, but never thought the storm would stay over me.

On March 25, 2019 Izaiah, his sister and grandpa had been at the park down the street from our house. They were walking home when Izaiah and his grandpa were hit crossing the road by a hit-and-run driver. I always thought I would be the one to go first. I never thought I would bury my child. Izaiah was called Zaya for short. Izaiah's smile would light up the room when he came in. He would be shy at first, but then he would open up. He was a wonderful, kind-hearted little boy.

I miss the little things he used to do. I find myself reminiscing on how he looked at whatever was happening around him or even how he would chew his food. It's unbelievable how every second hurts more than the last. The more I think of how my son was killed the more it hurts me to know his grandpa made the decision to cross the road.

For one week the police didn't know who hit my son and his grandpa. As much as I should hate the driver for killing my son, I also blame my son's grandpa for making the decision to cross the road with the children, especially a busy road. I feel the driver should be charged with murder. I know it wasn't his intention to hit and kill my son, but he knows what he did.

The day that changed my life forever was March 25, 2019. I got a call from my son's grandmother with the terrible tragic news that my son was hit by a car and she didn't know any details. I was getting ready for bed when she called at 7:45 p.m. Once I heard what happened I jumped up and 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 inside the emergency room and through the doors and I 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 wasn't alive. I felt they were hurting him doing the CPR. They stopped doing CPR and told me there was nothing else anyone could do for him. I felt so alone knowing my first born, who I thought would grow old with me was no longer alive. All I wanted was my son to be happy.

There are so many stories and memories of his short eight years of life that I could go on and on about. He was truly a wonderful boy and he knew more about video games than I thought. He will always be remembered and loved.

Written by his father,
Angelo Lopez



THE MANNY LOPEZ STORY

September 26, 2006



Fourteen 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 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

THE MANNY LOPEZ STORY

how 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) 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.

We are thankful for AAIM and the love and support they continue to give us. I’m now a victim speaker 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, ex-wife

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 6-year-old child. This choice has left a little girl without a mommy. No mommy to tuck her in at night, no kisses, hugs, or teach 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 10-year-old 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 four years since my niece was ripped away from this world. Four long, heartbreaking and horribly sad years. Every month there has been a court date; each month I face the person who caused this tragedy. This person hurt my family and took away a mother, daughter, niece, sister, and best friend. Four years of watching a precious child grow up without her mommy. Four years of seeing Tanya in her daughter's eyes.

I honestly hoped that the hard part would be over; but the trial will be starting soon. With the trial approaching my family and I get to relive that day over again. The day someone made a choice that took Tanya's life. Now it will be our turn to get justice for Tanya and her daughter.

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 DAVID NEWELL TRIBUTE
September 21, 1995 – November 16, 2017



David was living his best life. At 22 years old, he was a senior at the University of South Carolina, home to his beloved Gamecocks. He was a student in the prestigious Darla Moore School of Business. He was an active member of a fraternity, Chi Psi, known as The Lodge. Funny, highly intelligent, a friend to all, David had a large and diverse group of friends from schools and from sports, swimming, diving, lacrosse, basketball, baseball, football. Most of all, David was in love.

He'd known Rachael since the age of 10. They began dating at the beginning of their senior year of high school. From high school homecoming to senior prom, to fraternity formals and mountain weekends, their relationship remained a strong force. Although they attended colleges 5 states away from one another, they saw each other often. They worked together at summer camp, traveled to see her family in Australia, jumped out of an airplane together, and adopted a huge black lab puppy to raise together. They were planning on marrying after college and moving to Charlotte, NC to live near family and their college friends. But their plans never came to be. On November 15, 2017, as David was leaving campus following an exam, he was hit by a drunk, stoned, speeding driver. The official date of death is November 16th, allowing David to be placed on life support so his

THE DAVID NEWELL TRIBUTE

organs and tissues could be matched and harvested for donation. Instead of welcoming him home from Thanksgiving, we buried him. 1,500 people attended his funeral.

Since that dreadful day, I have tried to find ways to keep David's memory and spirit alive. We were the fortunate recipients of a "GoFundMe" account to help with funeral expenses. People were quite generous; I used to remaining money to start a scholarship fund in David's memory at the DMSOB at USC. I have been so touched by the generosity and kindness of others. As a member of a Facebook group, I recently asked if someone in the Columbia, SC area could leave a bouquet of flowers at the crash site on my son's birthday last month, more than 5,000 people responded in one form or another. Flowers and flowers and flowers were left at the site, donations were made to the scholarship, and people I've never met reached out to me. Throughout this tragedy, we have been the fortunate recipients of tremendous support, from our MADD SC advocate to the Prosecutor's Office, to the circle of friends at USC, our family and friends. This is what has gotten us through the many days we don't want to face the world, to allow others to see out grief and pain.

David was a vocal anti-impaired driving advocate, beginning from the age of 5, when he wrote in a first-grade essay, "*I will never drink and driv. I prims.*" As a college senior, the last persuasive speech David delivered, just days before he was killed, was again about the perils of drunk driving. At the age of 5, David knew. When will others learn?

THE ERIN ELIZABETH OLMSTED TRIBUTE

August 6, 1979 – March 2, 1997



I remember the evening Erin was born. I didn't know you could love another human being that much. She changed our lives in so many ways I can't even list them. She paved the way for a sister and brother, and upon their births, assumed the role of "little mommy". She helped me and watched over them both. She supported them in all their achievements, sitting in the stands alongside us cheering them on to victory. I remember Erin's first smile, her first steps, her first cold/fever, her cuddles, the mess she made as she learned to use a spoon, navigating the stairs as a toddler, sitting outside on the swing for hours, how easily she picked up the ability to roller-skate, ride a bike, bowl, golf and was even able to ride a unicycle! Her passion, though, was gymnastics. I remember how hard she worked to learn each skill and wouldn't give up till it was accomplished. She was stubborn, sensitive, trustworthy, sweet and dependable. She was impatient. She loved with her whole heart. She was a good daughter and sister. She was a good friend. I hope her friends knew how much she loved them. Erin loved life.....she took it on full-speed ahead and looked forward to everything life had to offer. Erin had goals. She wanted to go to college and become a Speech Pathologist. Her reason? Later, she could adjust her hours to concentrate on her

THE ERIN ELIZABETH OLMSTED TRIBUTE

REAL goal in life.....to be a wife and mom. She loved kids and wanted to be a mom. Erin taught young girls gymnastics and to this day I still hear from some of their moms. I know Erin would have been a GREAT mom.

It's been over twenty-three years since I've felt Erin's arms around me for a hug, seen those big eyes or bright smile. Twenty-three years since our last mom-daughter chat. There are so many "what if's", "if only's" and "should be's". I can't help but reflect on all Erin's missed. She's missed everything leading up to her sister becoming a High School English Lit Teacher - moving on to Humanities Division Chair - and now Associate Principal - a wife and mom of three boys. She's missed being a sister-in-law and Auntie Erin. She's missed all that has gone into her brother graduating from Medical School and living his dream of becoming an emergency room doctor, starting his new chapter, in another part of the country. Erin should have been part of all their accomplishments. She should have been beside her sister when she got married and as her children were baptized. She should have been able to celebrate her brother at his graduations and shared the joy when he became engaged, and now married. Every family milestone is bittersweet, with its tiny bit of sadness. We all think of Erin and what "should have been". We all think of the "what ifs" and "if onlys" and "should be's". We all had our dreams. We all try to make Erin proud. I'm sure Erin and her sister used to lie in bed at night and talk about what life would be like when they grew up. If only someone else had made a better choice. If only someone else hadn't chosen to drive drunk. If only.....

Written by Sandy, Erin's loving Mom

THE JUAN LOZANO TRIBUTE

October 12, 1993 – February 3, 2016



I'm Juan's mom and I would like to share with you a short story about my son and what his purpose was in life. 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 where he wouldn't do everything in his power to see his loved ones happy.

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.

All Juan's dreams were taken away from him the day he lost his life in that terrible crash. My life has completely changed; nothing is the same without him. My son is missed by his entire family but most of all by me. He has left an empty feeling in my heart. I'm not sure when or how I'll be able to move on from this tragedy. 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.

Over four years have passed and during this time the defendant bonded out of jail and was on the run. We spent months worrying that he wouldn't be found. Luckily, on June 24, 2019, my victim's advocate informed me that the defendant was found in North Carolina. He was being extradited to Rockford, Illinois, where he would be held until trial. We still haven't had justice, but we know it will happen eventually. We as a family finally have that sigh of relief that our case will continue and hopefully get justice for Juan soon.

Juan's little brother has really struggled with the loss of his big brother. The tears and anger are so hard for him. He looked up to his big brother and he is angry someone has taken him away. We all miss Juan. He was a son, brother, uncle and friend. I appreciate your taking the time to read my sons painful story.

*Written by his mother who misses him dearly,
Elizabeth Alvarado*

THE ADELAIDA OTERO TRIBUTE

March 19, 1938 – July 14, 2009

On July 12, 2009, we were awakened to a call that you were in a crash, hit by an “intoxicated motorist.” You were taken to the hospital and were conscious, but nobody knew that you were bleeding internally. You were rushed to surgery and the doctor said, “If she’s a fighter she will survive.” You fought until your heart couldn’t fight anymore and on the early morning of July 14th, our Lord called you home. It was one of the worst days of my life.



I recently lost my 37-year-old son, Eric, to a massive heart attack and this is one death that I don’t know if I will survive. My son was the second born grandson to my Mami. After raising seven daughters, you can imagine how much she spoiled her grandsons. The myths about grandparents are so true! Grandparents treat their grandchildren differently than they do their children. My Mami was old school and had no problem swatting us on the butt to reprimand us but God forbid we reprimanded our children in front of her! At the time of her passing, she had 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Today, she has 16 great-grandchildren. She has missed the births of 13 of her great-grandchildren, but I’d like to think that she’s sitting up there sending us these great blessings.

For me, the only thing that brings me some comfort is picturing my Mami in heaven now taking care of my son (like she always did), along with my Papi and my sister. They sit in heaven with the Lord, showering us with blessings.

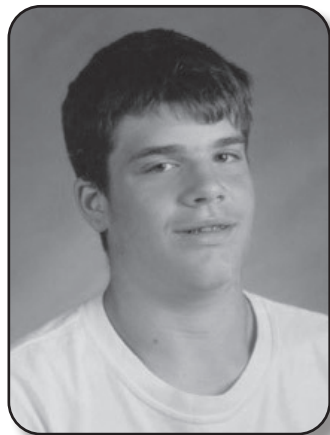
I love you, Mami, please take care of my Nene.

*Your Loving Daughter,
Irma Otero Velazquez*

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 have centered my work the past few years with a focus on helping young people make informed choices when it comes to alcohol and drugs. I firmly believe education is the best option when it comes to convincing young people to not use alcohol or drugs. It is not an easy task. Facing corporate marketing, mixed messages, confused parents, community social events where alcohol is sold, and teen peer pressure the challenge is daunting.

Since 2007 I have spoken to approximately 200,000 parents and teens, including each month at the DuPage Youth Victim Impact Panel. My own organization, Parents and Teens Together has awarded 17 scholarships to high school graduates. I also have served two terms, and maybe a third, as Chairperson of the DuPage County Prevention Leadership Team. I have become a voting member of the Illinois Impaired Driving Task Force, as well as a member of a second drug free coalition - Community Alliance for Prevention, out of Naperville. In 2018 I started a podcast called Positive Alternatives which can be found on iTunes and Spotify to name a couple of locations.

I would not complete my comments without mentioning Jonathan's Garden. It started out as my dedication to our son. One day sitting next 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 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, family, 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.

My advocate Kelly Krenzer has helped my family and me through this trauma. I'm grateful for AAIM and my family who have 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 when she gets out of prison. 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. 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 PAYTON RICHMOND STORY
Injured January 12, 2018



Together We Rise
A Grandparent's Perspective

On January 12, 2018, our precious granddaughter's life was almost taken from us by a senseless act of selfishness by an intoxicated motorist.

Days and months have passed, and Payton's recovery process has been a long one.

We prayed, cried, and asked God to help her walk again as Payton was confined to a wheelchair.

After months of therapy, Payton is no longer confined to a wheelchair.

Determination, love, support, and prayers from family, friends, and her loving AAIM advocate, Kelly Krenzer, is proof miracles happen. Payton is a miracle.

Together We Rise to support victims who have taken this unexpected journey.

Our appreciation goes out to the Police Departments for all the efforts to enforce DUI and impaired driving laws.

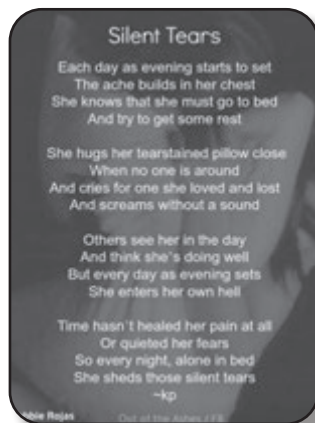
Thank you

Love,

Grandma Paula Stima and Grandpa Joe Stima

THE VERONICA ROJAS TRIBUTE

June 27, 1992 – June 28, 2010



Silent Tears

*Each day as the evening starts to set the ache builds
in her chest. She knows that she must go to bed
and try to get some rest.*

*She hugs her tear stained pillow close when no one
is around and cries for one she loved and lost
and screams without a sound.*

*Others see her in the day and think she's doing well but
every day as evening sets, she enters into her own Hell.*

*Time hasn't healed her pain at all or quieted her fears.
So ever night, alone in bed, she sheds those silent tears.*

Author KP

THE BRIAN SCHMIDT TRIBUTE

May 30, 1990 – June 24, 2018

The call I received in the early hours of Sunday, June 24, 2018 from my middle son, Shawn, telling me Brian was no longer with us, that he was gone, changed our lives forever.

Brian is my oldest son, followed by Shawn and my daughter Kailtyn. Brian has a son, Julian Jordan, “JJ”, who, at the time of Brian’s death was only 9 years old. All my children lived with me, including Julian, who was with us most of the week.



Shawn made plans to go to a party with a friend that afternoon. Brian was invited but was hesitant in going. I talked Brian into going and having fun as he had been down lately and not been going out. It was unlike him to be home every weekend and I knew he’d have fun. As both my boys walked out of the house, they told me they would be home early. They both had plans the next day and Brian knew Julian was with me that night. They both ran out the door calling “shot gun” (who’d be sitting in the front seat); neither one was the driver. Brian “won” front seat for the ride into the city.

This was a pool party with dancing and drinking. They stayed much later than they wanted. Shawn had front seat privileges on the way home, as it was only fair. Brian sat behind the driver. Both fell asleep on the way home, which was a good 45 minutes. The driver missed 4 exits on the expressway before deciding to stop in the second lane of a five-lane highway. He put the car in park and passed out right there, in the middle of the highway. Another car, driving at highway speed, tried to avoid the parked car but rear-ended it, slamming it into the concrete barrier. This resulted in the car facing the opposite direction of traffic. Shawn remembers hearing the paramedics speaking to him, seeing his brother on top of him, and then waking up in the hospital. Brian was thrown from the back seat into the front passenger seat. Brian didn’t survive due to traumatic injuries. If it wasn’t Brian, I lost that night, it would have been Shawn. The driver, their friend, had twice the legal limit of alcohol in him. This was his third offense, one for DWI and now two for DUI.

Our lives are forever changed. I lost a piece of my soul that night. Brian was loved by so many. He always had a positive attitude, a smile on his face and laughter in his voice. He touched so many lives. Knowing his son is growing up without his father is heartbreaking. The questions, the why’s and the what ifs, will be something that haunts us for the rest our lives.

Brian – forever 28, forever missed, forever loved.

We love you to the moon and back, again and again
Mom, Shawn, Kaitlyn, Julian

THE CARLOS SERRATOS STORY



Stacie and Carlos Serratos



Carlos Serratos

August 19, 2006 is a day we will never forget. I was at work when I got a call from my brother in law at 4:40 am. My husband, Carlos, 33 years old, had been hit by a car. Carlos delivered newspapers and was headed out to work when his car stalled. He went back inside and asked his dad to help jump the car.

While they were working on the car a drunk driver turned the corner. Carlos was able to push his father out of the way before the driver hit him. Carlos suffered several injuries, the worst being his leg.

I left work and went straight to the emergency room to be with him. When I arrived, he was in and out of consciousness and in severe pain.

Carlos has diabetes and had a difficult time recovering from his injuries. He was unable to return to work, and I became the sole provider for my family. We have two children who at the time of the crash were young; Dolores nine and Diego was two.

Since the crash, Carlo's health has deteriorated drastically. He had to have partial amputation of his foot on his injured leg. He is now on dialysis. He has heart failure and a rare and potentially fatal condition that comes from peritoneal dialysis. He is constantly in and out of the hospital and having surgeries to keep the access for dialysis open. He is a fighter and hasn't given up even though it seems as if his body wants to. We won't let it if we can help it.

THE CARLOS SERRATOS STORY

Carlos is in and out of the hospital with health issues all the time. He was hospitalized five times this summer alone. Carlos tries not to show he is worried about what's going on, but I know how scared he is. Before all of this happened, he loved working and being social. Now he is unable to work, and he doesn't visit friends often. There are days when he stays in bed all day. Sometimes I wonder what our lives would have been like if this never happened. It's a never-ending nightmare that I wish we could wake up from.

When AAIM came into our lives, a weight was lifted off my chest. I had someone to accompany me to the courthouse so I wouldn't feel lost. Cathy Stanley went with me at the beginning, and then Twyla Blakely after that.

We will always be grateful to them both! We'd be lost without AAIM. They were our voice while in court and explained everything we didn't understand. AAIM has helped us with buying my son's uniforms for school when he started. They were there to help with groceries, utilities, and medical supplies when I wasn't able to make ends meet.

I became a speaker at victim impact panels, sharing our story with the Spanish speaking community; working alongside AAIM, educating people of what can happen if they choose to drive impaired.

Carlos has never been able to do some of the physical things fathers do with their children. It's not fair that the quality of his life was destroyed because someone choose to drink and drive.

Carlos is a strong man, and has not given up, though it seems his body continues to fight his efforts; we will keep on fighting for good health.

I want to thank AAIM for being there for us when we needed it most. AAIM is a blessing; I always say they are angels in disguise.

Thank you for all that you do for the victims of this senseless crime.

The Serratos Family

THE RICHARD SEYLLER TRIBUTE

March 1, 1945 – October 25, 2005



On October 25, 2020, it will be 15 years since Dick Seyller, husband and father was killed by a drunk driver. He's missed so many family birthdays, graduations, weddings, holidays, grandchildren's births, and just everyday things. 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, Illinois. At 11:12 a.m. our lives were torn apart and will never, ever be the same. Dick was on his way to Marengo at the time and 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's a blue State of Illinois sign with his name on it at the crash site.

The woman that hit Dick was 49 years old, had three prior DUI convictions, lost her license for almost 14 years and got it back in 1999. Two hours after the crash, her BAC level 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.

THE RICHARD SEYLLER TRIBUTE

Our family has been devastated by this crash. The drunk driver ripped Dick from our lives. We continue to struggle to find a new normal. Dick has missed many important milestones in our children's lives. Andrew, Lauren, Laura and David have 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 now have 4 grandchildren. It hurts so much to know that these grandchildren will not know their Grandpa. Two of them are now old enough to start questioning where Grandpa Seyller is. Dick would be so proud of his children and grandchildren.

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

I speak at AAIM Victim Impact Panels that are held in Lisle, Illinois. I feel I need to speak for Dick and tell our family's story. My hope is that at least one person will listen and not drink and drive.

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

We know we must keep moving forward, but it's still hard 15 years later. We miss you Dick, every day.

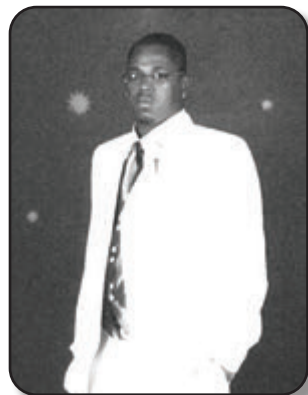
The Seyller Family

*Debbie, Andrew, Lauren, Laura, David, Casey, Ryan, Finnley,
Poppy and Charlotte*

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 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

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 awoken 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 THERESA "PEANUT" STANLEY TRIBUTE
July 7, 1978 – March 3, 2001



It has been 20 years since the loss of our youngest daughter, Theresa, at the hands of a drunk driver. Some days it feels like yesterday and other days it seems so long ago.

How does a family recover from such a terrible tragedy? How does a mom go on when one of her flesh and blood has been ripped from her without even a goodbye? I can only speak for myself since that is what I know best. I can honestly say I'm not sure how or if anyone ever gets over such a devastating loss.

In looking back, I now see that I was in denial. I had been initially blessed with being in shock, I was functioning well but I wasn't feeling anything. It was as if that part of my being was separated from me. I remember pinching myself and thinking it doesn't even hurt. But slowly everything began coming back - the pain, the sorrow, the depression. I feel so blessed to have brought her into this world, nursed her, tickled her, loved her, played with her, taught her and watched her grow into a beautiful, kind, loving and wise young woman. I would not change that for the world. For as long as I can remember we said "I love you" and that is the glue that holds my life together today.

THE THERESA "PEANUT" STANLEY TRIBUTE

Today I rejoice with my memories. Today I feel her spirit. She is with me every day. I just can't see or touch her, but in my head, I hear her voice. I've been blessed with her energy. I am not the same person. I am a better human being. She taught me a valuable lesson about life. Through her death she has given me a deeper insight into my purpose here on earth.

It has taken me 20 years to get to this point in my recovery. It has been an interesting journey and I have met many loving, caring and wonderful people along this path. Each has given me something to rebuild my life on - a word, a hug, a smile, a pat on the back, something that helped me heal. Often, I didn't realize it, but now in retrospect I see it so much clearer.

My hope is to continue my journey here on earth and to try to make a difference. I have my daughter's energy and spirit, and together we will make this world safer for my children and grandchildren. This is my path; this is my purpose. And when this journey is completed, I know I will be joyfully reunited with my beautiful daughter.

Cathy Stanley

THE MIKEY STEINES TRIBUTE

June 12, 1978 – August 29, 2012

Michael James Steines aka Mikey Santa. He was a brother, father, uncle, son, and friend. He was certainly a card! How can you describe someone like Mike? You can't. You had to meet him to understand. He was one of a kind.



Mikey and I had different mothers. His mother died when he was ten. In a way, I became his surrogate mom. Being the older sister, Mike and our baby brother lived with me for a time. Eventually, they went to live with our dad. Mike always looked up to me; he always came to me for advice.

He was my oldest daughter's favorite uncle, and they were very close. Mike moved to Alabama and she was heartbroken that he couldn't attend her high school graduation. Little did she know, we were bringing him home as a surprise for her graduation. We planned to have her party at our house. Mike called when he was around the corner from the house to let me know he had arrived. I needed to get her inside the house so she wouldn't see him. I sent her inside to grab some food to bring out to the deck. When she came out and saw him, she nearly dropped all the food she was carrying. She ran to him crying and nearly knocked him over! Our hearts were overjoyed; I don't think anyone was happier than my daughter. She was crying tears of happiness for nearly 30 minutes. She couldn't stop hugging or hitting him for lying to her and making her cry. He smiled and asked her, "Did you REALLY think I'd miss this? Wild horses couldn't keep me away." She said there was no gift that could compare to having him there. The photo with this tribute is of the two of them at her graduation party.

When an impaired driver took Mikey from us, he gave all of us a life sentence.

Mikey was funny, laid back, and easy to be around. He always wanted to make people laugh. We miss Mikey terribly, but were fortunate to spend time with him. Unfortunately, his children didn't get to spend much time with him. Nya has four children, having just recently giving birth to twins. His grandchildren will never have the opportunity to know their grandfather. Susan, the middle child just graduated from high school. She's working and living on her own.

THE MIKEY STEINES TRIBUTE

Joshua is the baby of the family and is in elementary school and doing well. Three children and four grandchildren... lives that Mikey should be a part of... lives changed forever.

It is hard to sum up someone that you loved once they are gone. It's difficult to imagine you'll never hear their laugh or see their smile again. You'll never have holidays, or birthdays together, or exchange secrets or knowledge. No more pranks, or deep, meaningful conversations.

Death is permanent. It damages, and scars so many lives. Think about that for a minute. How many lives have you impacted? How many lives would be destroyed, damaged, or affected by the loss? We have one life to live. Once it's gone, it's gone. All that's left is pain and memories.

On August 29, 2012, a death sentence was issued to my brother, because one person decided to get behind the wheel of a vehicle impaired. This crash took a father from his three children with the youngest child being only four years old at the time of the crash. No child should have to lose a parent this way.

Life is short. To have someone steal it from your loved one is incomprehensible. The loss of Mike's life could have been prevented if the driver were responsible and chose not to drink and drive. As Mike's sister, I truly try not to have hatred in my heart toward this cold-hearted man. It took nearly two years before this man was charged for killing Mike. He dismembered Mike on impact and didn't think twice about him. He didn't stop. He didn't try to help. He didn't call for help; he just kept going. I'm angry that he is walking free and can play with his children. He can watch them grow up, attend special events, and watch them graduate from school; Mike can't do the same with his children or grandchildren.

Life is short. Don't take one second of life or the people you love for granted. We're all living on borrowed time. Tomorrow isn't promised to any of us.

*Written in his memory by his sister,
Tressie Neiseimer*

THE MAURICE “MOE” TORRES TRIBUTE
September 20, 1958 – November 8, 2007



For thirteen years in a row, I am again sharing a little piece of our lives without my brother Maurice (aka Uncle Moe), who was taken from us needlessly one fall November afternoon in 2007. What always comes to the forefront during this season, every year, is remembering how that one insensitive, careless, extremely reckless decision that one person (Dana) made on that fateful fall afternoon to drive under the influence caused my brother's death at forty-nine years of age and how his death impacted so many people, literally around the world. As the actual anniversary of Uncle Moe's death looms over us I cannot help but recall every minute of how that evening unfolded for my family and me, how that seemingly normal day for my family ended anything but normal.

Although Uncle Moe is never far from our thoughts we have continued living our lives as we must. 2018 – 2019, was filled with many, many blessings which Uncle Moe was not able to share with us. We welcomed three beautiful babies within the same week into our small family; boy/girl twins for my oldest daughter and a son for our nephew and his wife. My nephew gave his son the middle name of Maurice, which truly warmed my heart! Another joyous occasion was the wedding of my youngest daughter to a wonderful young man. As my oldest did at her wedding, Carly carried a small photo of her Uncle Moe in her wedding bouquet. There is no doubt in my mind that Uncle Moe cried tears of joy in heaven that day. Even with all these blessings that surround us I still ask... why, WHY? He should be here with us, seeing the joy in his nieces' faces; he should be enjoying these babies. WHY???

THE MAURICE “MOE” TORRES TRIBUTE

Although Uncle Moe has been gone for so long, we still feel his presence around us and continue to receive signs from him. This does give us a little sense of peace.

In closing I will again share this poem that sums it up for most of us living the same nightmare of losing our loved ones to a drunk driver.

*The moment that you left me, my heart was split in two;
one side was filled with memories the other side died with you.*

*I often lay awake at night when the world is fast asleep;
and take a walk down memory lane with tears upon my cheek.*

*Remembering you is easy, I do it every day;
but missing you is a heartache that never goes away.*

*I hold you tightly within my heart and there you will remain;
you see, life has gone on without you, but will never be the same.*

We love and miss you Uncle Moe!

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



It's been eighteen years since the death of my beautiful wife, Joy. The best person in my life was taken from her family by a selfish high school senior who made the choice to drive impaired after a night of partying with his friends. Not a day goes by that I don't miss her kind heart.

I never thought I would meet someone as kind as Joy. Three years ago, I met a woman from my church. Friends tell me, "Joy would be pleased that you have found someone to open your heart." Before the pandemic, we would spend time at sporting events, concerts, and enjoy an occasional quiet dinner. Since the shutdown, we are learning new ways to enjoy the simple things in life.

My oldest daughter, Dawn, who is a nurse's aide, helps to take care of many COVID patients. She has been by the side of many dying patients whose families could not be there, comforting them and reassuring them that they are not alone.

Our youngest daughter, Kara, who continues to grow into a beautiful woman, works as a teacher aide with autistic children. She loves animals and earns extra money by working as a dog sitter. Nine months ago, Kara met a young man named Jordan and fell in love. I am overjoyed to hear them talk about their life together and what the future holds.

Joy would be so proud, as am I, of our daughters. I now live each day to the fullest in memory of Joy.

Until we meet again.

Love,
Clayton

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 ARIC WOOLEY TRIBUTE

August 25, 1982 – June 16, 2000

It's hard to believe that this year marks the 20th anniversary of Aric's crash. Each year I wait until the last minute to write a tribute, thinking it would get easier after so much time has passed since he was taken from us. But, to write this tribute, look at photos and talk about a young man who was taken too soon is still extremely painful...there's a hole in my heart that just won't heal. It doesn't get any easier. The tears still flow, and photos and memories bring joy and then turn to heartache. The only thing that brings comfort is knowing we'll all be together again someday...Together We Rise!



Due to the senseless act of carelessness by an impaired driver, 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 ruined the lives of many, taking all on a heartbreaking journey.

As a family – Together We Rise! We keep 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. If I can reach just one person and make them realize how one selfish, foolish decision can change the lives of so many people, then I'm honoring Aric's memory. Our lives will never return to "normal", but we find hope in the future – Together We Rise!

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.

THE ARIC WOOLEY TRIBUTE

He saw Aric's car at the intersection and was going to honk his horn as they 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 and strength to face each day - Together We Rise!

We haven't taken this painful journey alone. Thank you seems like such a small phrase for the love, 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. Lastly, a special thank you to my dear friend Rita Kreslin for her friendship, love and support...we share a "special bond" as our lives were changed forever – Together We Rise!

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

THE STEVEN R. WASILY TRIBUTE

October 9, 1983 – July 18, 2008



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

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. Steven would never come back home again. As his mom I ask myself why Steven would have gotten in the car with Mike. Didn't he know how drunk Mike was? Maybe he didn't, we'll never know. So, 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 cranio-cervical injuries.

Mike was released from jail November, 2016. We recently heard he is engaged to be married for the second time. Steven will never get married.

We see Steven's friends married, some with children and wonder what Steven's life would be 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 does not get easier. A part of us died with Steven that day. Our lives have never been the same. Not a day goes by that you're not in our thoughts. We know you're looking down from heaven watching over us.

We love and miss you, Steven!
Mom and your brother, Wayne

AAIM 2020

Together We Rise

Virtual Benefit

Friday October 23rd, 2020

7:00 pm

<https://aaim1.ejoinme.org/togetherwerise>

Offender Stories

AN OFFENDER'S STORY

I am 30 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

AN OFFENDER'S STORY

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 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.

THE JULIO A. STORY

I never thought that I was capable of hurting someone physically. For years, I thought the only victim resulting from my alcohol abuse was myself. I had every excuse in the world why I didn't have to stop drinking. I would say things like: *I've never been arrested for DUI..., I have never injured myself or crashed into anyone..., I've never lost my job..., etc.* All that changed on June 29, 2008, at about 1:30am.

The night of June 28, 2008, I walked into the bar at about 7:30pm; I didn't leave the bar until about 1:30am, June 29th. During the time at the bar, I consumed a lot of alcohol. This was very customary for me on a Saturday night back then. When I tell you my story, I am filling in a lot of blanks. I was so drunk that night that I don't have an exact memory of all of the details of the events as they occurred. When I left the bar, I got in my car and I somehow managed to exit the parking lot, then I made a right onto the street. I then reached an intersection to make a left turn onto another street. My turn light was green, but I didn't yield to oncoming traffic. I proceeded to make my left turn and that's when I hit a car going in the opposite direction of travel. My car and the car I crashed into were sitting there in the middle of the intersection. The police and ambulance arrived, shortly after. I was injured in the crash but I didn't feel much pain because I was so intoxicated. The police took me to the hospital to draw my blood and they took me directly to jail.

I wanted to know so desperately that everyone was okay. I knew I hit another car. I was expecting the worst. The policeman told me that there were three people in the other vehicle. The driver of the vehicle, a young man by the name of Brendan Kelly, 18, fractured his foot. One of the two passengers of the vehicle, Amanda Kershaw-Niazy, 18, suffered a minor skull fracture, which resulted in a severely bruised face. The other passenger, Tiffany Gecias, 19, was nine months pregnant at the time of crash. Due to the crash, she underwent an emergency caesarean-section. By the grace of God, the baby boy was born without injury. When I realized that I did not kill anyone, and that no one

THE JULIO A. STORY

was paralyzed, I started crying right then and there. I looked at the policeman right in the face and I told him that I was sorry and that I needed help.

To this date, there isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about the crash that I caused. The fact that Brendan, Amanda, and Tiffany had to suffer even the slightest ounce of pain because I couldn't get help for my substance abuse problem was unfair to them. My sincerest apologies still go out to them and their families for having to go through that awful ordeal. I no longer had all the excuses I used to make to justify my drinking. *Now*, I had been arrested for DUI. I did crash and injure people. And I did almost lose my job because of it.

The date of the crash was my last drink. I have over five years of sobriety. I am happily married and I have a beautiful baby girl. I also speak at Victim Impact Panels because if just one person listens to my story and decides not to drink and drive because of my story, then maybe I might have saved a life. I just don't think there's anything more important than that.

THE CALEB R. STORY

In 2019, my life changed forever when I was involved in a fatal car crash. While I was driving, I tried to avoid hitting one car, so I swerved, went over the median, and hit another car.

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 (showered, brushed my teeth, got dressed, and ate a bowl of cereal), 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 that our relationships would change once we left for college. My friends and I were planning on going to the St. Patrick's parade the next day, Saturday. My friends went every year; however, I only had gone the previous year. It was a fun time, and I was looking forward to it because it was one of the “lasts.”

On my way home from work that night, a car appeared out of nowhere in front of me. That's when the crash happened. 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, there was no glass there at all. 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.

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. Luckily, they caught me and guided me to the ambulance, and then they put me on a stretcher. The paramedics asked if anything hurt. That's when all the pain hit me. I couldn't feel my legs, and my neck hurt really bad.

I overheard them saying they needed a Flight-For-Life for the other car. My heart started to race, and I began to think of the worst. What was going on? I was so confused and didn't really understand why this was

THE CALEB R. STORY

all happening to me. All I was trying to do was go home and be with my friends.

I was in the hospital for five days. Numerous CAT scans, x-rays, and learning how to basically walk again because I was in so much pain. All of my friends and family came and saw me... that hurt me. Watching them walk in the room crying. However, nothing hurt me as much as finding out a girl had died from the crash. I remember both of my parents telling me as I laid in my bed in the ICU. I cried uncontrollably. I wished that it had been me. I cried and felt so bad. Words can't describe how I really felt even still to this day. I heard there were also other victims in the car and that they left the hospital the same night.

I was charged with reckless homicide and aggravated DUI. Marijuana ruined my life from the very start. I never noticed it until it took someone's life away. My actions and choices leading up to the crash were dumb. I tried to be like my friends and did not think of what can really happen. 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. One of my choices was to smoke marijuana, which can cause poorer 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 as it was, 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. I thought this was going to be the end of my life.

At the first court date, I saw the victim's family for the first time. When I walked in, I was confronted by my lawyer, and he 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 a word to describe it because it's something I've never felt before. If I were to put myself in the family of the victim, I don't think I could. It would kill me. She was very young and her life was just beginning. And for someone to take that away from her is not right. I did not know the family or really anything about them. After the crash, I just didn't want to think about

THE CALEB R. STORY

it because I didn't know how to feel, process or do about it.

I plead 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, said I deserved to be punished.

I feel horrible every day for the family of the girl. It kills me that they won't be able to see her graduate, see her get married, or have her grandchildren. 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. God forgive me.

THE ERNIE S. STORY

Very Remorseful

Hello advocates for Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists. Please accept my apologies for the loss of your family loved one(s)! There is not one day that I do not think about the loss I created of a child to his parents, sibling, six children, and significant other. It hurts me even more than being physically separated from my now teenaged daughter and the death of my own father, who passed just a few months previous to this fatal crash. Please know that I continuously pray and ask God to console everyone's family involved in a DUI collision and give me the opportunity to work with different communities and state-based agencies to eliminate drunk driving. I beg of you to please accept my sincerest apologies!

On July 13, 2002, I chose to drive under the influence of alcohol with a BAC .09 - .10. Never did I imagine, that having a few drinks would end the life of another person. On that tragic day, I turned my vehicle around and returned to the scene of the crash to help the victim. I tried very passionately to see if he was ok, but unfortunately, I was stopped, brutally assaulted, and left for dead by a large mob of angry pedestrians. I can't tell you how angry I am at myself for being a participant in this fatality and especially for not being able to help the victim. I was also dismayed that my mother arrived at the scene of the crash, threw herself on top of me, and saved my life.

The pain of this crash was so agonizing that the blood I carried on my hands eradicated my means of self-control and comfort, curtailed my sound mind and peace, and restrained my fellowship with God and others. I was ashamed to call myself a Christian and truly disappointed that *death* occurred on my watch. Although my God has forgiven me, these feelings still resonate in my spirit today. Why wasn't I dead instead?

I realize that this letter may seem a little bit impersonal, but I wanted you to know that I have dedicated my life and continue to practice sustainable efforts to reconcile with the victim's family and the community abroad to do away with drinking and driving habits! I know I can only achieve this by God's grace and mercy and your help. Please help me to promote life, not death and put an end to driving under the influence of alcohol. I will never be a participant of this deadly behavior again!

Thank you for listening to my story and God Bless You!

Ernie

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 awoken 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.

AAIM 2020

Together We Rise

Virtual Benefit

Friday October 23rd, 2020

7:00 pm

<https://aaim1.ejoinme.org/togetherwerise>

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

AN OFFENDER'S MOTHER'S STORY

like to speak for AAIM, I stated, “When do I start”. I have been speaking 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 & grief he has caused. Jason is trying to turn his life around & has attended & helped with the “Lockport Road to Reality” & speaking 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 & 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 I was the one that was helped the most.

Now with nine years of sobriety, 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.

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Letters of
Gratitude

November 2019

I attended the Victim Impact Panel on 11/19/2019 at the Cook County Skokie Courthouse. On the panel was Kelly, whose son Christopher was killed by a drunk driver at the age of 20. The drunk driver is still in jail. She gave the history of Christopher, who was a young person with his life in front of him. He had a steady and very nice girlfriend that he had dated since high school. Kelly talked about the crash, the call from the hospital in the middle of the night, being in the hospital, and all the horror that followed. The other panelist was Nick, who, while driving drunk, went the wrong way on the expressway and ran into a van wherein the back seat was a young girl, Leeslyee. She did have her seat belt on, but it was the old type of belt that came across the waist only. The impact of the head-on collision severed her spine and she is now paralyzed from the waist down. Nick was in a coma for 2 ½ months. Nick is very remorseful. He met Leeslyee, who forgave him for his actions and has kept in touch with her. Nick is a convicted felon. The stories and pictures were very moving. Many walked out of the VIP with tears in their eyes. I'm grateful for the work at AAIM and to the speakers for sharing their stories.

January 2020

Dear Kelly,

I want to say "Thank You" from the bottom of my heart. I truly appreciate your being there for me, my daughters, and Jakobi! You have a beautiful spirit, and a giving heart. May you never forget that.

God Bless,
Kristy MacKenzie

January 2020

Dear Rita,

Thank you for your kind words and for remembering us this holiday season. May you be blessed this year

Connie Onley & Family

March 2020

Dear Rita Kreslin,

Team AAIM:

Thank you for so much for your help and generosity. Again, many thanks for your king gesture.

Best,
Narao

4/28/20

Dear Friends of AAIM,

Please accept these donations in the memory of my mother, Bernita Caron. You made her life so much better after my brother died. You gave her a very constructive outlet for her grief.

She did not die from COVID-19. She died a natural death, which was an answer to my prayers.

I am proud to have AAIM34 on my license plates.

Thank you,
Marianne Caron

July 2020

Dear Kelly

I have been experiencing some difficulty with VERTIGO over the past several weeks, and it has been just debilitating. I've meant to send you a thank you for the beautiful card you sent me a few weeks ago, but I have been too weak. Your kind words made my day, week, month so much better. I am so grateful that you have touched so many of our lives with your care, strength, gifts and love. I hope to see you soon. Miss you, love you.

7/11/2020 from Rachel Venlos.

(Victim is Laurens, email is from her sister, Rachel)

July 2020

To all of the AAIM Staff...

Thank you for all you do for all survivors and victims.

Miss you all! Hope to see you in the near future.

With Love & Gratitude,

Anna Marie Caruso

October 2020

Many thanks to Carrie Kilpatrick and all of you for being there for my entire family and me. We are all devastated after the crash which killed my granddaughter, Alysa Lendino. The crash also severely injured my other granddaughter, Amanda, my daughter Michelle and son-in-law Tony. As we continue to heal, we are deeply grateful to you for being there for all of us.

Mary Ellen Smith

McHenry County Victim Impact Panel

I recently attended an AAIM Victim Impact Panel. I had gotten a DUI back in January — I'm lucky that I didn't hurt anyone but I'm haunted by the fact that I easily could have. I just wanted to say thank you to the volunteers who shared their stories. Your losses are unimaginable, and I, of course, wish you could turn back time and get your loved ones back. But although they're rooted in awful tragedy, your stories are changing lives. I've been sober for 22 days. I figured sacrificing alcohol is nothing compared to the sacrifice of those who have lost loved ones to drunk drivers. Your stories and bravery will stick with me. I will never again make that terrible choice I made last winter.

Thank you,
Meg

