

## The Christopher Krenzer Tribute

January 20, 1990 – August 26, 2010



On August 26, 2010, our 20 yr. old son Chris had a wonderful day fishing with his friend and a quick meal in the evening with his girlfriend Stephanie. I had five minutes with him that day, I should have called him later that evening to tell him what I made for dinner; maybe he would have come home, but I thought there was plenty of time to enjoy a meal together in the future. Instead of coming home that night, he went to his grandparents' house. He loved being with them, and he often spent the night there....and that is where our normal night ended.

Chris was struck on the driver's side of his car by a two time drunk driver in Rockford. The drunk driver blew through a red light and hit Chris at a speed between 93 and 104 mph. An off duty emergency room nurse witnessed the crash; she was with Chris in seconds. She couldn't tell how old he was because his injuries were so extensive, but she knew he was young because there were college text books strewn about the scene. Kelly, a trauma nurse, did everything she could for our son that night. For that we are grateful, grateful that he wasn't alone; grateful that she, a mother herself and other people were around our son in the last moments of his life.

Only one person could have changed the outcome of that evening. If only the driver of that car wouldn't have put the keys in the ignition. If only Chris would have been three seconds faster or slower than the drunk driver. The months, if fact, the years after Chris's death have been spent in great pain, a blur. We are shadows of the people we once were. We may look the same outwardly but inside we are broken people held together by a thin line of glue. All of this because of a reckless decision of a complete stranger to drive after drinking.

The Winnebago County States Attorney's Office was kind and compassionate and guided us through the process of the court system. Shortly after the offender's sentencing, AAIM contacted the States Attorney looking for speakers to talk to DUI offenders. This is how we started in the organization. We have been given so much by AAIM, a voice for our son, and support from the AAIM advocates and understanding by all AAIM's members.

I now work for AAIM as a Victim Advocate in Rockford and surrounding areas. It's emotionally, physically and mentally challenging, but it's really not a job to me, it's a victim supporting another victim. It has

taken years to learn how-to cope and carry the awful pain of losing our son. Many people ask how or why I would put myself back in the court room, living other people's crash details along with my son's. There is a very simple answer to that. If someone had not been in court for us, to support our family, to inform us of what was going on, to hold our hand, we would have been lost. The compassion, support and guidance we've experienced has given us the foundation to be able to support other victims and their families in this, the most devastating time of their lives. We miss our son every second of everyday, so we work to educate, to change, to support in Chris' memory.

Loving parents of Christopher, Art and Kelly