

Distracted Driving

By: Tristen A. Sharp

On Wednesday evening, I met my mother at a local restaurant to eat dinner before heading off to church. Nothing was different, as my usual routine on Wednesday's was always the same. After pulling into the church parking lot a little after 7:00 p.m., I placed my cell phone in hand and proceeded on to the crosswalk. Some friends were already across the street standing in front of the church. As I looked both directions, I noticed a car approaching from my left. The car approaching stopped to make a left hand turn and I looked both ways one last time before proceeding into the intersection. I have no other memory of the chain of events that took place after that moment because I was struck by a car coming from the opposite direction. The injuries I sustained were critical with the most extreme being the injuries to my brain. My skull was removed in an attempt to save my life and I now lacked the memory to remember who I was. After extensive rehabilitation and re-learning many aspects of my life, I was now left with so many unanswered questions. " Did I not look both ways before I crossed that street? Was I looking at something on my cell phone and just not paying attention? How could he not see me?" The emotional toll of these unanswered questions would test me to the core. As I searched for answers to these very questions, the answers slowly came to light. Witnesses advised that I did look both ways, twice! My cell phone company verified that there was no activity on my cell phone. I was just carrying it in my hand. " So, how did this happen?" The driver gave a statement that said he was paying attention to an individual standing on the sidewalk that had crossed the

road right before I had and he did not see me in the intersection. My whole life was changed forever at age 16.

Distracted driving can come in various forms such as texting and driving, reaching into the floorboard for something, or just plainly not paying attention to the road. Pedestrians can oftentimes be distracted as well. Most pedestrians assume they have the right away, but this is not always the case. They equally share the same responsibility as motorists. In my situation, I had done my part in trying to ensure my safety and the safety of others before I crossed that street.

Distracted driving causes numerous accidents, injuries and oftentimes fatalities throughout the world. Many families are left to pick up the pieces of the devastation caused by other individuals. Families lives are turned upside down and some never get the chance to return back to the life they previously lived. We, as a society must stop operating under a mindset that “This will never happen to me.”, or “It doesn’t hurt anything.”

While I may not have been the driver involved in my accident, I am still a driver myself. I owe an equal obligation to everyone around me, that I, myself, do my best to insure the safety of others. It is extremely important to have discussions with your friends and family about the effects of distracted driving and ways to reduce the accidents caused by this. I have created a Distracted Driving Plan for other individuals to use in discussions with their family in hopes of protecting the loved ones of others.

Distracted Driving Plan

- **We will not operate a vehicle in an unsafe manner.**
- **We will obey all driving laws in the manner in which they are implemented for.**
- **We will further educate our friends and family about the effects of distracted driving.**
- **We will always look twice, and cross once to ensure our safety and the safety of others while operating a vehicle or as a pedestrian.**
- **We will not talk or text on a cell phone while driving.**
- **We will pay attention to my surroundings.**

Oftentimes, we as individuals get so hung up in our busy lives that time gets away from us. We find ourselves thinking about multiple things while we are heading somewhere else. Little thought is given to the devastation that is caused by distracted driving. As a person living with the effects of this type of behavior, I can assure you that the struggles I have had to overcome has been life changing. In a split second, you can easily become a victim, or a defendant.