

The Human Cost of Impaired Driving

Media backgrounder – May 11, 2017



Ben Darchuk
Age 53
Prince Albert

Ben Darchuk was on his way to his cabin at Emma Lake on May 20, 2012. It was Sunday of the May long weekend.

He had recently bought a new boat for his family to enjoy at the lake and was hauling it up with his truck. His wife, Leanne, was driving up in a separate vehicle with their fishing boat.

Ben never made it to the lake that day, and he never got to enjoy the new boat he was so excited about. Instead, he was struck head-on and killed by an impaired driver. Ben was 53 years old. He left behind his wife of 29 years, two daughters and a son.

Earlier that day, Ben and his family had gone to a service at the graveyard to remember and celebrate those no longer with them, a Ukrainian Greek Orthodox tradition. The day before, Ben had celebrated his sister's 30th wedding anniversary. Family and friends meant the world to Ben.

Ben's wife, Leanne, misses Ben's spirit. "He was so fun and happy. Everyone liked to be around him because he was so positive and had so much energy. He loved to socialize with people and make sure everyone was having fun."

The family of five enjoyed spending their summers at the cabin, boating and fishing. Ben kept busy running his own business, Ben's Auto Glass, and was also very involved in the community. For Leanne, life will never be the same. "His loss is devastating. It changes you. The kids and I, we're all different now."



Brandy Lepine
Age 17
Prince Albert

On Sunday, July 14, 2013, Brandy Lepine and her friend Taylor Litwin were driving to the convenience store. Brandy was 26 weeks pregnant and craving a slushie.

Brandy couldn't wait to be a mom. She loved children and enjoyed looking after her nieces and nephews and her friends' kids.

Brandy never had the chance to hold her baby, or experience motherhood. On the way to the store that day, an impaired driver crashed into the vehicle Brandy and Taylor were in. Taylor died at the scene. Brandy survived long enough to deliver her baby girl, three months premature. The baby lived; Brandy didn't.

Brandy was 17 years old. Brandy's daughter, Aurora Skye, will never know her mother. Brandy's mom, Josie, is raising Aurora, who faces many challenges from being born so early and the head injury she suffered in the crash while still in the womb.

Josie describes Aurora as a blessing, because she can see Brandy in her. "But sometimes I wish I could take away all the hurt and pain and suffering that Aurora is going through, so she could talk, walk, play, go to preschool like any child. She is missing out on a lot. That's what's hard for me."

Josie remembers her daughter's loving, giving, heart-warming nature. "I miss hearing Brandy say 'I love you, Mom,' and how she always knew how I was feeling and would make me feel better."



Adrienne Gardiner
Age 28
Ile-a-la-Crosse

Adrienne Gardiner and her fiancé Eric were stopped at a red light on Albert St. in Regina, early Saturday morning on Oct. 8, 2016.

Adrienne was looking forward to her wedding. The date was set for Aug. 13, 2017 at a place very dear to Adrienne’s heart – a campground she used to go to often as a child. It was going to be a big family gathering with everyone camping out for the weekend.

Adrienne never got to walk down the aisle. While stopped at that light an alleged impaired driver smashed into the back of their vehicle, killing Adrienne at the scene. Adrienne was 28 years old. She leaves behind her nine-year-old son, Aiden.

To Eric, the pain of losing Adrienne is defeating. “I lost everything. My life was destroyed in the blink of an eye.”

Eric describes Adrienne as an “unbelievably caring person, with a really soft place in her heart for elderly people.” When Adrienne’s grandfather was sick, Adrienne was a devoted granddaughter, spending time with him at the hospital in Saskatoon and caring for him.

Adrienne’s mom, Wanda, said Adrienne’s grandfather always used to say “she is special, made of sugar” because of Adrienne’s kind heart. Adrienne dreamed of being a nurse one day. She genuinely cared about people and always put her son first.

Wanda says she’ll miss her conversations with her daughter, her joking around and her laughter. Most of all, she’ll miss watching Adrienne with her son. “Adrienne was a wonderful mother. She prided herself on being a mother who was always there for her child. It was that loving side of herself she always showed her son that made Aiden into the sweetheart he is today.”



Danille Kerpan
Age 25
Kenaston

Danille Kerpan was driving home to Davidson on Oct. 10, 2014, after a day in Saskatoon helping her mom pick out paint colours and spending time with her sister, sister-in-law and nephew.

Family meant everything to Danille. She dreamed of one day raising a family on the quarter section right next to the family farm in Kenaston. And that future wasn’t far away; she and her boyfriend had already picked out an engagement ring together.

Danille’s dream never came to light. With her boyfriend driving his vehicle on the road just ahead of her – close enough to witness the crash – she was hit head on by a drunk driver going the wrong way on Highway 11 near Bladworth. Danille died at the scene. She was 25 years old.

Nille, as her family called her, was the youngest of four children. She was very close to her parents and siblings and shared a special bond with her sister, Stefanie. Danille’s mom, Melanie, said “Nille brought joy and selflessness. I miss her smile, her sense of humour, great conversations, and her love of family and animals. She made each of us feel like we were special to her.”

Danille’s dad, Allan, said Danille radiated gentleness and happiness, and her loss has been devastating. “I don’t know how to explain to someone what it’s like to lose part of your very being. How do you explain to someone what a broken heart feels like?”

Danille loved animals, horses in particular, and had a passion for horseback riding. She enjoyed playing basketball and volleyball, and quading with her boyfriend. She had a great sense of humour and the ability to laugh at herself, a quality her lifelong friends still treasure.



Quinn Stevenson
Age 17
Saskatoon

Quinn Stevenson was driving to work at the Saskatoon Golf and Country Club, his summer job, early in the morning on Aug. 3, 2013.

Quinn had recently graduated from Centennial Collegiate in Saskatoon. In the fall, he planned to attend Western Academy Broadcasting College, his first step towards fulfilling his dream of becoming a TSN sportscaster.

Quinn's future was cut short that Saturday morning, when a drunk driver ran a red light and crashed into Quinn's vehicle. Quinn died at the scene. He was 17 years old.

Quinn was a talented athlete with a true love for sports. He played golf, hockey, football, curling, badminton and was proud to "wear the stripes" as a hockey referee. He had a passion for baseball that started at five years old and ended with Quinn pitching for the Blue Jay Slow Trains. Quinn's dad, Craig, remembers how focused and determined Quinn was while pitching for his baseball team in the last few weeks of his life. "His mantra 'good things will happen when you work hard, have fun with friends, and enjoy every moment' led the Slow Trains team to winning a championship they had no business winning just a couple weeks before Quinn died."

Quinn's brother, Shea, was 15 years old when Quinn died, and his brother's death impacted him greatly. Shea describes Quinn as "that person you can always rely on. I miss his company and the way he could make people so happy. I miss the laughs, the good times we had, and I really wish I could have my brother back."

Quinn's mom, Bonny, misses Quinn's big hugs, the sparkle in his eyes, and getting to see what his future would have held. "He would have been an amazing dad and coach of his children." Bonny remembers Quinn and his friends filling their basement, garage and backyard with laughter. "Quinn had a huge group of friends, but his laugh was always the loudest! When Quinn died, his friends became Shea's new big brothers."



Tanner Kaufmann
Age 37
Regina

Tanner Kaufmann was driving on a country road north of Regina, early in the evening on Sept. 4, 2016. He was taking his German Shorthaired Pointer, Macy May, out to do some training as a bird-hunting dog.

Tanner was the ultimate family man. He and his wife, Alyscia, had two young sons, Parks and Kolt. He had infinite kindness and patience for everyone, including his dog Macy who was still just a puppy, but already showing real potential in her training.

Tanner and Macy never got to finish their training that Sunday. After Tanner parked his truck and went to help Macy out of the vehicle, they were struck and killed by an alleged impaired driver.

Tanner lived his life and passions to the fullest – hunting, fishing, cooking, camping, travelling, and playing sports. He had reason to; in 1999 his 18-year-old brother Matthew died in a car crash on the way to the movies.

With a smile that could light up the room and a friendliness that let him connect with anyone he met, Tanner lived a life of genuine openness and gratitude.

Tanner's last adventure with his sons was crayfish hunting. They will remember his sense of fun, all the times they played together, from LEGO to wrestling matches, the time he spent coaching their soccer, hockey and football teams, the playlists he'd make them on his phone, the camping and fishing skills he tried to teach them and his complete willingness to give them his full focus.

Alyscia misses the unconditional love she and Tanner had for each other. "Tanner was my best friend and my soul mate. He was the most thoughtful and kind man I'd ever met. I miss having a partner to raise our boys with."



JP Haughey
Age 17
Saskatoon



Sarah Wensley
Age 17
Saskatoon

May 5, 2014, was a typical Monday night for James Paul (JP) Haughey and Sarah Wensley. JP picked up Sarah and another friend and were headed to track and field practice.

They never made it to practice that night. The vehicle JP was driving was hit by a drunk driver in a stolen truck, slamming it into the side of a building. JP and Sarah were killed; their other friend was seriously injured.

JP was in Grade 12 at Bethlehem Catholic High School in Saskatoon, just weeks away from graduating. He was 17 years old.

As an only child, JP was the light of his parents' life. He was very close with his mom, Marilou, spending time with her shopping, going to concerts and to the gym. They even had a shopping trip planned for the weekend after JP was killed, to pick out his graduation outfit. "That never happened," said Marilou. "We never got the chance." One of Marilou's fondest memories of JP is the time they spent together during the summers, running and long boarding along the river.

Marilou describes JP as very fun-loving. "He would hide in the corner of the basement when I went down to do laundry, then jump in front of me to try and scare me! We'd start chasing each other around the basement, laughing away, and JP's dad, Alex, would come down and ask 'Who's the kid and who's the mother?!'"

Marilou remembers JP's love of music. "Music was his passion. Whenever he was home he'd play the piano and sing. Some nights I'd hear him at 2 o'clock in the morning, hammering away on the piano." JP completed his Grade 7 music exam at the Royal Conservatory of Music.

JP's motto was "live life." Hundreds of people attended his funeral, all wearing bow ties – JP's trademark – in his honour.

Sarah was a Grade 11 student at Bethlehem Catholic High School in Saskatoon. She worked hard, got good marks, and loved track and field. Her favourite was the 4 x 100 relay, because it was a team effort.

Sarah was 17 years old. She had a bright future and ran like the wind.

Sarah's dad, Dave, said what he misses most about Sarah is "her sense of humour which brought so much joy to our home. There is an emptiness or void in my soul and heart that will never be filled. I lost my best friend."

Dave remembers the emotion and happiness on Sarah's face when she got to witness the birth of her baby brother, Cain. Sarah was the second person to hold Cain after he was born. "I will never forget watching her and seeing her cry during the delivery." Sarah had four brothers and one sister.

Van de Vorst Family Saskatoon

Jordan and Chanda Van de Vorst and their children Kamryn and Miguire were driving home early in the morning on Sunday, Jan. 3, 2016, after a fun-filled night playing board games and visiting with friends.

It was the end of a special week. They had spent it tobogganing and teaching the kids how to skate. And for the first time ever, Jordan took his family with him to photograph the Aurora Borealis on New Year's Eve.

They didn't know it was the last time they'd get to see the northern lights, or celebrate the start of a new year together. Tragically, it was. That Sunday, an impaired driver crashed into their vehicle. Jordan and Chanda died at the scene. Kamryn and Miguire were rushed to hospital but later died from their injuries.

Six months before they died, Jordan and Chanda finally took the honeymoon they had been planning for years and went to Iceland, where Jordan was in his element taking photos of the night sky.

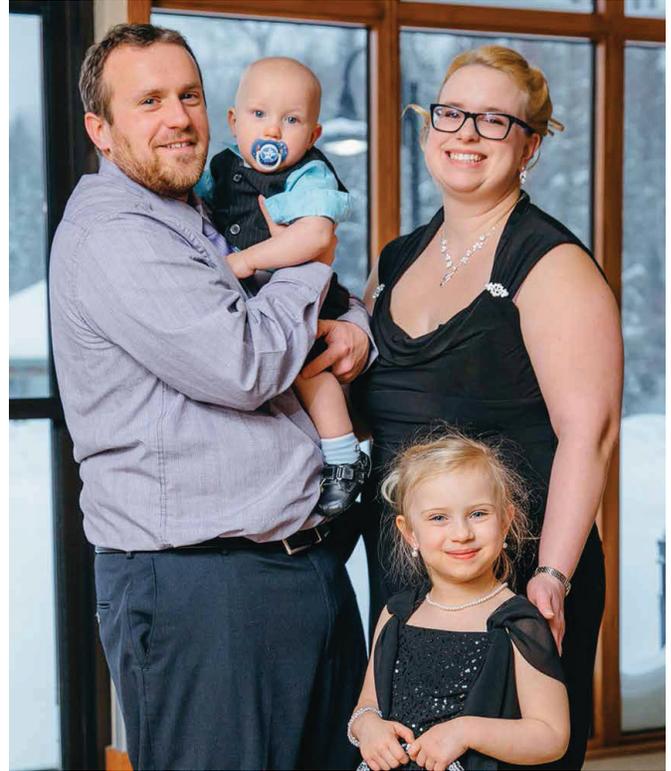
Jordan's sister, Angie, describes the Van de Vorsts as a fun, loving family. "They were always clowning around and laughing and just having fun all the time." Their families – parents, siblings and nieces and nephews – meant everything to them.

Jordan Age 34

Jordan was a microbiologist who loved his challenging work in medical research. He met Chanda at the University of Saskatchewan, where they both went to school and played recreational hockey together.

Jordan was also a talented photographer with a passion for the night sky. He was a member of the Saskatchewan Aurora Hunters, a group of amateur photographers that documents the northern lights. Jordan's mom, Linda, shared that he was interested in astronomy ever since he was little. "We even bought him a telescope. He loved the constellations, and studied them and knew where they were in the sky and when they would be there. He loved the night sky – the Aurora Borealis, the Milky Way. These things fascinated Jordan."

Jordan also loved gardening and spent hours tending to his vegetables and flowers. He played hockey and ultimate Frisbee, but above all else he enjoyed spending time with his family and his many lifelong friends.



Chanda Age 33

Chanda worked as an exercise therapist. She was a real people person and took great pride in caring for her clients, teaching them and helping them recover from injuries.

Chanda loved being with her family and always put Kamryn and Miguire first. They spent a lot of time outdoors and liked to go on picnics to the park, camping, biking, swimming, tobogganing and skating. Like Jordan, Chanda loved spending time with her parents and siblings.

Chanda also played hockey and volunteered as a power skating coach to share her love of being on the ice.

Chanda's sister, Tana, remembers Chanda's warmth above all else. "She had a great big smile from ear to ear and was always joyful and happy." Jordan's mom, Linda, described Chanda's smile as contagious. "You very seldom saw Chanda without a smile on her face."

Kamryn

Age 5

Kamryn was full of energy and giggles. She was in Kindergarten and loved going to school to see her friends and her teacher.

She was a busy little girl who loved to play Barbies, cook in her play kitchen, read books, skate, play soccer, do crafts with her mom and dad, and play dress up.

She loved spending time with her aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. One of her favourite things to do was go for sleepovers at both grandparents' homes. Kamryn's maternal grandma, Marie, will always cherish the pajama parties she had with her granddaughter. Linda, Kamryn's paternal grandma, remembers their bedtime ritual when Kamryn would sleep over. "She always expected two songs before she went to bed: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star and the ABC song. Both songs had to be sung twice in a row and then she'd go straight to sleep."

Kamryn was a great big sister to her little brother Miguire. She looked out for him, liked helping him and always made sure he was okay. She preferred raw vegetables to french fries and liked having nail polish on her fingers and toes.

Miguire

Age 2

Miguire was a sweet little boy with a gentle spirit. "Miguire always needed a hug, no matter who came in the door," Marie said. He loved playing outside, stomping around in puddles and making mud pies.

He was just learning how to skate and for Christmas he got some mini hockey sticks and was learning how to hit the puck. He liked to ask "why?" and was curious about how things worked, like his new remote-controlled race track.

Miguire liked playing with cars and trucks, but most of all he liked playing with his big sister Kamryn. He loved Kamryn and the two of them would spend hours playing together.

Like Kamryn, Miguire loved spending time with his grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Miguire's grandma, Linda, remembers how when he came over to their house, he loved playing with their Ukrainian nesting dolls. "He'd sit on Grandpa's knee taking them apart and putting them back together over and over again. Every time he came over he would go to those little dolls."