

January 10, 2016

Dear Madison County friends,

I write in support of a community-wide program to end the premature deaths of Madison County's young people due to motor vehicle accidents. It's been more than two years since my son, Lane Warren, died after crashing his car on Carpenters Mill Road on his way to the MCHS Homecoming Dance on a very rainy evening. When the initial, mind-numbing shock began to wear off, I found myself uneasy -- to the point of near-panic -- whenever it would rain hard or for long periods of time. What if another inexperienced driver were to hydroplane on Carpenters Mill Road or another local road, crash and die or be seriously injured? What could I do to prevent another such tragedy? These thoughts kept me awake at night for many months.

Within a year of Lane's accident, thanks to Madison County friends and officials, a study was completed by VDOT on Carpenters Mill Road, speed limits were adjusted and additional signage was installed to enhance safety. A memorial sign, with the words "Drive safely in memory of Lane Warren," was placed near the spot where his car ran off the road. These measures brought me some peace of mind. I felt that by acting on what we'd learned at such a terrible cost, we might help to prevent a similar accident in the future.

But I've since learned that there's much more that needs to be done.

I have learned that although less than 20 percent of people in the U.S. live in rural areas¹ -- and only one-third of the vehicle miles traveled occur in rural areas -- **more than half of crash deaths occur in rural areas.** [This info comes from The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS)/Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI) -- see <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/roadway-and-environment/fatalityfacts/roadway-and-environment/2013>.] And I have learned that for our young people this risk is compounded: motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death for people aged 15-24 in Virginia and in the U.S. [See <http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/virginia-cause-of-death-by-age-and-gender>]

Sadly, this means that most of us in Madison have first-hand experience with the trauma of losing a child to a car crash, as each loss is felt profoundly by family members, friends, neighbors, teachers, classmates, teammates, and on and on, throughout the entire community. We owe it to ourselves -- and to the memory of those we have lost much too soon -- to act. By coming together in a community-wide effort, Madison County can achieve the United States' highway safety vision "Toward Zero Deaths." [See <http://www.towardzerodeaths.org/>] As the website says: "Zero is not an impossible goal, but it will take all of us to get there. It is the only acceptable target for our nation, our families and us as individuals."

Although Lane's sister, Phoebe, and I no longer live in Virginia, Madison County was our home -- and Lane's home -- for 16 years. It will always have a special place in our hearts. We want to honor Lane's life and memory and show our -- and his -- love for Madison by supporting this community-wide effort in any way that we can.

Very truly yours,



Lisa Warren
304 E. Winmore Avenue
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Lane Warren's sister, Phoebe, and his friends pose in the MCHS parking lot by his space after his class graduated in May 2014.