

SADD – CARO SMIT

Caro Smit - 19 November 2006

Memorial Service

40,000 are severely injured on our roads, and 18,000 are killed, each year.

These are people and not statistics. One of those killed last year was my awesome son Chas.

Chas was only 23 years old, and was at the beginning of a very promising career as the lead guitarist in the Band “Plush”, that had won the Battle of the Bands in 2002, beating 500 top bands including “Freshly Ground”.

I just want to give you some idea about the devastating effects a sudden death means to a family.

Chas was one of those beautiful, gentle, soft, smiley types of people who everyone loved. I never heard anyone saying anything bad about him at all.

We come from a large, very close knit family, who did everything together. Camping, sport, socializing, music. There would often be 25 family members together on holidays. So for the family it is also as if they have lost a brother and a son.

Car crashes cost the SA Economy R43 Billion per year.

The cost to families in terms of grief and emotional cost is immeasurable.

The costs to our family alone are enormous. Antidepressants for most of us, Counseling, both children have been in Hospital for grief related illnesses, as has the Band manager, I was unable to work for quite a time, and more.

Sudden deaths by murder, suicide and by drunk driving give rise to terrible anger and despair – because they are all unexpected, and were so preventable.

We will never be the same again.

My 20 year old daughter is constantly worried about her friends when they go out, and she spends most of her time not drinking, and then driving them home safely. She has lost her carefree youth. That is not fair on her.

We are suddenly very serious people who have little faith in naturally surviving. My children had flown up for Chas’s first anniversary, so we could all be together. As I drove my children back to the airport I could sense the absolute fear in my husbands heart that his whole family was traveling off in one car, and that we would all be killed.

As a parent it feels as if part of my body has been amputated, so I will never be normal again. I loved being a mother, and loved my children passionately and fully.

My precious, innocent, first born, was then killed so suddenly and senselessly.

Reminders and flash backs are present at times, and prevent proper sleep. Whilst seeing "Faith is like Potatoes" there is a scene where a child is killed in a road crash, and seeing him bleeding profusely and everyone pleading with God to save his life, had me, and my other friend who also lost her young son, totally traumatized, and resulted in flash backs to our crashes where we had witnessed our children smashed to pieces and flung meters across the road, and then bleeding to death in front of us. I also try not to drive over where he was killed, so have to plan my route.

Most crashes are preventable and are attributed to human error, such as not wearing seatbelts, driving unroadworthy cars, speeding, (and especially in wet weather), disobeying the road rules (going thro red robots / overtaking at the wrong time) or driving drunk.

People think "I'll just take a chance", or "But I've only got to drive 2 km's home."

In most cases this is a choice, and not an accident, so it is entirely preventable.

2 km's, and a bad choice killed my child, and it has devastated my family.