



342 flags marking each life lost on CT's roads since last November.

Carri Roux had expected to find her son, Luke, back at the house after she finished walking the dog. But he was missing.

He never made it home.

Two years later, at a locally hosted memorial for lives lost on Connecticut's roads, Roux described how scenes from that horrible day remain "etched" in her memory — and how a serious statewide focus on traffic safety could prevent future tragedies.

Roux addressed a somber and sobering gathering in Goffe Street Park on Sunday for the second annual Connecticut commemoration of [World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims](#).

Roughly 50 people attended, including elected officials, road safety advocates, law enforcement, and other family members of victims of vehicular violence. Some held pictures of loved ones who had died during roadway crashes.

Roux spoke about how, [back in June 2022](#), she was confused when her son Luke didn't make it home. She had just seen him play at his baseball game earlier that evening, where one of his hits had resulted in two RBI's.

Though the park was just ten minutes away, the two had driven separately. After Luke's team had won the game, Roux went ahead and drove back home before him.

Concerned, Roux checked for Luke's location on her phone. She saw that he had been stationary at an intersection in between the park and the house.

"I waited a few minutes to see if his location would move," Roux said. "It did not, and a pit began to form in my stomach."

A drunk driver from Hartford had struck Luke's car at the intersection in Farmington, driving 80 miles per hour on a 45 mile-per-hour road. The driver had run through a traffic light that had been red for 18 seconds. Roux remembered the scenes of the incident — the ambulances, her son's body on a stretcher, the mangled car. She said the scenes are "etched" into her mind.

"A police officer drove me to the hospital, where I waited and waited until I finally heard the news that my heart already knew," Roux said.

Near the stage on Sunday, 342 flags stood on the ground, waving in the wind: 270 were white, representing the number of people in Connecticut killed in cars or motorcycles since last year's World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims last November; 72 flags were red, representing the number of pedestrians who had been killed by a vehicle during that same time. And near the field of flags was a table with informative fliers about traffic safety and bike reflectors.

New Haven has seen nine pedestrians and cyclists struck dead on city roads so far this year, including, most recently, [41-year-old New Havener Luis Timbila in Cedar Hill on Nov. 10.](#)

Watch for Me CT Program Specialist and representative Amy Watkins, who emceed Sunday's event, shared that the U.S. has the highest traffic death rate among 29 high-income countries analyzed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In 2023, U.S. traffic crashes claimed 40,990 lives, which were almost equal to gun-related deaths.

"Where is the outrage? Where are the mandates? Where are the emergency meetings?" Watkins asked. "That's why we're here today. We are here to voice our outrage."

Roux pointed to a need for more local awareness regarding traffic deaths and injuries. She particularly pointed to the local judicial system, advocating for harsher sentences on offenders.

"This was not an accident. It was [a] preventable crash," Roux said. "And these crashes need to end...Our culture needs to change."

First responder and retired Enfield Police Sgt. Charles C. Grasso shared the traumas he endured in the 45 years he worked in public safety and as a crash reconstructionist. Following fatal car accidents, Grasso said that he "got to know the victims" — where they went to school, what they did for work, their personalities. Eventually, the emotional burden of witnessing such fresh losses caught up to him, and he was diagnosed with PTSD.

“What I used to do is every evening, I would lay in bed to go to sleep, and I would think about each person,” Grasso recalled. “I could remember each one, right down to the clothing they were wearing.”

During his time at the mic on Sunday, Mayor Justin Elicker highlighted the city’s recent efforts in making busier, crash-prone streets more safe. He pointed to [the securing of \\$11 million in federal grant funds to upgrade a stretch of Chapel Street](#), as well as [the city’s adoption of a Safe Routes For All plan](#).

Additionally, he pointed to New Haven’s efforts to [implement red light and speed cameras in 19 different locations across the city](#), in a bid to become the first municipality to install such cameras in Connecticut. Elicker also highlighted recent street reconstructions, with bump outs, speed humps, and 50 miles of bike lanes throughout the city, all of which should help with roadway safety.

Alongside Elicker, other speakers at Sunday’s event included New Haven State Rep. and state legislature Transportation Committee Co-Chair Roland Lemar, state public safety Commissioner Ronnell Higgins, state transportation Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto, Board of Alders Majority Leader Richard Furlow, and U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal.

The ceremony also saw three other friends and family members of victims speak beside Roux, one of whom had been a close comrade of [Yusuf Gürsey, a local peace advocate who was struck and killed by a car on his way back from a protest on the New Haven Green earlier this year](#).

Watkins ended the event with a list of demands to local and state governments. She called on officials to enact harsher and more timely penalties for impaired and speeding drivers, as well as improve the number of safe pedestrian crossings on Route 10 between Ella T. Grasso Boulevard and West Park Avenue, and on Whalley Avenue between Orchard and Sperry. Watkins also called for a citywide implementation of unique pedestrian interval implementation and an accompanying education campaign. Lastly, she demanded for improved and increased traffic signals.

“Together, we can make a difference for all those who travel on our roadways, so that others may never have to feel the loss and the grief that we share here today,” Watkins said.

Sam Williams, a local cyclist and New Havener, stopped by the commemoration out of curiosity about what local government would do to protect pedestrians like him. He had moved to New Haven in August, and has become a frequent biker and walker around town. Of his experience cycling around town, Williams said that he has to be cautious, even when he has the right of way on the street.

“Once, I even got honked at for walking across a crosswalk too slowly,” Williams recalled.

Williams noted that he loves the two-way bike lane on Edgewood Avenue, and underscored the need for better infrastructure around the city — such as raised crosswalks — to prevent future injuries and deaths.



The crowd on Sunday afternoon.