



Kyle's Story— **Pledge Never to Drive Distracted**

It began as one of those perfect almost-summer days, the 15th of May. Kyle was 19 and had returned from his first year of college a week and a half before. He landed a job cooking at the Red Robin at Dulles Town Center. He enjoyed cooking, as a matter of fact, earlier that day, he made a batch of scrambled eggs for some of his high school buddies, all returning home to Herndon and enjoying being together again. It was fun seeing these handsome, sturdy boys, sitting at my kitchen island, joshing and laughing.

Kyle donned his uniform later that day for his 4 pm shift. He went out in the driveway to shoot a few hoops. Unbeknownst to us, he plopped his phone in the grass nearby so it wouldn't fall out of his pants. We said goodbye.

Those were my last words to my son.

The next thing I knew is that it was 4 am, and there was a heavy knock on the door. Carl went down to open it, and the man identified himself as a Fairfax County detective. I heard him asking if his wife was here; he wanted me to come downstairs.

That's when we heard the most devastating news of our lives.

I couldn't believe what the man was saying, that Kyle died at approximately 10:30 pm, on his way home from his job. At that point, it was all about the details we would have to sift through, where the body was, calling the coroner's office, making funeral arrangements. Little was known about the crash, other than there was an ongoing investigation.

How little I understood at that point about grief, all I knew is that this wasn't real, and I was in shock. We couldn't sleep. It was a Monday morning and a school day. We had to wake up our 14-year-old daughter and tell her the horrible news.

Fast forward, it is eight years later. Kyle's car had broken down about a mile from our home, he put his emergency flashers on and attempted to move his car to the side of the road. We found out that Kyle's killer had been



texting, more than 20 times from the time he left his ex-wife's house, until the time of the crash. This was no accident; this was a willful act which, due to the lax texting law at the time, went completely unpunished.

Due to the efforts of legislators such as Scott Surovell (D-Mt. Vernon), victims, families and others who have been impacted similarly, a no texting bill was passed in 2013, two years after Kyle died. This year we aimed to strengthen that law, to hands-free legislation. Again, no success, but we will try again, as our traffic congestion and speed limits require more effort to prevent the increasing number of crashes and fatalities that are caused by distracted driving. Pedestrian fatalities have also increased, as on both ends, the driver and pedestrian engage in distracted behaviors.

I can't bring my son back, but I can ask you to share my story with your loved ones and ask you to pledge never to drive distracted. If you need to text, use a hands-free device, pull over to text, or just wait. It can save a life.