

HB 2076

Vonnie Rickerson

Thank you (I don't know what goes here). My name is Vonnie Rickerson and this is my daughter Hallie. I am a constituent of Representative Jacobs from Fort Scott, Kansas. I'm grateful for this opportunity to be standing in front of you today with my daughter to share our experience and the value of wearing a seat belt.

Seat belts have been a major factor in the two car crashes that stand out the most in my life. The first, was before Kansas had seat belt laws. I was eight years old, on my way to school when our school bus passed beside a wreck. The driver was NOT wearing a seat belt. The impact of the crash caused the driver to fly forward hitting the steering wheel, dislodging her heart. She died instantly. The driver of the vehicle was my mom.

The second crash began with a phone call, telling me, my 15 year old daughter, had been in a car wreck with her 17 yr old boyfriend. For the second time in my life I drove past a mangled car that held someone I loved. My heart dropped when I saw the life flight helicopter hovering over the road ahead. I drove around the 'road closed' signs to get to my baby girl and I can't express all of the emotions I felt as I drove through the horrific scene of the crash, then seeing a crumpled car, I didn't think anybody could walk away from. I was sure my friend and I had lost our babies. After hitting a tree, the car rolled twice and flipped end to end and when the car finally came to rest it was unrecognizable. My daughter was unresponsive & was taken by helicopter to the hospital in Joplin an hour away. I didn't know if she was even alive until I was almost all the way to Joplin. Hallie had suffered a serious concussion. She couldn't remember anything and repeated herself over and over. She had glass embedded near her upper right shoulder blade, along with multiple cuts and bruises. All I could think was 'She's Alive'. Her boyfriend had experienced a broken leg, broken foot, a chest bruise from the seat belt, along with other minor cuts and bruises. By the Grace of God they were both were back to living their lives within a couple weeks.

I believe with all my heart that the hand of God and seat belts saved the lives of my daughter and her boyfriend that day. And I believe if my mom had been wearing a seat belt the day of her wreck, she may have lived as well. I lost one... but I got to keep the other. Thank you, for letting us share our experience with you today. Does anyone have any questions or comments?