

Thank you. My name is Vonnie Rickerson and this is my daughter Hallie. I am a constituent of Caryn Tyson and Representative Jacobs from Fort Scott, KS. 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. When I was eight years old, our school bus passed beside a wreck. I'll never forget the crashed vehicle I saw from my window seat. 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 was on July 23, 2016 & began with a phone call, telling me, my 15 year old daughter, had been in a car wreck with a 17 year old friend. I immediately jumped in my car and headed toward the wreck. My heart dropped when I saw the life flight helicopter up ahead a few yards from my house. When I got to the scene, I drove around the people blocking traffic, and the pieces of the car that were scattered along the road and in the ditches...and for the second time in my life I drove past a mangled car that held someone I loved. I can't begin to express 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 it 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 alive until I was almost all the way to the hospital in Joplin. Hallie 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. The driver of the car 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 and the seatbelts keeping the kids safe inside the car, 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 friend 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.