

Maddie's Minutes

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AWARENESS AT THE WHEEL IS DRIVING WITH A PURPOSE



According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, people ages 16 to 17 are more likely to be in car accidents than drivers from any other age groups. Turning 16 brings on one of the most independent feelings-being the age to drive without an adult and getting a license.

Behind all of the excitement though, the emotion of fear lingers in the back of those students' minds. Driving an average weight of 4,100 pounds is a huge responsibility, especially when there are many others doing the same in close proximity. "Accidents happen" is a phrase every adult figure says, but some accidents are irreversible and permanent.

Driving with safety should be a priority that every person has if they are behind the wheel. Young independent drivers who are more aware can change the national accident statistics drastically. In the occurrence that safety is questionable, danger is possible and adrenaline takes over. Sometimes fight or flight isn't a question and accidents occur faster than human reaction.

Unfortunately, the

Eaton community has experienced many heartbreaking losses due to car accidents and with that, many moving lessons have arisen. After two high school students were lost due to accidents involving trains, the high school began focusing on safer driving initiatives more than before.

The Eaton community was hit hard after the loss of the two important community figures. In the past four years, another student was lost due to an accident that occurred on Highway 85. Devastation hit Eaton once again, leaving the community questioning what it would take to not experience this again. In EHS Eaton 101, a class taken by

Freshmen, guest speakers are invited to the EHS campus to share their personal experiences with the EHS Freshmen class. Lauren Keller, a former EHS grad and new Language Arts teacher, spoke to students about Awareness.

Keller began her speech by mentioning that change can happen fast, can become negative, and that no one is prepared for life changing events. Keller spoke alongside her presentation of photos, pictures of when her and her father were hit by a train, in Eaton, on County Road 76 and Highway-85. Keller prefaced that she had just gotten her permit and was beyond excited to drive, when

her father gave her the chance. One night her father asked her if she was interested in bringing pizza to her family friends, as they were experiencing flooding in their home. Who would have known that this nice gesture would have turned into being upside down, held by a seatbelt in the ditch.

She was driving full speed without conscience, as most teenagers do, as the sun was going down, creating a blind spot. Keller and her father, who was a seated passenger, made it partially over the tracks but came to an abrupt stop. When she looked both ways, she found a train heading right towards their vehicle. Her father told her to reverse and as soon as

she did, the car was hit, turned by the train, and further pushed into the ditch. Both passengers were in stable condition and escaped the vehicle while the ambulance was on the way.

As a result of the accident, she experienced a sprained ankle and bruising in her face, along with nose bleeds. As for her father, he was hospitalized for a concussion, but in the end was completely recovered.

That day, Keller's life changed, not physically, but mentally. She realized that if she was aware and conscious of that, she might have noticed the train coming her way.

All teenagers could use this advice for the benefit of life. Keller was extremely blessed that she survived and she wants students to not make the mistake she did. Her message to students brought attention to students to be more aware of their surroundings. This applies to the roads as well as the simplicity of the school parking lot.

The essential idea is that being aware, regardless of the situation, can be beneficial, and in some cases life saving.



Lauren Keller

Keller's vehicle dismantled after the car accident that occurred when she was 15 years old.