

Stepping Up to Prevent Tragedy

Distracted driving is a plague on our roads that adversely and disproportionately affects teen drivers. In 2017, the fatal crash rate for teens was three times greater than for drivers 20 and older. One study showed that driver distraction is responsible for 58% of teen crashes. The most common distractions leading a teen driver to crash include interacting with passengers and cellphone use.

This month, I would like to recognize two very courageous and inspiring people—AAJ member Joel Feldman and

resulting tragedies. Joel and Dianne couldn't change the past, but they would do everything in their power to affect the present.

Using a behavioral science-based presentation that EndDD developed, Joel and Dianne created a network of approximately 500 speakers made up of mostly trial lawyers. AAJ partners with EndDD as part of the association's Trial Lawyers Care initiative, which encourages and highlights the volunteer and community outreach programs of trial lawyers.

AAJ members already have given their time to help this worthy cause—thank you to those who have volunteered, and I encourage others to do the same. Passionate trial lawyers can help teach about the consequences of distracted driving. We are the last line of defense for many clients—picking up the pieces of damaged, often destroyed lives. By volunteering to work with EndDD, we can also be the first line of

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his wife, Dianne Anderson. Ten years ago, a distracted driver struck and killed Joel and Dianne's daughter Casey when she was just 21. As a parent, I can barely comprehend the horror of losing a child. There is no way to prepare for that level of pain, and there would be little anyone could say to make things better.

In the face of unspeakable tragedy, Joel and Dianne decided that Casey's death would not be in vain and that something positive would come from it. They founded End Distracted Driving (EndDD), a nonprofit organization that educates teens and their parents to prevent distracted driving and the

EndDD has reached more than 450,000 people at schools, colleges, and workplaces in 47 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. It also created a bystander intervention program to teach teens how to speak up when they're in cars with distracted drivers, developed video public service announcements, sponsored video and meme contests to promote safe driving, and developed resources for parents to help them model distraction-free driving. It provides all of this for free.

I am in awe of Joel and Dianne. Where many would have wilted, they acted and devoted themselves to sparing other parents from the heartbreak they feel. They have been an immense force for change—raising awareness, changing habits, and saving lives.

I want to continue and strengthen AAJ's relationship with EndDD. Many



defense. It is a small time commitment with a big impact. Register to speak at www.enddd.org/become-a-speaker. Everything you need, including the training video and the presentation itself, is available on the EndDD website for you to download.

I intend to volunteer for EndDD in the coming year, and I challenge all of you to make that same pledge. Doing just one presentation in your community will go a long way toward saving lives. Please get involved. You truly can make a difference.

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