



**Testimony from Jessica Hart on behalf of DC Families for Safe Streets  
for the Committee on Transportation & the Environment  
Performance Oversight Hearing for the District Department of Transportation  
held on Monday, February 27, 2023**

To the Committee on Transportation & the Environment:

My name is Jessica Hart. I am a Ward 5 resident and the mother of Allison Hart, who was 5-years-old when she became traffic violence victim #28 in 2021. I am here today on behalf of the 80 members of the DC chapter of Families for Safe Streets. We are family members whose loved ones were killed or severely injured on District streets.

This testimony is submitted in dedication to the 38 people who died due to traffic violence in the District since the last DDOT performance oversight hearing held on February 18, 2022. The names listed in our written testimony do not include the 5,500 crash survivors whose lives have been forever changed.

We thank the Council for passing recent safe streets legislation, but we are dismayed by DDOT's slow or non-implementation of these life-saving laws that we fought so hard to win. We have shared our heart wrenching stories. We've learned traffic engineering on the fly. We've attended ANC and Council meetings. It's not enough. My testimony today highlights the burden we put on residents to identify the changes needed, and shows how DDOT prioritizes moving cars over human safety.

**Traffic Safety Investigation/Inputs.** Many have already spoken about the changes to DDOT's process by which it considers and implements residents' requests for safe street design. Allow me to add a personal reflection. The first change to the TSI process came in October 2021, not long after my daughter was killed. I remember the press conference at which Director Lott, standing next to Mayor Bowser, invoked my daughter's name as an impetus to make it easier for DC residents to have a say on the safety of our streets.

I watched in September 2022 as neighbors, friends, and strangers rallied to make traffic safety requests across the city. Over 400 requests were made as part of the All for Allie campaign – so many requests that it essentially broke the system. **Why must residents** be the catalyst for the changes that this Council has legislated and the goals that this government has adopted?

At a recent ANC 5B meeting, a DDOT representative explained the new TSI process as this: we can request an evaluation and DDOT engineers will review and make a recommendation. If the engineers do **not** think traffic calming is warranted, then that's it. There is no way for a resident – someone who knows the area, who witnesses danger daily – to appeal that decision.

At this same ANC meeting, it became clear that this is not the case in the opposite scenario. If the engineers decide traffic safety measures are warranted but residents oppose them, then a vocal minority can undermine the stated Vision Zero goals of this legislature and administration during the notice of intent (NOI) period. There is no similar period for residents to oppose DDOT's decisions that favor the status quo. The **burden of proof** to bring about positive change is too high.

**Unsafe conditions that are created because of construction sites.** On February 8, 2023, James Tarrants was struck and killed while trying to walk through sidewalks that were closed due to a construction site along Rhode Island Avenue NE. As so many do, the DDOT-approved "traffic control plan" for this construction project prioritized the convenience of drivers over pedestrian safety—James's safety. This is despite a law passed ten years ago that required "safe accommodations" for pedestrians and bicyclists – a law often ignored.

Unsafe traffic control plans should not be approved in the first place, and more requirements and/or enforcement needs to be in place to ensure that developers and construction managers do not create unsafe conditions. There are questions the Committee should be asking DDOT: how are these plans reviewed, and does more training for reviewers need to be in place? Should there be a manager or consultant who solely focuses on reviewing for safety? Does 311 need to be modified so the everyday person can submit a violation (despite this being **yet another** burden of proof we're placing on residents)? Does DDOT need more public space inspectors to quickly identify violations, issue stop work orders, and require safe conditions to be put in place? Maybe answers to questions like these could have saved James's life.

Lastly, we are concerned about DDOT's failure to win funds from the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, specifically from the new Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program that awarded \$800 million to 510 projects across 49 states and Puerto Rico. DDOT should secure as much funding as possible to implement safety improvements for not only the recently identified High Injury Network, but also any traffic safety measures any time DDOT routinely repairs a street instead of residents who have to beg for them when a larger project is finally in the works.

Families for Safe Streets is ready to support the Council and DDOT in creating a city that is safe for all road users, and we welcome the opportunity to continue this conversation. Thank you.

*This testimony is submitted in dedication to the 38 people who died due to traffic violence in the District since the last DDOT performance oversight hearing held on Friday, February 18, 2022. These names do not include the 5,500 crash survivors whose lives have been forever changed.*

- Unnamed person.
- Anthony Shaw, 48, from Southeast DC.
- Unnamed person.
- Steven Roy, 32, from Southeast DC.
- Rakesh Patel, 33, from Silver Spring, MD.
- Terese Dudnick Taffer, 73, from Northwest DC.
- Jane Bloom, 76, from Northwest DC.
- Javon Leach, 13, from Washington, DC.
- Michael Thomas, 29, from Northwest DC.
- Joseph Robinson, 52.
- Unnamed person.
- Demetrius Fultz, 47, from Southeast DC.
- Amir Fultz, 10, from Southeast DC.
- Unnamed person.
- Clinton Covington, 66, from Northwest DC.
- Kaidyn Green, 9, from Southeast DC.
- James Herndon, 29, from Hyattsville, MD.
- Michael Hawkins Randall, 70, from Northeast DC.
- Charles Jackson, 64, from Northeast DC.
- Michael Gordon, 65, from Northwest DC.
- Shawn O'Donnell, 40, from Northwest DC.
- Timothy Fingarson, 66, from Charles Town, WV.
- Unnamed person.
- Jasmine Butler, 25, from Southeast DC.
- Jefferson Leonel Garcia-Yanez, 25, from Monrovia, MD.
- Venancie Musabe, 60, from Fredericksburg, VA.
- Darryl Leak, 42, from Northeast DC.
- Ralph Patrick Williams, 72, from Northeast DC.
- Bredarius Lanford, 28, from Southeast DC.
- Richard William Farmer, 49, from Greensboro, NC.
- Jonathan Plater, 30, from Lanham, MD.
- Sheda'sa Thompson, 25, from Northeast DC.
- Cherice Allen, 41, from Southeast DC.
- Shuyu Sui, 31, from McLean, VA.
- Carlos Enrique Christian, 24, from Northwest DC.
- Andy Cariño, 22, from Severna Park, MD.
- James Timothy Tarrants, 66, from Northwest DC
- Eric Lyons, 49, from Northwest DC.
- Wayne Brown Savoy, 63, from Southeast DC.

## Allison Hart, fatal crash victim:



Allison Hart—Allie, as she was known to many—was struck and killed by the driver of a passenger transport van as she rode her bike in a crosswalk on September 13, 2021, and died on the scene. She was 5 years old.

The location of the crash is just down the street from Allie's home in the Brookland neighborhood in Northeast DC. This particular intersection is a four-way stop and in a school zone—at the four corners of the intersection are two homes, a church, and a school playground.

Allie is often remembered as the District's traffic violence victim number 28 in 2021, but she was so much more: joyful, loving, kind, curious, thoughtful, brave, funny. The list could go on and on. She had just started kindergarten and was flourishing with new experiences, friends, and discoveries.

Following the crash, DDOT installed flexposts at the intersection to narrow the space for cars in an effort to make them slow down and make pedestrians more visible; added "stop ahead" notices; and repainted the crosswalks. All too little, too late for Allie.

In the wake of their daughter's death, Allison's parents have pushed for safer streets as a way to honor their beloved daughter. Their efforts are the result of a deep and abiding need to ensure that Allie's death was not in vain. To have a child's life so cruelly and violently cut short is horrifying. For the Harts, they feel passionately that they cannot accept that their daughter is gone, this violence continues, and that the city continues to fail to meet its goals to eliminate traffic violence. More personally, they refuse to accept that the only change is the end of Allison's life and her family's devastation.



To that end, the Harts have spoken out to share memories of their daughter and to use their grief to push for the goals of Vision Zero, including testifying before DC Council hearings on automated enforcement, transportation bills, and oversight and working with local journalists to tell Allie's story.

Local bike and safe streets advocates worked with the Harts to organize a "chalk-in" for Allie, where the community gathered at the intersection to draw hearts and flowers and memories of Allie while they demanded action from the Mayor's office.

For World Day of Remembrance in 2021, the Harts honored their daughter with a post on the Families for Safe Streets (FSS) Remembrance Wall at Union Station. In 2022, they created a sign for Allie at the intersection of 14th and Irving Streets NE as part of the FSS chapter's District-wide initiative to visibly mark and catalog deadly crash sites. The Harts will continue to share Allie's story to push for safe streets in DC.

*Further reading:*

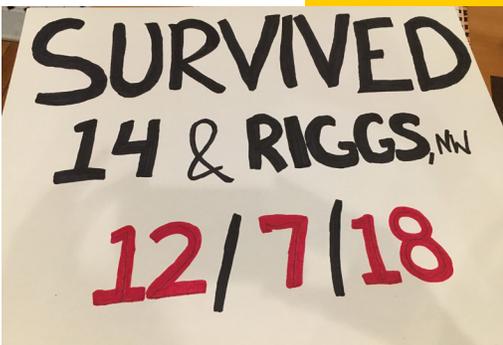
- Cogan, Marin. "A Driver Killed Her Daughter: She Won't Let the World Forget It." *Vox*, 5 December 2022, [www.vox.com/23462548/allison-hart-pedestrian-deaths-suvs-deadliest-roads](https://www.vox.com/23462548/allison-hart-pedestrian-deaths-suvs-deadliest-roads).
- Vargas, Theresa. "At 5, she was killed riding her bike in a crosswalk. Her legacy should be safer streets." *Washington Post*, 18 December 2021, [www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/12/18/allison-hart-child-safer-streets/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/12/18/allison-hart-child-safer-streets/).

## Aysha Ghadiali, crash survivor



On December 7, 2018, I left my office to walk home. Departing from a crowd on 14th Street, NW, I crossed the street on a marked pedestrian crosswalk. Three drivers stopped for me. I walked in front of the first stopped car and as I took another step, an SUV in the second lane struck me. I was knocked down but stayed conscious. Laying on the street, I feared another car could hit me. With adrenaline, I slowly made my way back to the sidewalk. A crowd gathered, and a man brought me my glasses and purse, which flew off from the impact.

He yelled, “She’s bleeding!” I couldn’t stop shaking. I was fortunate a doctor walked by. Parting the agitated crowd, she came to me like a fairy “god-doctor” in a dramatic, yet clinical way. She looked directly into my eyes and said firmly, “You are going to be OK.”



In the emergency room, I learned I had multiple fractures on my nose and my left cheek, which was indented. My facial fractures required surgery in order for me to chew and breathe normally. I also had four fractures in my left foot, and one fracture in my right fibula. I needed a

wheelchair and could not eat solid food for a few months. I had stitches, puncture wounds, and bruises. It hurt to wear glasses or simply turn on my left side. The driver that struck me did not have car insurance. From a distance I heard her say, “I’m sorry, I didn’t see you.” If she was driving faster, or if I was one step ahead on the street, my outcome could have been devastatingly different.

From my wheelchair I started to read about traffic violence in the DC metro area. I learned about the Vision Zero movement to eliminate traffic fatalities on our streets. I eventually met the community of DC Families for Safe Streets, which provides a supportive outlet for all persons affected by traffic violence. This network helped me navigate the difficult first year of physical and emotional healing from my crash. Now, I do not accept car “accidents” as the price for free movement in our society. They are crashes and we can fix the systems that cause them. I am fortunate to walk with small scars on my legs to remind me of one DC rush hour commute. I survived when nearly 90 pedestrians in the region were killed by cars that same year. That is why I dedicate my time to DC Families for Safe Streets.

—Aysha Ghadiali



## Dan Winston, crash survivor:

My mother and father thought I was dead. Moments earlier, on a spring evening in 2003, we were driving back from my high school band concert in Providence, Rhode Island. At the same time, a young man was speeding down residential streets, holding up a can of beer to show off for the underage girls in the car beside him. His sedan slammed into my parents' SUV at more than 60mph.

My mom, bloody and bruised in the front seat, turned back to see me slumped silently against the case of the tuba I had just used to create beautiful music. My dad, who'd been driving, was physically unharmed. He screamed my name, but I did not respond. As emergency workers rushed me to the hospital, Dad called my sister in Syracuse and told her to come home immediately. Her younger brother might not make it through the night.

I slipped into a coma for 9 days and spent another 10 days in the intensive care unit. I was transferred to a rehabilitation hospital in Boston, where I would remain for another month. I have a distinct memory of "waking up" about one month after the crash, wondering why I was in a hospital bed. I still could not walk, talk, or swallow solid foods. My days were consumed by physical and occupational therapy, surrounded by an incredible medical team, until I was released in July.

Later that summer, I didn't understand why friends cried when they saw me. On the outside, I looked normal. Back at school for my junior year, I didn't understand why I was failing classes that used to come easily. On the inside, I felt normal.

Traumatic Brain Injuries can take years to heal, a process that doctors still do not fully understand. By my senior year of high school, with lots of hard work, classes began to come more easily.

Even with halting academic progress, I wasn't quite the same. Some of my friends didn't want to hang out with me anymore. Before the crash, people used to be surprised by my self-confidence. It was unexpected for the smallest boy in the class. For years after the crash, my parents would reflect that I had lost



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that “spark.” In the fog of the brain injury, I didn’t notice anything had changed. I carried on like before. Nothing would stop me from reclaiming my life.

18 years later, I think my spark has come back. I’m happily married, fortunate to have a wonderful job and live in a community that I love.

I can’t remember the crash itself, of course, but the entire saga—struggles in school, years ago; not being able to ride a roller coaster, even today—is never far from my mind. It’s the most dramatic of a series of forces that have guided me in my career to create better, safer communities through great transportation systems.

When I was an ANC Commissioner, I reviewed road designs or development plans and considered trade-offs on parking, access, affordability, and more. For me, these trade-offs were not conceptual. Professionally, I’ve helped build businesses that reduce reliance on cars. My teams know that safety is our number one priority.

Our country’s cavalier attitude to deaths on the road is incredibly frustrating. When you’ve had an experience like mine, it is truly incomprehensible. But one of the lessons I’ve learned from the crash is that you must keep going, after any setback. Don’t be cynical. The future will be better, only if we work hard to make it so.

I’m sharing my story to help others feel the same way.

—Dan Winston

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## Sabrina Sussman, crash survivor:

I stepped out for an early morning run on May 12, 2014 around 6:45 a.m. I had just begun training for my first race, and it was a crisp beautiful morning. Half a block from my front door, on a quiet residential street, I was struck by a driver who sped over a speed bump. I don't remember anything that came next. A witness reported that upon impact, I flew onto the top of the vehicle, rolled down the windshield, across the hood of the car, and was thrown onto the street. After hitting me the female driver put the car in reverse, and fled the scene. I was left lying on the street, unconscious and bleeding.



I was lucky. My injuries included a severe concussion, scalp hematomas, shattered bones across my face, deviated septum, separated AC joint in my left shoulder, fractured left knee, torn meniscus, torn ACL, PCL and FCL in my right knee, broken and separated tailbone, and torn ATFL in my right ankle. But, I was alive. I was lucky.

Following the crash, ten orthopedic surgeons told me my knee was inoperable. I underwent two massive surgeries, was out of work for 13 weeks, and spent two and a half years in physical therapy learning how to walk, and even run again. I was lucky.

The driver that hit me was never found, the license plate called in to 911 was a fake plate. Traffic camera footage from near the crash was deleted before the MPD officer assigned to the case returned from vacation. Under DC law at the time, this life changing crash was codified as a "collision and departure" only subject to a \$500 fine as a minor misdemeanor. Had I been hit several miles away in Virginia, the same crash would have been a felony.

I wish that I had the support of a group like Families for Safe Streets DC during my recovery. A crash like this leaves behind much more than just physical scars. The loneliness of recovery is daunting, and today, I am lucky to be part of a group whose mission is to advocate for change, and support victims through their experiences.

—Sabrina Sussman



## Shonta' "Shawn" High, crash survivor:

On May 7th, 2019, at 3:07 pm while riding a 49cc motor scooter on my way to pick up my youngest daughter from school, I was struck by a motorist at the intersection of 500 Rock Creek Church Road NW.

It was by the grace of God that there were witnesses. I later found out they were my Park Morton neighbors. They called the ambulance for me. The driver who struck me fled the scene. I was told that she came back later. No charges were filed against her because she returned to the scene. I, on the other hand, was rushed to the hospital with multiple life-threatening injuries.

I sustained a concussion that gave me double vision and vertigo for months, a broken left scapula, a broken right femur that now has a permanent titanium rod that goes from my hip to my knee with screws that holds it in place, 6 broken ribs, and both my lungs collapsed. First responders performed CPR to resuscitate me. I literally died that day. For a moment in time, I was dead.

My crash and its aftermath have forced my oldest child to grow up in a split second. She was a legal adult at the time (19), however, it made her have to deal with the type of crisis that she was not ready for. The amount of distress, duress, anxiety, sadness, and overwhelming frustration that she experienced having to take on responsibilities that were not meant for her at this time. She should have been focusing on a relaxing college-free summer. As for their father, it was tiresome for him. He was mentally fatigued. He worked at night, came by the hospital during the day, then went to check in on the children in the evening. Then he would go to his home to get what little rest he could to repeat the routine the next day.

My life has changed dramatically. Today, I can't bend at the waistline for too long to tie my younger daughter's shoes or I get dizzy. Vertigo onsets at any time. I have low blood pressure, headaches, fatigue, and memory loss. My body aches more now than it ever did before. When it rains, my leg tightens up and gets stiff. It hurts. It makes it hard to walk. I have to apply heat or wrap up in bed after taking over the counter pain relief. It has been a nightmare.



## Shonta’ “Shawn” High, crash survivor:

I don’t retain information the same way I used to. I’m more agitated than usual. My memory has been affected. I just don’t feel like I used to. I don’t feel like the person I was. The crash has changed me. I find myself clenching my leg whenever a motorcycle, scooter, or anything passes by on my side of the vehicle abruptly. I feel a lot of tension having to ride through that intersection. It’s like reliving it over and over again.

The police report asked, “Was the driver distracted?” The answer was checked, “No.” If the driver was not distracted, how did she not see me? I’d like drivers to pay attention. It’s people like me that follow traffic laws, guidelines, rules and regulations that get hit, damaged, and suffer.

Our elected leaders and public officials are responsible for my tragedy and every single one like it. Every life lost, every life changed due to a crash, they are responsible. Some of them will pass legislation to protect some, but not others. This is socially and racially unjust. They speak about equality as if they are part of the fairness of the world when they are not. I lost my life that day. I’ll never enjoy an amusement park with my youngest daughter due to the pain and the vertigo. My depression has worsened since this crash. Leaders don’t think it affects them, until it does. Leaders and legislators never do anything until it happens to them or their loved ones. This is a crisis to be handled right now.

Working with Families for Safe Streets means support for traumatic experiences and a near loss of life. It means building a bridge to a safety net of people who can relate to a cause that will be supported wholeheartedly. It means comradery. A band of brothers and sisters in arms that can patch each other up by screwing together each other’s nuts, bolts, pins, and rods to build each other back up in the hardest of times with understanding, sympathy, and compassion.



**DC Families for Safe Streets confronts traffic violence** and its epidemic of tragic injuries and deaths. We are comprised of victims of traffic violence and families whose loved ones have been killed or severely injured by aggressive or reckless driving and dangerous conditions on District streets. We represent the full breadth of the District’s diversity and demand an end to traffic violence.

**We bear witness** to our pain and suffering to press for the elimination of fatalities and injuries on our streets. Through our stories and advocacy, we seek cultural and physical changes on our streets and the rapid implementation of Vision Zero.

**We envision** a city where people who walk, roll, bike, and drive can safely co-exist, and children and adults can travel freely without risk of harm – where no loss of life in traffic is acceptable.

**We advocate** for life-saving changes and provide support to those affected by deadly crashes in our communities. We seek changes toward safer streets that might have saved our loved ones, or prevented injuries, as a meaningful way to channel our grief and honor our family members. We work so that no other families suffer the loss or life altering injuries that have impacted our families.

[dcfamiliesforsafestreeets.org](http://dcfamiliesforsafestreeets.org)



## “ Su Balasubramanian, crash survivor:

I moved to Washington, DC in 2010. I have been using my bicycle for my regular commute and to carry out most daily activities, ever since. I live in SE and am a resident of ANC 6B06.

Every time I've gotten on my bicycle, I've done so wearing my helmet and adhering to every road rule. Despite this, I have experienced and witnessed so many egregious hazards of being a cyclist in DC, most of which could have easily been prevented with a protected bicycle lane.



In the summer of 2018, I was riding my bicycle south on 11th St NW. As I reached the intersection with Florida Ave NW, a large van was parked illegally in the bike lane where it merges into the road. Because I was not protected by a separated bicycle lane, the van fully blocked my path. By the time I saw the van, I wasn't able to get around it, and I crashed.

That crash left me with a concussion, three brain bleeds, a broken jaw, which had to be wired shut for six weeks, a broken collarbone and three broken ribs. I was out of work for six weeks. All of this could have been easily avoided if, as a cyclist, I had been afforded the same respect and value as drivers and had a safe lane on which to ride.

And then, in the fall of 2020, as I was riding eastbound in the bicycle lane on T St NW, a motorist sped by me and suddenly pulled directly in front of me and came to a dead stop in the bike lane. In the seconds I had to respond I squeezed my brakes to avoid collision and flew over my handlebars and came inches within slamming into the car that was parked in front of me. This person driving had just decided to stop in the bicycle lane to look for parking. When the officer responded to this crash, he told me that I needed to be more careful as a cyclist - that I should maintain sufficient stopping distance to vehicles in front. When I asked how exactly I was supposed to maintain stopping distance from a motorist who suddenly pulled in front of me, he had no answer. While, yet

## “ Su Balasubramanian, crash survivor:

again, this incident could have been avoided with a protected bicycle lane. What was equally frustrating was this unequivocal lack of care for the safety and well-being of cyclists embodied by this police officer. It is representative of the toxic car-first culture in the District and across our region.

I ride on Pennsylvania Ave SE every day, where there are 4 car lanes in BOTH directions – one is used for parking, another for STOPPING and two for moving car traffic. Really? Do we need to waste an ENTIRE precious lane for cars to stop when there is NO dedicated bicycle lane or bus lane on this major thoroughfare?

Our culture and our infrastructure need to change now. I know that there are efforts being made, but they are not being made quickly enough or widely enough. We need a full network of protected bicycle lanes in the District and need to change the pernicious culture that puts the convenience of motorists before human lives. Our lives literally depend on it.



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[dcfamiliesforsafestreets.org](http://dcfamiliesforsafestreets.org)

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## Three years, by Tess McEnery and Jeff Pool:

“You know, you’ll look back in a year, and this will all seem like it happened a lifetime ago.”

I remember the trauma surgeon saying this to me, minutes or hours or days after my husband, Jeff, first arrived at the hospital, barely clinging to life. She had seen this, countless times before. She had treated people at their worst and seen them survive and felt the years go by.

It was August 2016. Jeff was riding his motorcycle on Richmond Highway in the Potomac Yard area of Alexandria, VA. He safely braked for a traffic light ahead that was turning red, but a speeding driver in a very large SUV—a GMC Yukon XL—struck Jeff and four other cars from behind. My husband was violently thrown from his bike and broke his back, pelvis, both of his shoulders, ribs, his left hand, right leg, and ankle. He suffered internal bleeding and road rash over much of his body.

I was with my husband in the ICU, bleary-eyed and curled up in a chair next to his bed. He had breathing tubes; feeding tubes; surgeries; plates and screws and fixators; and drugs, drugs, and more drugs.

A year from now was a concept of time I couldn’t grasp. Not then, not in that clammy, vinyl recliner that I slept on day and night, the ICU nurses leaving me to sleep in the bright daylight when my bedside vigil was on pause, whenever Jeff was wheeled away for surgery #1 or #8.

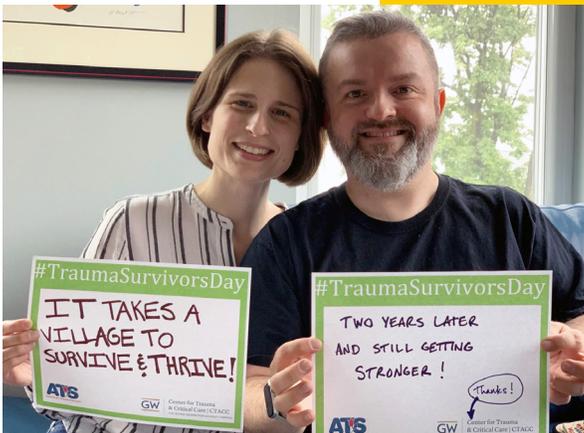
But here I am now; it is three years later. I am typing this at my kitchen table, next to Jeff. He almost died three years ago, and now, he sits next to me. Grimacing at having to work on a weekend. Leaning down every few minutes to pet the dog. Reaching over to pour more coffee into his cup. Things he did before The Crash.

Of course, many things are not the same. Almost every bone in his body is fused to a metal plate; he has chronic pain every day; his leg brace compensates for a foot that doesn’t receive signals from his brain anymore; and his beard and hair grew in shockingly grey from the trauma. And yet. He’s sitting here next to me, an Old Normal and a New Normal sharing space with me every day.



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**Time Will Pass.** This lesson is more profound than it seems. Some things will change, some will remain the same. You will feel your heart drop into your stomach when he mentions how the cold weather hobbles him with pain. You will feel your heart leap out of your chest when you realize—for the thousandth time—that he’s still alive. You will zone out, wondering when chronic arthritis will put him back in a wheelchair. And you will smile uncontrollably because he texted you a heart emoji.



You will always balance fear and hope. Gratitude and anger. “It could have been worse” and “This is the worst.” The scale will tip back and forth, and you will try and land on a little more good than bad. Everyone has their own way of getting there, and you are entitled to make your own way: turning to friends and family, bonding with other survivors and caregivers, finding a good therapist, finding a new hobby, restructuring parts of your lives, cherishing old memories, making new memories, saying no sometimes, saying yes other times.

The art of recovery and survival comes in many forms, and it will change over time. The only constant is that time will pass. One day will become one month will become one year will become 1,228 days.

“Hey, there’s something I never told you,” Jeff interjects, as I am typing this. “If you look right out this window... the yellow house across the alley looks just like a cartoon dog!” He hugs me from behind, wrapping his arms tightly around my chest.

Three years after The Crash, my husband is at home, gazing out the window into the frigid weather that hurts his bones. Today is a good day. Today is a bad day. Today is another day of recovery.

We are conditioned to breathe a sigh of relief when we read about a crash and learn there were no fatalities. Jeff feels lucky to be alive and able to walk, and is grateful every day for the good luck, good timing, and tremendous skill that saved his life. But behind every debate on changes to road design is our pain, grief, loss, disabilities, and a whole range of lifelong effects. And we know we are unfortunately not alone in our experience.

—Tess McEnergy and Jeff Pool

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## Tracey Jacobsen, crash survivor:

In May 2018, my husband and I were struck by a car while crossing a street in Washington, D.C. while visiting from California. My husband sustained nine broken ribs, a shattered breastplate and a lacerated liver. He was hospitalized for two weeks.

My injuries included 10 broken ribs—several of which were crushed in multiple places and punctured my lung, stomach and diaphragm—along with a ruptured spleen. After the initial surgery to repair the damage, I quickly became septic and went into acute heart and lung failure. At this point I required life support. My heart quickly stabilized and I was removed from the Machine, but I required several more surgeries to drain and clean all the infections that had consumed my lungs and chest cavity. Since my ribs had been so badly crushed, my emergency medical team had to rebuild my rib cage making it possible for me to eventually breathe on my own.

After four weeks in the hospital's intensive care unit, my breathing and feeding tubes were finally removed.



It was very scary to have been told that my husband and I were struck by a car, that we never made it home from our vacation, and that I had been on life support. Not to mention the battle wounds on my body.

I spent another two weeks in the hospital getting strong enough to walk, eat, breathe and travel back home. Getting back to California in my condition and finding a medical team to take over my care was extremely challenging. I was blessed to have had a huge support system consisting of friends, family and neighbors. My husband was my biggest advocate. He made my recovery his top priority even though he was recovering from his own injuries. Miraculously my infections cleared at a faster rate than was expected and I was finally discharged 42 days later on July 2nd and was able to fly home on the Fourth of July.



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It has now been almost three years and I feel blessed to have recovered so well. I was healthy and active before the crash and this played a big role in my recovery. I have few limitations and enjoy doing most things I did before the crash. I have worked hard at getting my physical, mental and spiritual strength back and I feel grateful for all the life experiences I have to look forward to. Those battle wounds have now turned into scars that I proudly wear because they serve as a reminder that I am stronger than what tried to kill me.

The road to recovery hasn't been easy, but I carry two words with me every day that connect my time in recovery to where I am now, to **BREATHE** and **WALK**. Be grateful for the new **BREATH** of life I was given and **WALK** in faith every day.

My crash could have been prevented. We were walking through a marked crosswalk on a green light. Both vehicles involved were speeding when the road conditions were slick due to earlier rainfall. One of the vehicles left the scene and was never found which I find incomprehensible since there were multiple video cameras in the area and the vehicle would have had substantial damage. Since I was pretty much unconscious for four weeks I wasn't able to have any conversations with detectives before going back home to California and any video evidence was erased before we could look further into it. I learned that these types of incidents happen frequently and only minimal driving infractions are ever imposed on the persons who cause these types of crashes.

Local decision makers also have a role to play in making streets safer for everyone. I hope things can get changed through legislation and implementing safe street designs to prevent other residents and visitors from going through a similar life changing trauma.

—Tracey Jacobsen

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**DC Families for Safe Streets confronts traffic violence** and its epidemic of tragic injuries and deaths. We are comprised of victims of traffic violence and families whose loved ones have been killed or severely injured by aggressive or reckless driving and dangerous conditions on District streets. We represent the full breadth of the District's diversity and demand an end to traffic violence.

**We bear witness** to our pain and suffering to press for the elimination of fatalities and injuries on our streets. Through our stories and advocacy, we seek cultural and physical changes on our streets and the rapid implementation of Vision Zero.

**We envision** a city where people who walk, roll, bike, and drive can safely co-exist, and children and adults can travel freely without risk of harm – where no loss of life in traffic is acceptable.

**We advocate** for life-saving changes and provide support to those affected by deadly crashes in our communities. We seek changes toward safer streets that might have saved our loved ones, or prevented injuries, as a meaningful way to channel our grief and honor our family members. We work so that no other families suffer the loss or life altering injuries that have impacted our families.