Driving Distracted Fatality File

Laura's story – "I drove distracted and a man died"

Laura Maurer isn't a victim of distracted driving. She was a perpetrator. Now she lives with the fact a 75-year-old husband, father, and grandfather is dead because she looked down at her phone while she was driving.

The crash happened July 14, 2014, just outside of Brooklyn, Iowa, on Poweshiek County Road F-29 (Old Highway 6). Maurer, now 39, had pulled off the road to send a text to her daughter's dance instructor. She pulled back onto the highway and traveled a few miles when her phone sounded that familiar "ding" for an incoming text message. "I heard it ding a couple of times, so I just looked down for a second to check my phone. I still don't know how I didn't see him," said Maurer.

At the same second Maurer was looking down, Marvin Beck of Malcom was driving his Cub Cadet tractor and pulling a tiller on the side of the road. The Buick Enclave Maurer was driving clipped the tiller and Beck was ejected from the seat of the tractor.

"I stopped right away and ran to him," she said. "He held on to me and tried to get up. I called 911. Two of his sons got there before the ambulance and started to do CPR. I was in the back of the police car when they told me he didn't make it."

Maurer, who lives outside Brooklyn with her husband and two children, didn't know Beck directly, but her 13-year-old daughter and his grandson are in the same grade at BGM Community School and Maurer was acquainted with two of his sons and their families through church.

Maurer said, "I was devastated. I didn't know how to feel or what

I could do. I just wanted to hide. Because I tried to withdraw, I think the Beck family thought I wasn’t sorry. I couldn’t eat. I couldn’t sleep. It was very difficult to drive. But nothing I was going through can compare to the pain the Beck family was feeling. And it was my fault. I did something wrong, and I needed to pay the consequences.”

The investigation took more than seven months. On Feb. 20, 2015, Maurer was ticketed for distracted driving. “I pled guilty because I was guilty,” said Maurer. “I did what I had preached to others not to do. I drove distracted and a man died.”

On July 14, 2015, exactly one year after the crash, Maurer was sentenced to 14 days in jail and 200 hours of community service. “I didn’t know what would happen, so I was prepared to go to jail that day,” Maurer said. “But they allowed me to schedule my jail time for later that month. After I had finished the jail time, I wanted to start talking to people about what had happened. I want people to learn from my mistake. It just takes one second to change your life forever. I have driven down that road a thousand times since the crash trying to figure out how I missed seeing him.”