



## OWEN BREZITSKI, 8

“Owen was so loved and so talented.  
He was special –  
nothing will ever be the same.”

— Karen Brezitski, Owen’s Mom

Owen Brezitski carried a crisp dollar bill in his hand and walked with his family across the marked crosswalk outside Bishop McDevitt following his sisters’ band concert on St. Patrick’s Day, 2011.

The 8-year-old from Harrisburg, Penn. had received the dollar from his grandfather because Owen had been so well-behaved during the concert. He told his family as they walked across the street that he wanted to go to McDonald’s. It was St. Patrick’s Day, after all, and he wanted a Shamrock Shake.

A 17-year-old driver was distracted and talking with her passenger when she drove up the hill, driving about 10 miles per hour over the posted speed limit. Distracted by the music on her cell phone and the passenger, the teen driver failed to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk or notice the group of people who had left the concert and were crossing the street.

The teen drove through the crosswalk – not realizing she had struck Owen. In fact, it wasn’t until she noticed a crowd of people yelling and chasing after her that she realized what she had done.

Karen knew the attempts to save her son’s life would likely be in vain.

“It’s the lost potential that bothers me the most,” said Karen, almost one year after her son’s death. “He was going to be something. He was so loved and so talented.”

The driver who hit Owen shouldn’t have been distracted by music on a cell phone or by a passenger, and she shouldn’t have been speeding. The combination cost an 8-year-old boy his life and sentenced his family to a lifetime of pain.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Americans ages 8 to 35, and teens are four times as likely to crash as older drivers.

“The police officer [that handled the case] said it was an avoidable incident,” Karen said. “Not an accident.”

Karen, her husband, Mark, and their two daughters, Makenna and Kyla, honored their Owen’s memory by raising money for special blinking LED crosswalk signs in front of Bishop McDevitt with the hope that other drivers will see the signs and slow down. They’ve established a nonprofit, Owen’s Foundation, and they decorate their home with his artwork and favorite color – orange.

The Brezitski family also joined the HEARTS Network, a nationwide community of families and victims impacted by teen-related crashes. Through HEARTS, they are sharing Owen’s story and engaging with the Pennsylvania Teen Safe Driving Coalition to advocate for change.

But nothing can bring Owen back.

*Continued*



# Sharing HEARTS

Honoring Everyone Affected, Rallying The Survivors

INITIATED IN PART BY: Allstate Foundation

The following blog post was written by Owen's mom and is shared with you with her permission.

## Owen's 1st Birthday in Heaven

My little boy should be turning 9 tomorrow,  
instead my heart is full of sorrow.  
Everyone says that time will heal  
but that is not how I feel.  
Owen was the "best Owen ever"  
and I will miss him forever.  
My heart is broken and all I know  
is the quietness of the house below.  
Owen was so special,  
full of kindness and compassion.  
I'm so proud of the boy I knew,  
and how he put others first.  
He is in Heaven now and is content,  
but still I long for his presence.  
I pray that Owen helps heal our hearts  
and that he keeps watch over us.  
Someday my sadness and pain will disappear  
as we greet each other way up there!  
My little boy should be turning 9 tomorrow,  
instead my heart is full of sorrow.



## What you can do

### *The HEARTS Network*

The HEARTS Network, managed by NSC and initiated in part with The Allstate Foundation, is an acronym for Honoring Everyone Affected, Rallying The Survivors. HEARTS links families across the nation to support one another through grief and empower each other to advocate for change. To learn more, please visit [nsc.org/heartts](http://nsc.org/heartts), call (630) 775-2411 or email [heartts@nsc.org](mailto:heartts@nsc.org).

### *Teen Safe Driving Coalitions*

To help combat teen driving-related crashes and keep everyone on the roadways safe, the National Safety Council and The Allstate Foundation have established Teen Safe Driving Coalitions in 10 states to educate parents and teens about the effectiveness of Graduated Driver Licensing programs, which maximize experience while minimizing common risks teens face in the novice stage of driving. Coalitions in California, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Florida, Texas and Pennsylvania advocate for stringent GDL laws. NSC also has a coalition established in Ohio. To join a coalition in your state, please contact [roadsafety@nsc.org](mailto:roadsafety@nsc.org).

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