

Chaffin Luhana Anti-Distracted Driving Scholarship Essay Contest

Distracted driving has impacted my family immensely through the loss of one of our loved ones. My uncle Bill lost his life as a victim of distracted driving. This personal impact has caused me to focus on my driving habits as a new driver. I saw the impact of this destruction first hand, and had to experience this loss with my family. Now that I am aware of the consequences of distracted driving, I make sure that I am a responsible driver so that no other family has to endure the pain of losing a loved one due to the mistakes of others. I never want to be the cause of loss or the reason that a loved one will be buried.

On June 1st of 2012, my uncle Bill was walking home from dinner alone when a young girl hit him with her car as a result of distracted driving. This young girl and her friend were racing down a busy road when my uncle was hit and thrown twelve feet through the air, leaving only a single shoe behind on the road. From this accident, he was brought to the hospital where he had such severe brain damage that he was put on life support. The accident occurred on a Friday night, but it was not until the next Tuesday that the doctors could determine whether he would survive or not. A week later, on June 8th, my aunt had to make the difficult decision to take my uncle off of life support, leaving her to finish raising three kids on her own. My cousins lost their father only in adolescence due to another's irresponsible decisions. The driver that caused this incident also was not charged for her illegal acts of driving. My aunt and cousin were never given that closure, and the driver was not brought to justice.

Distracted driving, in any form, comes with many consequences. Someone could lose a loved one, whether they are the driver or the pedestrian. I still have memories of when I was little of him at family gatherings. While I may not have known him long, I wish I would have still had

the opportunity to get to know him better. If it wasn't for the accident, I would have had the opportunity to know him for a bit longer and my cousins would have had their father. It only took a few seconds of irresponsible actions to end his life.

Because of this personal impact, I've taken precautions when driving. I put my phone on silent. I keep the music volume low. When my friends are in the car, I do not focus on their conversations. I never get behind the wheel while intoxicated. I wait to check my phone until I arrive at my destination. I take these precautions to avoid making irreversible mistakes. More people can put effort into avoiding casualties from distracted driving. People can take precautions like I have, or even more to ensure the safety of themselves and others on the road.

Technology has been destructive in distracted driving before, but could now be part of the solution. Technology is giving people more options to continue safer driving practices, such as a "do-not-disturb" feature. These tools can aid in alleviating the casualties from distracted driving. I now display my cell-phone on the dashboard of a car so that it is more accessible and only needs one or two taps of the screen to complete a task.

I have seen first-hand the impact of distracted driving on the victims and their loved ones. These destructive actions come with devastating consequences. Because of what my family has lost due to distracted driving, I have taken multiple steps to make myself a safer driver to protect myself and other drivers around me. Others can learn from these actions and take action themselves. Drivers can collectively put more effort into making roads safer. Even if one person changes the way that they drive, they could create safer roads for others.

I am a current undergraduate student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania studying psychology and sociology/human services as a minor. I plan to work in this field with either children of no specific population or with adults with substance abuse disorders. Even mixing these two populations to work with families would be extremely interesting to me. I hope to attend graduate school in the future to ensure that I can earn a career in those specific areas of psychology. While I am unsure of which university I will want to attend for graduate school, I will look for an accredited university that will allow me to earn a masters in counseling.