

Amanda Schoonmaker



My daughter Amanda is 15 years old and on Saturday Nov 1st 2008 she was in an ATV accident. We were at a cook out in a private community and all the kids were taking turns on the ATV. I was dead set against my kids riding but everyone said I was just being paranoid and then the owner of the ATV taught the kids how to handle it and so on, against my better judgment I allowed my kids to ride. They did good all day and at dusk we were getting ready to leave and my daughter asked to go one more time so I allowed her too. About 20 minutes later I thought it was strange she wasn't back yet so my husband and I jumped in the van and went looking. About 200 yards from the house there were cars stopped in the road and I knew then that it wasn't good, off to the left you could see the ATV against a tree lights still on. Amanda hit the tree head on at 25 MPH. My stomach dropped and my husband and I went running, my girl friend had left a few minutes earlier and she grabbed me when we got to the scene and told me to stay calm but that Amanda had hit the tree and it was bad. She had found my daughter wondering in the street bleeding and screaming for me. She was life flighted to Kosair Childrens hospital in Louisville. She had over 100 stitches in her face she broke 3 bones in her face, fractured her skull and nose. She had surgery the following Tuesday to repair the broken bones. She spent 5 days in the hospital. My daughter does not remember the accident at all but believe me I remember that night very clearly. She is recovering quite well she has a scar about 6 inches long and it goes across her eye lid also. She hit the tree at 25 miles per hour head on, she is lucky to be alive. It's the worst feeling in the world to see my baby hurt like that and knowing I cant do anything to fix it!! We were very lucky in the sense that I didn't lose her that day but she has to live the rest of her life with that scar to remind her of what happened. My kids will NEVER get on another ATV as long as they live in my house!!

Source: <http://www.atvsafetynet.org/stories.php>

Bryan Paul Smith



Bryan Paul 'B.J.' Smith, Jr. was born on June 15, 1990 in a small town in south central Louisiana. He grew up an only child and we loved and spoiled him from the beginning. He and his dad had a passion for motorcycles and rode almost every day. He didn't have an ATV of his own but had ridden with friends and family many times before.

August 8, 2005 was a day of great tragedy and sadness for us. While visiting family in Houston, BJ & his cousin decided to ride his uncle's new ATV. Even though the boys had been told not to go near the ATV, they took it out anyway. They ventured out into the neighborhood to show off for some friends. BJ was not wearing a helmet or other safety gear and had never had an ATV instruction course. With nothing but open road before him, BJ gunned the 4-wheeler to almost 60 mph - then a dog ran out and clipped the front wheel. BJ's life was changed forever. The ATV spun out of control and he was thrown 25 feet, landing on the road headfirst. One of the boys watching immediately called 911. He later said BJ had blood pouring from his eyes, ears, nose and mouth and was making a terrible gurgling sound. He was instructed to turn him on his side and wait for the ambulance.

On the way to the hospital, paramedics were unable to sustain BJ and we were later told by the ER doctor that he was brought in 'dead on arrival'; however, lifesaving measures were continued - he underwent emergency brain surgery and spent 3 weeks in a coma/life support in Neurotrauma. His diagnosis was severe traumatic brain injury, but he also sustained a broken collar bone, broken ribs, punctured lung, lacerated liver and severe road burn on his arms, legs and back.

During his five and a half month hospital stay he endured a total of four brain surgeries, numerous infections, seizures, memory loss and a stroke. He had to relearn how to walk, talk, eat and dress himself. For the remainder of his life he will deal with permanent, partial blindness. A year after the

accident, at the age of 16, his academic level was that of a 5th grader. Since then he has improved, but he will never be the same again. The year before BJ's accident he excelled academically and with encouragement from his coach, he was pursuing a future in football. He will never again play football and it is doubtful he will ever get a driver's license. I have had to watch my son regress emotionally at times to that of a 6 year old. It's the most heartwrenching thing to live through.

If you have kids under 16 - PLEASE keep them off of these powerful and deadly machines. AN ATV is NOT A TOY - its a powerful vehicle that deserves respect.

To all the families out there who have had kids killed or injured on ATVs - our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Kim Smith

Source: <http://www.atvsafetynet.org/stories.php>

Anthony Paul Wodzinski



My name is Natalie Camp and I lost my only son on June 10, 2006 due to an ATV accident. He was just 15 years old. I had sent my two children to their dad's for a couple of weeks during the summer for visitation. My precious son did not come home.

While at his dad's he went to visit a friend who owned 4-wheelers. The parents were gone and the 15 year old girl gave him the key and let him ride off alone, without a helmet. He rode over 5 miles alone down lonely country roads.

As he was riding alone, no one really knows what happened, but the best guess of the investigator was that he was riding down the side of the road and for some reason lost control of the 4-wheeler going over the edge of a 20 foot ravine. He actually rode the 4-wheeler all the way to the bottom safe and sound. But then he hit a cement pipe running under the road that was overgrown with weeds and was thrown from the 4-wheeler.

He lay there at the bottom of that ravine for almost an hour before being found. He was transported to the ER, and I made the two hour ride to get to him. I was told when I got there that he was in grave condition and had coded 3 times after they found him. It took them almost 30 minutes one time to get him back. He was then airlifted to the closest trauma unit and again, I raced to be with him, praying that he did not die in a helicopter full of strangers.

I made it and we had to wait forever to find out anything. Finally a doctor told us that he was in very grave condition as he had a neck fracture, his spinal column was destroyed in several places leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. And then, there was the head injury and facial fractures.

I walked with my baby up to PICU, holding his hand, telling him I was there and we would make him all better. He opened one eye and squeezed my hand. I had to wait for them to get him settled and was finally allowed to see him. He was hooked up to dozens of machines. He looked so peaceful, like he was sleeping. You could not tell he was injured at all, much less as severely as they were talking.

Anthony never opened his eyes again, never responded to us again. We were told that he had swelling on the brain, so they put in an ICP (inter cranial pressure) monitor. I watched those numbers for 3 days, I hardly slept, did not eat, just prayed, touched and talked to him. I was watching my son slowly pull away from us and enter the arms of Jesus.

On Saturday, his ICP was 135, normal is under 13. They did a test and he was pronounced brain dead. That day was the worst day of my life. I had to leave my precious son in that hospital and go home without him, after I told him that I would not leave him, that he would get better.

Since that time, I have lived my life in desperation, fear and confusion. There is no one that can help me, no one to bring him back.

Anthony had ridden ATVs since he was 4 years old, raced go-carts, 4-wheelers, bikes, everything. He was getting reckless on his, so I did the responsible thing and took it away. I just wish the mother of that little girl had been responsible too, by locking up the keys or even taking them with her.

Natalie M. Camp

Source: <http://www.atvsafetynet.org/stories.php>

Sara Rose Hennerichs



My name is Cathy Hennarichs and I live in Boca Raton, Florida. My story begins as a typical Saturday on September 13, 2003. My 13 year old daughter Sara woke up early that morning, made herself and her little sister breakfast and was off to a cheerleading event at the local middle school. Sara's dad, Duane was away in Wisconsin for the weekend and I spent most of the day shuttling around my other 2 daughters, Amy (Sara's older sister) and Laura (Sara's younger sister). Sara got home around 5:00 pm and asked to sleep at her friend Alexa's house. I said it was o.k. and drove them over to Alexa's house as I have done many times before. Little did I know the events that would take place this particular evening.

Apparently, right after I dropped the girls off, a 13 year old boy friend of theirs drove his adult sized ATV from his home, unsupervised, across a public road and into the neighborhood where Sara was. He allowed Sara to drive the ATV even though he knew she did not know how to operate the machine. The road she drove on was a narrow dirt road with trees on the side of the road. She ended up crashing into one of those trees. Although I am still not sure of all the events that took place right after the crash, I know the children called 911 right away and her friend Alexa knew enough to run down and open the gate of the community so the ambulances could arrive quickly. I received the dreaded phone call around 7:00 pm that evening from her friend's mother telling me to go to the hospital right away. People tried to console me as I sat in the emergency waiting room for about an hour and a half not knowing how bad Sara's injuries were. Hoping and praying for the best, but deep down knowing it wasn't good. Finally the doctor called me into that little room and started telling me how serious her brain injuries were and the damage to the main artery of her heart and at that point I just screamed and I didn't need or want to hear anything else. Everything from that point on became very surreal. I was able to go in and see Sara before she died but was in such a state of shock I couldn't seem to find the right words. I remember telling her how much I loved her and not to be afraid, that she is always in my arms. I wanted so much to

just die with her. I couldn't believe what was happening and my whole body felt numb. My husband was on his way back from Wisconsin on a private jet and I couldn't wait till he arrived because I didn't know how to handle this without his strength to support me. I was so lost that evening and continue to be every minute of every day since. My life has forever changed and I will never be the same person I was before Sara's accident. My greatest challenge in life now is trying not to feel guilty about living while Sara is not and to try to find some joy in my life for the sake of the rest of my family. This deep pain will never go away. Please visit Sara's website to see more photo's of my beautiful girl and to get to know her through the many wonderful things written about her.

I am hoping that by sharing my story I will be able to save another innocent child's life by making parents aware of the dangers of these machines and the responsibility that goes along with owning one. This 13 year old boy was entrusted with an ATV as if it were just a bicycle and that is why my daughter is not alive today. Laws should prohibit the use of adult size ATV's by children younger than 16 years old without a driver's license. Additional training and certification in ATV safety should also be required. I know Sara would want parents and children to learn something from her tragedy.

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