

A Life Cut Short

Last July, a distracted driver hit aspiring journalist Casey Feldman in a crosswalk, ending the dreams and promise of a rising star.

Two hundred dollars.

That was the total amount a South Jersey snack salesman was fined in March for the careless driving that killed Casey Feldman, a 21-year-old college student who was struck by his van last summer in an Ocean City crosswalk.

For Casey's inconsolable parents, however, the penalty could have been \$200 million and it still wouldn't matter—there is no way to quantify all that they lost to a motorist's split-second of distraction.

On Friday, July 17, while Casey was walking to her summer job at Bob's Grill, 58-year-old Anthony Lomonaco was making his way through a congested stretch of Central Avenue to drop off a delivery on the north side of town, reaching 14th Street in his Ford Econoline just as Casey approached the busy intersection on foot. After briefly halting at the stop sign, he hit the gas while fumbling to set down his iced tea, glancing toward the cup-holder to guide it in—just as the petite blond proceeded into the crosswalk. His eyes returned to the road when the impact occurred,



but it was too late. Casey was already under his van, mortally wounded.

Casey's father took the call every parent dreads just after 5 p.m., and was soon pacing the waiting room of the Atlantic City trauma center where she was undergoing surgery. At 9:30 p.m., he and his wife were informed that Casey had died on the operating table, which is when life—as they knew it—ended for them, too.

The Feldmans channeled their intense grief into outreach aimed at preventing similar distracted-driving catastrophes in New Jersey, which claims double the national average of vehicle-pedestrian collisions. And this April, a new, tougher pedestrian law inspired by Casey took effect. It requires motorists to remain stopped for pedestrians in marked crosswalks or intersections—replacing the ambiguous former obligation to simply yield. "It's absolutely horrible to have lost our daughter," Feldman says, "but it would be far worse if something good didn't come from it." —J.K.