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News,

Hospital Presents Distracted Driving Program

Tragedy leads Delaware County couple to campaign

By Joanna Poncavage | [Email the author](#) | March 19, 2011

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Casey Feldman was a 21-year-old college senior working in Ocean City, N.J. for the summer when she was hit and killed in a crosswalk by a driver who took his eyes from the road for just a second. He had placed an iced tea into a cup holder in his vehicle.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Casey's death was one of 5,500 in 2009 caused by distracted driving, a statistic becoming even more alarming as drivers use cell phones to talk or text.

Since their daughter's death, Joel Feldman and Dianna Anderson of Springfield, Delaware County have created the Casey Feldman Foundation, which sponsors a Web site, www.endDD.org to help end distracted driving.

On Tuesday, Joel Feldman came to [Lehigh Valley Hospital-Cedar Crest](#) in Salisbury Township to talk about his family's loss and show a video made about Casey for the U.S. Department of Transportation's national campaign against distracted driving, "Faces of Distracted Driving" at www.distraction.gov/faces/.



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“The Feldmans were a storybook family,” said Loren Hulber, a member of LVHN’s board of trustee’s community relations committee, as he introduced his family friend. “Two successful attorneys with two beautiful children, and they even got their dog from the shelter where their daughter volunteered. You could see the light of love for each other in their eyes. But then suddenly it all changed.”

Feldman’s advocacy was part of a two-hour presentation by three emergency room physicians and LVHN staff that’s part of a [distracted driving campaign](#) launched in October. Since then, they’ve taken it to more than a dozen Lehigh Valley area high schools.

Lehigh Valley Hospital physicians Gavin Barr, Robert Barraco and Bryan Kane are serious about their mission because they know it works. By comparing driver behavior before and after their talks at schools, they can say that cell phone use by drivers leaving those schools has dropped by 74 percent.

Speaking to a group of about 40 people of all ages, the physicians presented some frightening statistics: 15 percent of driving is distracted driving; 80 percent of traffic crashes occur within three seconds of some kind of driver distraction; 66 percent of young drivers use cell phones while driving, and 51 percent admit to texting while driving.

Also: talking on a cell phone while driving raises your risk for a crash to the same level as driving drunk. And if you’re text messaging, you are eight times more likely to crash.

Among the faces of destroyed lives on the hospital’s video screen was Mallory Bomboy, the 18-year-old Northern Lehigh High School senior who died in 2006 when her car hit a tree in Washington Township, Lehigh County. At the time of the crash, she was talking on her cell phone, said her mother, Susan.

Pat Luftman of Emmaus, parent of a 16-year-old boy about to get his drivers learning permit, said she thought the program was fantastic and should be mandatory in schools and for anyone learning to drive. “I’ve been guilty of talking on the phone while driving, but after tonight, I won’t be doing it any more,” she said.

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It was the first time the program was offered to the public, but it may be offered again, said LHVN spokesman Brian Downs.

The campaign has put messages on billboards, LANTA buses, radio, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike. It's handed out 15,000 car magnets, and 500 lawn signs.

Its Web site, www.cellimito.com, has a place to share stories about injuries and close calls due to distracted driving; it uses Facebook and Twitter to spread its message, and it's offering a downloadable distracted driving app that tells callers you are driving and can't talk or text. Earlier this month, the social media component of the campaign earned an honorable mention in the 2011 PR News corporate social responsibility category.

Area businesses have also requested that the hospital present its message to employees, and in April, Coca-Cola Bottling of the Lehigh Valley will put the distracted driver message on its trucks.