

The Darrell Gwynn Foundation : Education and Prevention Program

Page 2 – Spinal Cord Injuries Happen from Darrell (Inside Cover)

In 1990, I was a race car driver at the top of my career. I'd never had a bad day before, but sure enough I was about to have one. During an exhibition run, in London, an accident occurred which landed me in the hospital with a spinal cord injury. I am now paralyzed from the chest down.

My injury was due to a freak accident but so many others occur when people are acting foolish. That's why my wife, Lisa, and I started the Darrell Gwynn Foundation and it's why we have created the Education & Prevention Program so that young people know it can happen to them and it only takes one bad decision to change your life. Through our E&PP we have even had the opportunity to host events such as the Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Week.

By taking the time to talk to young people, maybe they will stop and think before they make a tragic mistake. "It only takes one second to change your life, how are you going to use that time?" Please use that time to help us reach out to the students and young people near you. They still need us and we still need you.

-Darrell Gwynn

Bio

The Darrell Gwynn Foundation was cofounded in 2002 by Darrell Gwynn and his wife, Dr. Lisa Gwynn. The organization was started with the idea of helping those who have been affected by spinal cord injuries. Darrell Gwynn was in a tragic exhibition accident that paralyzed him from the chest down. This accident prompted him to start the Darrell Gwynn Foundation

(DGF) and to help support and educate people about spinal cord injuries (SCI) and hopefully prevent more of them from happening. The Education & Prevention Program (E&PP) reaches over 10,000 students annually at over 50 high schools. This Program has been a success at educating young people about the causes of paralysis and safe practices they can incorporate into their daily lives in order to prevent spinal cord injuries.

The DGF donates custom power chairs that can cost up to \$25,000. The chairs are customized for each recipient and what they may need. The organization itself has grown substantially since 2002, when they donated power wheelchairs to only four recipients. Now, after being in operation for over ten years, the Darrell Gwynn Foundation donates thirty to forty power wheelchairs annually. The Darrell Gwynn Foundation is committed to increasing the amount of donations as the organization continues to grow.

Page 3 – A Brief Program Over view

DGF's Education and Prevention Program (E&PP) is a program focused on educating teenagers about SCIs and how to prevent them from happening. A speaker with firsthand experience goes into the school and speaks with the students about their own SCI and discusses the risks of certain behaviors that the students can make an effort to avoid.

The program is specifically targeted towards young people like teenagers because they are some of the most likely to obtain a spinal cord injury. Teenagers are less likely to pause and think "What are the consequences of this action?" They have a feeling of invincibility and don't think that anything bad could happen to them. This is why DGF wants to reach out to them now and hopefully prepare them so they won't make decisions without thinking about the risks.

DGF is fortunate to have endorsements such as Miami-Dade, Broward, and FDOH.

(Logos here)

Page 4 – Driving Risk

Drinking and Driving

Drinking and driving is one of the riskiest things a person can do and the most preventable. Young people are some of the mostly likely people to get into a car and drive after they have been drinking. The rate was highest among persons aged 21 to 25 (23.4 percent). An estimated 5.8 percent of 16 or 17 year olds and 15.1 percent of 18 to 20 year olds reported driving under the influence of alcohol in the past year¹. When this does occur, the potential for a car accident is higher which can lead to a spinal cord injury. Teens are putting themselves at risk and most of them don't even realize just how dangerous their actions can be, which is why DGF talks to them about the risks through the Education & Prevention Program. We present teenagers with the information they need to make a better decision. When a person drinks, their reflexes, coordination, judgment, reasoning and perception are impaired. This greatly increases their chances of getting into an accident and sustaining a SCI.

Statistics

¹ ([Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#). “Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings.” September 2011.)

- Roughly three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related collision at some point in their life. (Van Tuyl, Christine. 2006. *Drunk Driving*. Chicago, IL: Greenhaven Press)
- Kids who start drinking young are seven times more likely to be in an alcohol-related crash (<http://www.madd.org/statistics/>)

Texting While Driving

Texting while driving is a problem because it distracts the mind away from the road. When a person is splitting their focus, they increase the chance that they might make a mistake. Texting is also dangerous if a person looks away from the road and at their phone because they can't see exactly what's happening. They might drift out of their lane and into the path of another car. If they light turns red or the car in front is braking and the driver is looking at their phone they might not be able to react in time and this could lead to an accident. If the accident is severe enough, it might leave the driver or its passengers with a SCI. 570,000 accidents leading to minor and serious injuries are caused each year by cell phone distractions, according to a Harvard study². DGF wants to talk to teenagers and let them know about the risks of texting and driving and that it could happen to them.

Statistics

² (New York Times)

- Crash risk is four times higher when a driver uses a cell phone, whether its hands free or not. (http://www.teendriversource.org/stats/support_gov/detail/64)

Not Wearing Seatbelts

Not wearing your seatbelt may not be a dangerous behavior but it can have serious consequences if someone else on the road is doing something reckless. There are people on the road who aren't always making the best decisions by drinking and driving or texting while driving. When an accident happens the impact on the car starts a chain reaction that will throw the driver's and the passenger's bodies against the car or potentially through the windshield if the seatbelt is not being worn. The force of this action can lead to a SCI. Seatbelts reduce serious crash-related injuries and deaths by about 50%³. DGF wants to let teenagers know that they need to wear their seatbelts no matter what. The most common reasons given by drivers in the 16-20 age group for not wearing seat belts were that they forgot or were driving a short distance⁴. By letting teenagers know that this is an easy precaution they can take DGF hopes to better prepare them to be safe.

Page 5 – Dangerous Activity Risk

Diving in Unknown waters

Water activities can be so common that they aren't thought of as being risky; however, an unfamiliar body of water can be very dangerous. Diving into water without knowing the depth

³ <http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/seatbelts/facts.html>

⁴ http://www.noys.org/seat_belt_statistics.aspx

can be dangerous, because of the potential to hit the bottom and injure the spinal cord. It can also be risky to dive into water without being able to see into the water because debris, such as a tree limb, could be floating beneath the surface. Hitting this debris could cause an SCI. Even the waves at the beach can be dangerous if someone dives in from the wrong angle. An estimated 75% of diving-related SCI result in tetraplegia (quadriplegia), the paralysis of all four limbs⁵. By providing teenagers with this information DGF believes that they will be able to make good decisions.

Statistics

- Men – the majority of whom are between 16–30 years of age – account for 86% of all diving/water-related SCI.
- Diving is the leading cause of all sports-related SCI.

Playing with Guns

It can be so dangerous to play with a weapon such as a gun because they are essentially designed to harm and to kill. A gun left loaded has the potential to be set off injuring or killing someone. Accidentally firing a gun can be very dangerous and if it hits someone it can lead to a SCI. Even the back fire of a gun can be dangerous if it is powerful enough. If someone isn't accustomed to firing a large gun the kick back can seriously hurt them leading to a SCI. This is one reason why guns aren't toys to be played with. Most unintentional firearm-related deaths among children occur in or around the home; 50% at the home of the victim and 40% at

⁵ (<http://www.kessler-rehab.com/company/newsroom/News20090623.aspx>).

the home of a friend or relative⁶. By talking to teenagers about the risks that come with firing a gun, even in jest, DGF hopes to prepare them for that moment when they are in this situation.

Statistics

- 12% of high school students have carried a weapon to school.
- The presence of a firearm in the home increases the risk of unintentional firearm-related death among children (especially when the gun is loaded and unlocked).
- <http://www.chop.edu/healthinfo/firearms-injury-statistics-and-incidence-rates.html>

Reckless Horseplay

It's fun to play around with among friends and especially for males it is fun to wrestle and to play rough. At the time it may not seem harmful or dangerous, however it only takes a too hard hit or fall for teens to severely injure themselves or their friends. Horseplay can mean just climbing in trees, but if they climb to high the potential to fall out and hurt themselves increases. Wrestling with a parent or sibling can lead to injuries like hyper extension of the neck. Even pushing someone in the pool can be dangerous as Rachel Friedman learned in 2010. "In an act of innocent horseplay my friend playfully pushed me into the pool and I went head first causing a C6 spinal cord injury. I was now paralyzed from the chest down and unable to use my hands."⁷ These actions and others have the potential to cause SCI but by presenting teenagers with this information we can stop the potential of SCIs.

Statistics

⁶ <http://www.chop.edu/healthinfo/firearms-injury-statistics-and-incidence-rates.html>.

⁷ http://backbonesonline.com/?page_id=418

Page 6 – Program Details

In working with the Florida Department of Health, DGF has assembled a roster of speakers who have sustained a spinal cord injury. The foundation assigns each school one or two speakers who have firsthand knowledge and are available to visit the school. DGF's Education and Prevention Program has been designed so that it can be tailored to a school's specific needs. DGF is able to speak to large auditoriums or to small groups such as; classrooms, sports teams, and pre-med clubs like HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America). This program has been well received and has excellent evaluations from both teachers and students.

The Program agenda goes as follows:

- Presentation of 9-minute video, "It Could Happen to You," produced by The Darrell Gwynn Foundation.
- Speaker's personal story about his or her accident; what life is like with a spinal cord injury; how it could have been prevented; rundown of their daily routine and challenges posed by their spinal cord injury, etc.
- Spinal cord injury prevention tips that are geared to and relevant for this age group.
- A question and answer session with students.

Contact us: If you have any questions, please call us at 954-792-7223 or email

info@darrellgwynnfoundation.org

Some of the Suggested Discussion Topics that parents and teacher can use to talk with their children before and after the presentation are:

- Ask if anyone knows someone who has a spinal cord injury. If so, ask them briefly to share information about that person (i.e. what happened; if relevant, how it could have been prevented, etc.)
- Fact: Spinal cord injuries impact the injured persons, their families and communities. Ask students to provide examples of ways a person living with a spinal cord injury could affect others around them.
- Ask the kids about their perception of disabled persons...and why they feel that way.
- Ask for the kids to share examples of behavior that could result in a spinal cord injury.
- Ask the kids about things that can be done to prevent an injury from occurring.
- What should you do if you're ever faced with a situation where you or a friend believes they have been seriously injured? (Answer: never move the person; encourage the injured person to keep their head straight; immediately call 911 and wait for help to arrive.)
- Share some of the statistics provided below and generate discussions based on those statistics (i.e., how many of you text while driving? How many of you have gotten into a car with a friend who's been drinking? How many of you have dived, or jumped, into an unfamiliar lake?)

Page 7 - SCI Statistics

Spinal cord injuries can happen to anyone. Participating in unsafe driving or recreational activities puts individuals at significant risk of being paralyzed. In order to

educate young people regarding spinal cord injuries and to prevent them from being injured, the Darrell Gwynn Foundation has gathered the following statistics:

- Someone suffers a spinal cord injury every hour of every day.
- There are 262,000 people currently living with spinal cord injuries in the United States.
- There are 12,000 new spinal cord injury cases each year.
- Automobile accidents account for approximately 40% of spinal cord injuries.
- Alcohol is a factor in 25% of spinal cord injuries.
- The most common age for someone to experience an SCI is 19, and 81% of those injured are male.
- Most people with neurologically complete lesions above C-3 die before receiving medical care. Those who survive are usually dependent on mechanical respirators to breathe.
- The average annual cost of care for individuals who have a spinal cord injury ranges from \$245,000 to \$830,000 the first year after injury, with an estimated lifetime cost ranging from \$529,000 to \$3.3 million depending on the severity of the injury.
- Only 52% of individuals who suffer spinal cord injuries are covered by private health insurance at the time of injury⁸

⁸ <http://darrellgwynnfoundation.org/education-statistics.htm>

Bios

Ryan Gebauer was born and raised in Coral Springs, Florida. In June 1995 he sustained a C 3-4 spinal cord injury. This means that he is paralyzed from the shoulders down. Ryan was injured when he jumped out of a tree from 36ft up. He lost his balance on the descent and belly flopped into the water. While he was in the hospital, Ryan was visited by Darrell Gwynn. Ryan had been a fan of Darrell back when he was a racer. When he heard about the Darrell Gwynn Foundation and about the speaker program he was interested in getting involved. Ryan believes that if someone had come and spoken to him about the risks he was taking and what the consequences could be it would have made a difference for him.

Alex Lutin was born and raised in Florida; he sustained a level t-2 spinal cord injury [Date of injury]. This means that he is paralyzed from the chest down. He was riding a motorcycle on the turnpike heading south bound when he was hit from behind and sent over to the north bound lane. He stood up to get out of the way when he was hit by a car and run over by two more. Alex spent a year in the hospital and rehabilitation. During this time he felt like he was the only guy in the world going through this and it inspired him to start a support group. Alex was continuing to see more and more kids sustaining spinal cord injuries and it made him think about his daughter and what if something happened to her. He began reaching out to the

<http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/scifacts.html.pdf>

<http://www.sci-info-pages.com/facts.html>

school system so that he could talk to the students. This is how he found out about the Darrell Gwynn Foundation and was eager to join them and help out. Alex believes that if he had met someone who was in a wheel chair than he might have sold his motorcycle sooner.

Alexandra Santibanez is from Miami Florida. In June 1988 she was injured in a car accident that left her with a T-3 spinal cord injury. This means that she is paralyzed from the chest down. Alexandra became a speaker because she wanted to inspire other people no matter what challenges they have to face every day there is still hope. She wanted other people with spinal cord injuries to know that life isn't over. She believes that if someone had spoken to her it would have made a difference.