



Remembering the 18 teens lost on Utah roads

2024



The people we love and care for are intrinsically woven into our souls. And though they may be taken from us suddenly, they remain forever stitched in our hearts.

Through the Teen Memoriam, we remember the teens whose lives were needlessly cut short on Utah's roads and honor their memory with the hope that others will learn from their tragedies.

When you step into a car, get behind the wheel, or use the road in any manner, remember the shared responsibility we all have. The decisions we make there have far-reaching consequences that can affect more lives than we know.

Our appreciation goes out to the families who have shared their stories in hopes of keeping others safe on our roads.

SPENCER AIDEN LANGSTON

17 | HERRIMAN, UTAH

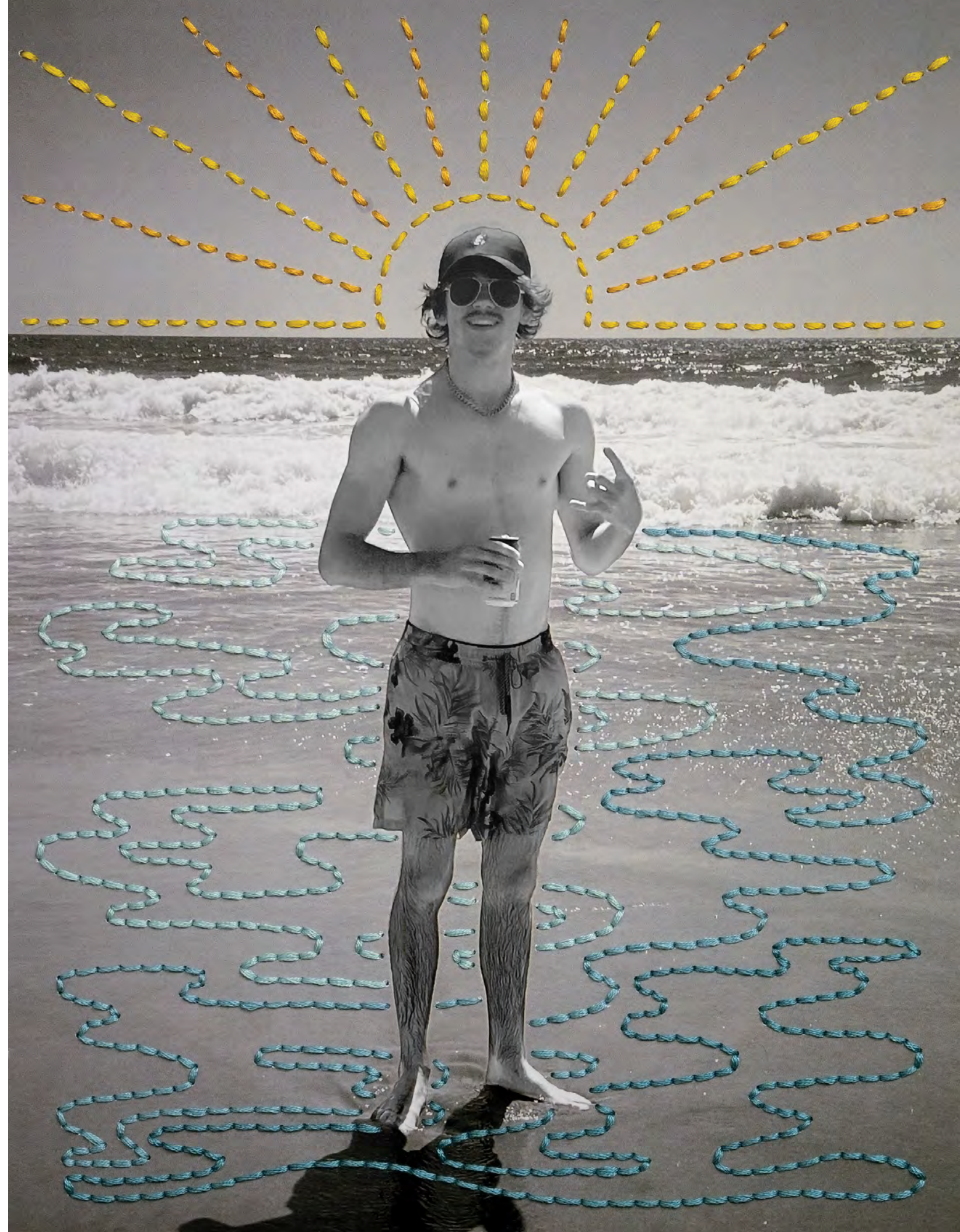
Aiden passed away on May 30, 2024. He was driving home from a late-night adventure with friends. They dropped him off at his car around midnight and he started heading home. He was 5 minutes away when he sped through the light on 13400 South and Mountain View Corridor in Herriman. He then sped through a second red light, passing his friends in another car. He was distracted and went straight through the Corridor traffic. A vehicle struck him on the passenger side, and because he did not have a seat belt on, he was killed instantly.

I am bawling as I write this because it was the worst day of my life. I lost my baby boy because he thought he was invincible. I warned him over and over again of the dangers of speeding and his response was always, "I'll be fine." He never thought it would happen to him, but it did. And it happened to all of us.

He was supposed to go to his high school graduation that day. He also enlisted early in the Navy and was going to boot camp in June. His birthday is July 11th. Now he will never turn 18, never get married, never have kids, never excel in the Navy, and never build the race car he wanted. His family will miss his laughter and fun personality!

I tell all of his friends and everyone I talk to, PLEASE drive safe! No distractions, NO speeding, and wear your seat belt. And "you are not invincible!" It CAN happen to you. Aiden thought he would be fine, and he wasn't. And now I will never be fine again!

I MISS MY BUDDY!





JAXX COWLEY

161 PRICE, UTAH

Jaxxlyn "Jaxx" Cowley was tragically killed on July 27, 2024, a month before her 17th birthday. She and some friends had attended a house party on the night of July 26, 2024, where drinking had taken place. Having only met the 34-year-old male driver a few hours earlier, Jaxx, a 24-year-old male, and another 16-year-old girlfriend decided to go for a drive on Airport Road.

The driver was impaired at almost three times the legal limit with a .137 blood-alcohol level. Driving at a speed of 112 mph while drifting from one lane of traffic to the other, he crashed into a ravine, flipping the car on its side, passenger-side down. The car caught fire. Jaxx's girlfriend and the driver were able to crawl out of the car where she found the driver's phone and called 911.

The 24-year-old male passenger was killed on impact, but Jaxx was trapped in the car, screaming for help but unable to move, while the others escaped. Imagine Jaxx feeling the heat of the fire, fear, pain, desperation, feeling of helplessness, and the horror of knowing you were not going to be able to escape and that no one could help you, even though an officer injured himself while trying to save you.

Our family, friends, community, and friends of Jaxx have been emotionally traumatized by this horrific crash that was senseless, inexcusable, and completely avoidable. The way she died is incomprehensible and disturbing. This image haunts us. It wakes us up at night screaming and crying uncontrollably. There are signs, sounds, scents, pictures, and events that we would normally associate with happiness and joy that now trigger anxiety, uneasiness, panic, sadness, and oftentimes anger.

She was an intelligent and beautiful young woman. She had plans and aspirations of finishing high school, going to college to pursue a veterinary degree, continuing to barrel race, and eventually hoped to marry and have children of her own. These were our aspirations for her as well and we were looking forward to those times.

She said, "Dad, I want you to be here to walk me down the aisle and for you and Mom to see your grandkids." We never thought that she would be the one that would not be here to fulfill those wishes.

Word of this crash spread quickly and immediately there was a memorial set up at the crash site for the 24-year-old male and Jaxx. This memorial has been a healing place for us and for many of their friends to sit and reflect on memories and what could have been. Family and friends are constantly putting new mementos there and visit regularly.

We are saddened for the family and friends of the other victims involved in this crash. They made the decision to drink and get into the car with a drunk driver. That night two young people were killed while one is left to deal with being a survivor and the loss of her friends. The driver's life has also been changed as he will spend many years in the state prison.

This crash was not intentional but definitely could have been avoided. Drinking and driving is serious. If you drink, stay put. Don't get into a car with someone else if they are driving impaired. That choice could change your life forever as it did for Jaxx and those involved.

We love you, Jaxx.



RILEY E. SMITH

171 SALEM, UTAH

On the evening of September 23, 2024, our family experienced an unimaginable tragedy. Riley E. Smith, a vibrant 17-year-old with a deep love for the outdoors, animals, his family and friends, and his motorcycle, was suddenly taken from us.

Riley was a childhood cancer survivor who not only overcame adversity but thrived in life. He was a student at Salem Hills High School, where he passionately participated in FFA. Following in his father's footsteps, Riley worked for Salem City alongside his brother and best friend, Hunter. Together, they dedicated countless hours to earn enough to purchase their very own motorcycles — a shared dream they were finally able to achieve.

That September evening, Riley set out for a short ride to Water Canyon, not far from home. Riley was always sure to wear his helmet and ride responsibly. As he approached a green light at Woodland Hills Drive, a driver attempting a left turn failed to see him due to the sun's glare. The SUV turned directly into Riley's path. His motorcycle collided with the vehicle, and he was thrown into the windshield.

Riley sustained devastating injuries: severe trauma to all limbs, near-severance of his right arm, critical damage to his left hand, a shattered pelvis, internal bleeding, and brain hemorrhaging. First responders arrived swiftly and administered life-saving care as his mom and dad watched helplessly. He was airlifted by Life Flight to Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City, where he passed away the following afternoon.

Riley leaves behind a loving family — his parents, brother, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins — and a circle of friends who cherished him. He also leaves his beloved dog, pheasants, chickens, and FFA pig.

This was a tragic accident that deeply affected the whole community of Salem City. A moment's delay in making that left turn could have spared Riley's life. The void left from his passing is unimaginable and one that can never be replaced. The pain we all carry is a testament to the love we all had for him — and a loss that could have been prevented with just a second more of caution.





JOHNATHAN MCQUEEN

18 | GRANTSVILLE, UTAH



Like most 18-year-old boys, Johnathan was outgoing and just starting his life. He loved to longboard, take pictures of nature, and, most of all, he loved to drive. He would go on long drives, especially through the mountains, where he loved to find new roads. As a little boy, Johnathan had memorized all the roads. He could tell anyone how to get to Grandma's house, and he would draw street signs and traffic lights and hang them all over his room.

Just after 10:30 p.m. on Friday, January 12, 2024, Johnathan was driving north on I-15 with a friend, heading to pick up a dog. The roads were slick with black ice, and as he drove near Willard, his car spun out and crashed. Johnathan, a safe driver who was going below the speed limit, was not seriously hurt. A good Samaritan stopped to help, and Johnathan, always thinking of others, got out to cut his friend's airbag. In that split second, another car lost control on the ice and slid into the median. It struck the helpful driver's car, then crashed into Johnathan's car, pushing Johnathan, who was standing outside of the vehicle, over the concrete barrier.

We were in bed when we got the call. It came up as a spam call, so we didn't answer at first. The phone rang again, and I answered it. It was a social worker telling us we needed to come to McKay-Dee Hospital right away. We immediately drove from Grantsville to the hospital. Johnny's mom and his sister were already there, along with the doctors. It felt like a movie. They walked us back to a room and said, "We did everything we could." That was it — Johnny had passed away by the time he got to the hospital.

Our Message to You

If the roads are snowy or icy, please wait until they are safe to drive. Johnathan's love of driving and his compassionate nature led him to get out of his car that night. Our first instinct is often to help others when they are stranded or hurt on the freeway, but the best and safest thing you can do is to stay in your vehicle, stay buckled, and call 911.



EZEKIEL GORDON

17 | LEHI, UTAH

Ezekiel Logan Gordon, lovingly known as Zeke, was a force of nature — a radiant soul with a magnetic presence, fierce loyalty, and a heart open to all. At just 17 years old, Zeke had already lived with purpose, grit, and compassion beyond his years.

Zeke's kindness wasn't quiet — it roared. Whether fixing up cars, skating with his "mob squad," lifting someone out of a bad day, or making the people around him feel seen and understood — he gave fully and freely.

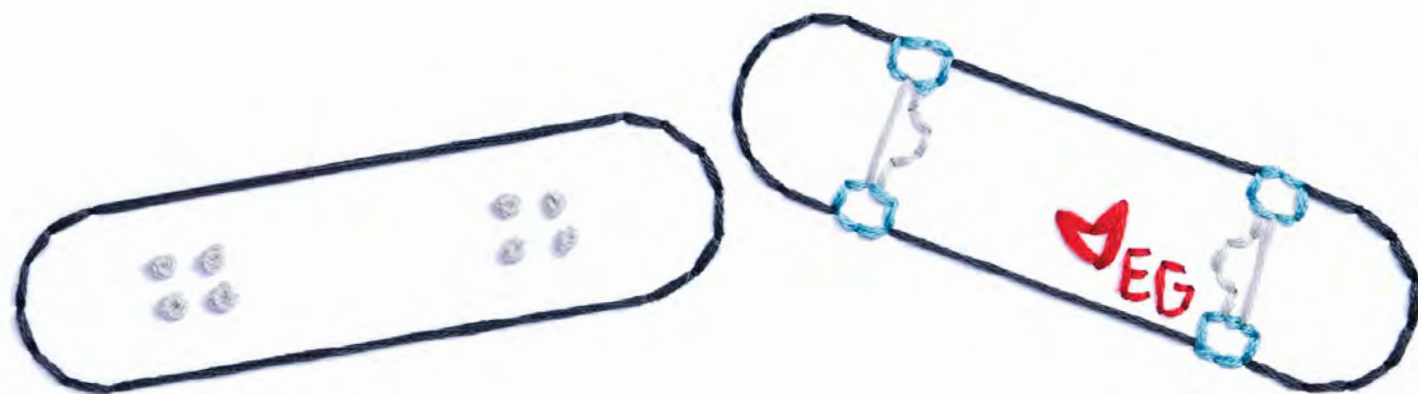
On the day of the crash, Zeke and his friends were having the time of their lives. He was riding a homemade motorcycle when he crossed traffic and was hit by a truck. He wasn't wearing a helmet, and he failed to follow the traffic safety laws that might have kept him safe. I hope his friends — and all young riders — take this to heart and become more aware of their surroundings.

Even in passing, Zeke gave the ultimate gift: the gift of life. As an organ donor, he made the courageous decision to help others live on — restoring hope to families who were once waiting in darkness. That final act of generosity echoes who he truly was — a protector, a giver, and someone who always showed up for others.

We celebrate Zeke not only for the life he lived, but for the lives he saved. His story did not end — it rippled outward. Somewhere, hearts now beat stronger. Lungs breathe easier. Eyes may see a clearer world. And spirits rise, forever grateful for a boy who chose love, even in his final breath.

Teens, every time you ride or drive, your choices matter. Wear your helmet. Watch the road. Slow down. Accidents can happen in a heartbeat, and one split-second decision can change everything. Zeke was full of life, laughter, and love — but that one moment ended it all. Make the safe choice every time you get on a bike or behind the wheel. Your life — and the lives of your friends — are worth it.

His momma misses him more than words can hold and hopes his legacy of love lives on in those he's given to. May they carry him forward — with gratitude, with joy, and with love.





ALEXUS SARLE

18 | SANDY, UTAH

Alexis wasn't just my daughter — she was my best friend. She was the glue that held our little family together. She was a light in this world, making you feel everything would be okay. Without her, the world feels darker.

Alexis was probably the hardest-working person I've ever known. She started working at age 12, shoveling horse stalls at a ranch. Everything she did, she did it 150%. She never did things halfway. People often told me, "They just don't make people like her anymore."

She loved mechanical things and learning how stuff worked. Shop class was her favorite place. She loved hands-on projects and took great pride in her work.

Alexis had a goofy, fun side, too. She loved anime, camping at her grandma's, and going on drives with her close friends. Freedom was everything to her. She was happiest when she could just be herself, surrounded by the people she loved, building her own life. More than anything, she just wanted to grow up and start that life.

Alexis cared deeply about her friends. She was the cool kid everybody loved — always giving rides, helping them get to work, and making sure no one was left out. Her friends meant the world to her. To Alexis, they were family.

In September 2024, Alexis had just gotten her motorcycle license — only two weeks before the crash. Late that night on September 21, I got the call no parent ever wants to get. She'd been riding her motorcycle northbound on Redwood Road in Saratoga Springs. Distracted on her phone and after arguing with her boyfriend, she ran a red light and was hit by a car. Emergency crews were able to get her heart beating again, but her injuries were too severe.

The next day, September 22 — just one day before my birthday — Alexis passed away. She was only 18.

Even in her passing, she was a hero. She became an organ donor and saved several lives. That was who she was — always helping others.

Losing Alexis has been the hardest thing I've ever faced. We all struggle daily without her. She was the one who kept us moving forward. Now we try to think, "What would Alexis do?" and live in a way that would make her proud. But it's hard without her light and her passion for life.

I want every young driver to really hear this: no distraction is worth your life. Emotional conversations, texting, looking away for even a second — it can all wait. Alexis did everything right in so many ways. She was responsible, hardworking, and loved deeply. But one moment of distraction took her from us. If she'd taken a moment to calm down and put her phone away, she'd still be here.

Please remember this: every time you get behind the wheel or on a bike, your life and your family's future are on the line. Slow down. Pay attention. Think of your family. Make it home.



JADIN PALMER

19 | THATCHER, ARIZONA

We live in a small town, and when the sheriff's number came up on my phone, I didn't think much of it. But when they said they needed to meet me in person, my mind started racing. I had the thought to try and call Jadin, but every call went straight to voicemail. By the time I got to the park to meet them, I think deep down I already knew.

When the officers walked over to me, I didn't even let them speak. I said, "Please don't tell me that something happened to Jadin." They told me he had been in a crash and that he didn't make it. I hugged my wife and my boys and later had to make one of the hardest calls of my life to my daughter, who was serving a mission in Brazil at the time. Those are phone calls no parent should ever have to make.

We learned later that Jadin, who was living in St. George at the time, had been riding his motorcycle home from work, going too fast down a hill. A vehicle pulled out in front of him, and he hit the front of the car. Even with his helmet and protective gear, the impact was so severe that it took his life.

Jadin had a gift for making friends — he could make a friend out of anyone, anywhere he went. He never wanted anyone to be left out and always looked out for the kids who needed a friend. I remember one day he asked me to take him and some friends to a pond. Half the kids in the car had met him either the day before or that very morning. That was just who he was — he could make people feel special, like they were his best friend.

Jadin was a good-looking, happy-go-lucky kid who loved doing anything exciting. He loved basketball, working out, boxing, shooting guns, and most of all, making others happy. Jadin was full of adventure, and we had plans to go skydiving and bungee jumping together that summer.

My plea to teens is this: listen to your parents and the people who care about you. They've seen more, lived more, and know what can happen. Road bikes are dangerous, not always because of the rider's choices, but because so many drivers just don't see them. Even with all the right gear, if you're going too fast and something happens, it might not save you.

I'm not a big fan of road bikes at all and would caution any teenager to think twice before getting one. But if you're going to ride, slow down, chill out, and remember that people can't always see you.

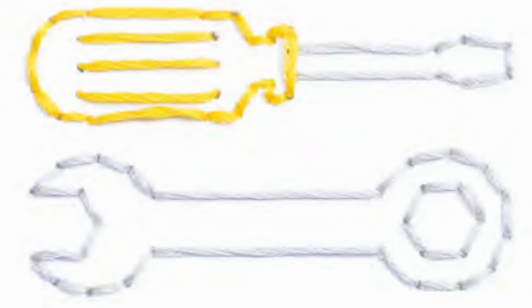
Please — think about your family and friends before taking risks. You may not be afraid of what could happen to you, but the people who love you will be left carrying that pain for the rest of their lives. If reading this makes even one person pause before speeding or think twice about a risky decision, then telling it is worth it.





CREY CORNELIUS

19 | KANARRAVILLE, UTAH



You didn't have to know Crey long to understand why people loved him. Crey was the kind of person who walked into a room and lifted the energy without even trying. From the time he was little, he was always happy. He was the kid with the constant grin. That joy stayed with him throughout his life, earning him the nickname "Chuckle Head" from those who loved him most.

From the time he was little, he was always moving. He was always outside, always riding something with wheels. We bought him his first bike when he turned one, and he never looked back. He grew up riding bikes, four-wheelers, and eventually motorcycles. He was fearless but skilled, known around town for the long wheelies he could ride through streets and trails. One time he rode a wheelie on his mountain bike for miles. People called him the "wheelie king," and it stuck.

Crey didn't just live fast. He worked hard too. He was a self-taught mechanic who loved figuring things out with his hands. He had recently landed a job as a diesel mechanic and was excited about that new chapter. He had big plans and the work ethic to back them up.

But the thing that stands out most is how quietly kind he was. He would fix cars after hours for free, carry in groceries for a widow, or take a neighbor on a ride when they were having a bad day. He didn't talk about the things he did for others. He just did them.

On the Fourth of July, one of our family's favorite holidays, we were celebrating at the park when Crey decided to go for a ride on his bullet bike. I had a bad feeling, so I tracked his location. I saw he had stopped at a gas station and called to check in. We talked for a few minutes and I told him I loved him. That was the last time I spoke to him.

About forty minutes later, his location stopped. He didn't answer my calls or texts. My daughter found a post online about a motorcycle accident near Zion. No one would give us any details about the accident or even if he was involved that night. The next day, we got the call. Crey had died from his injuries. There were no witnesses, so we don't know what happened.

Our family will never be the same. The grief is heavy. There are so many things he should still be here for.

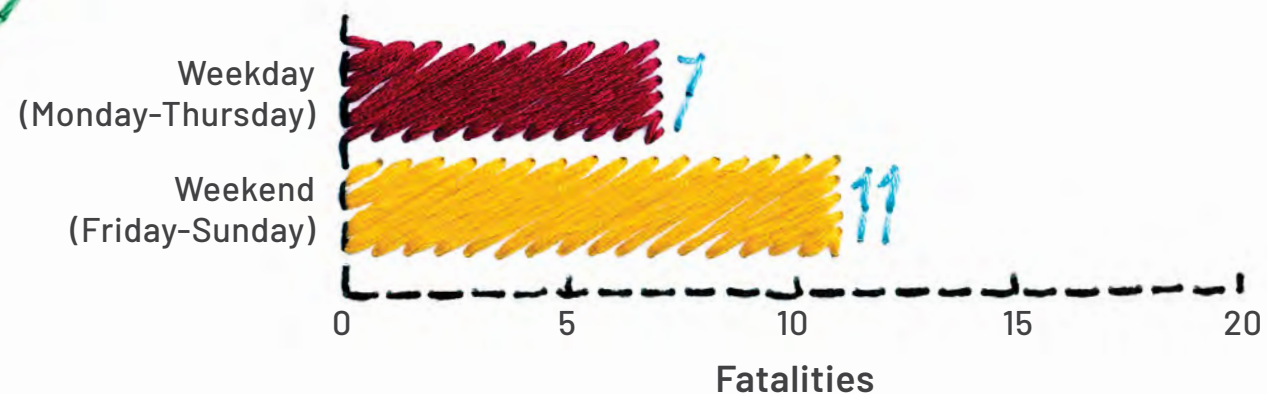
If you are reading this, please remember that even if you are skilled and even if you are cautious, accidents happen. Whether you drive a car or ride a bike, pay attention. Look twice. Give space. It only takes a second to change everything.

2024 UTAH TEEN CRASH STATISTICS

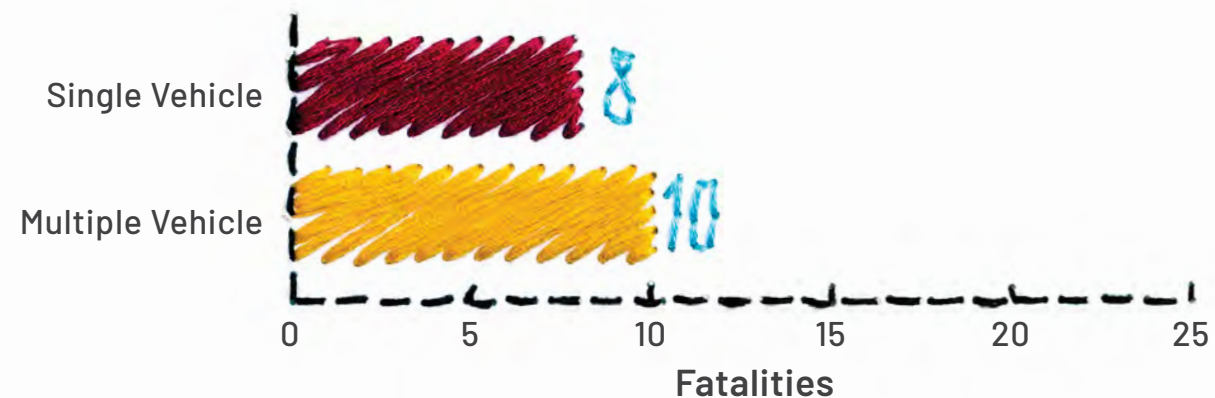
18 TEENS LOST THEIR LIVES ON UTAH ROADS

A fatal crash is defined as a crash involving a motor vehicle traveling on a traffic way resulting in the death of at least one person within 30 days of the crash. (Utah Department of Public Safety)

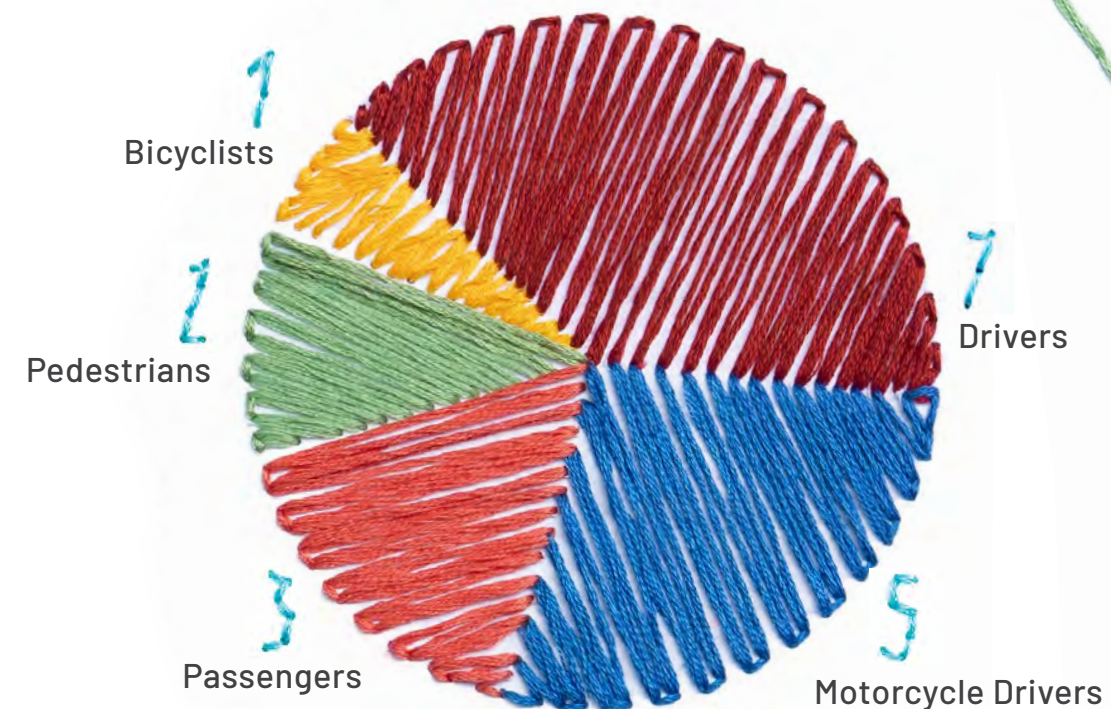
DAY OF WEEK



TEENS WHO DIED IN SINGLE VEHICLE VS MULTIPLE VEHICLE CRASHES

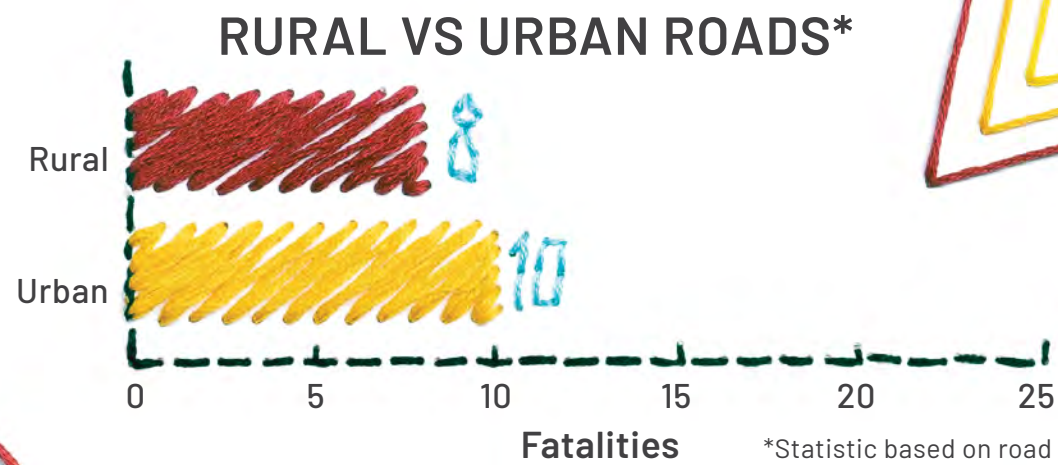


PERSON TYPE

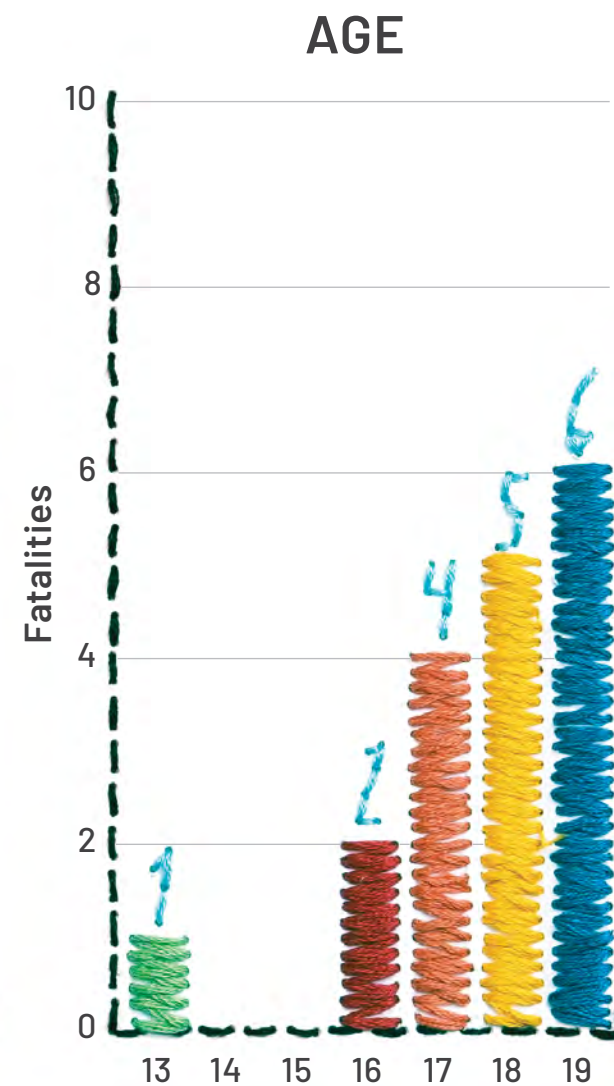
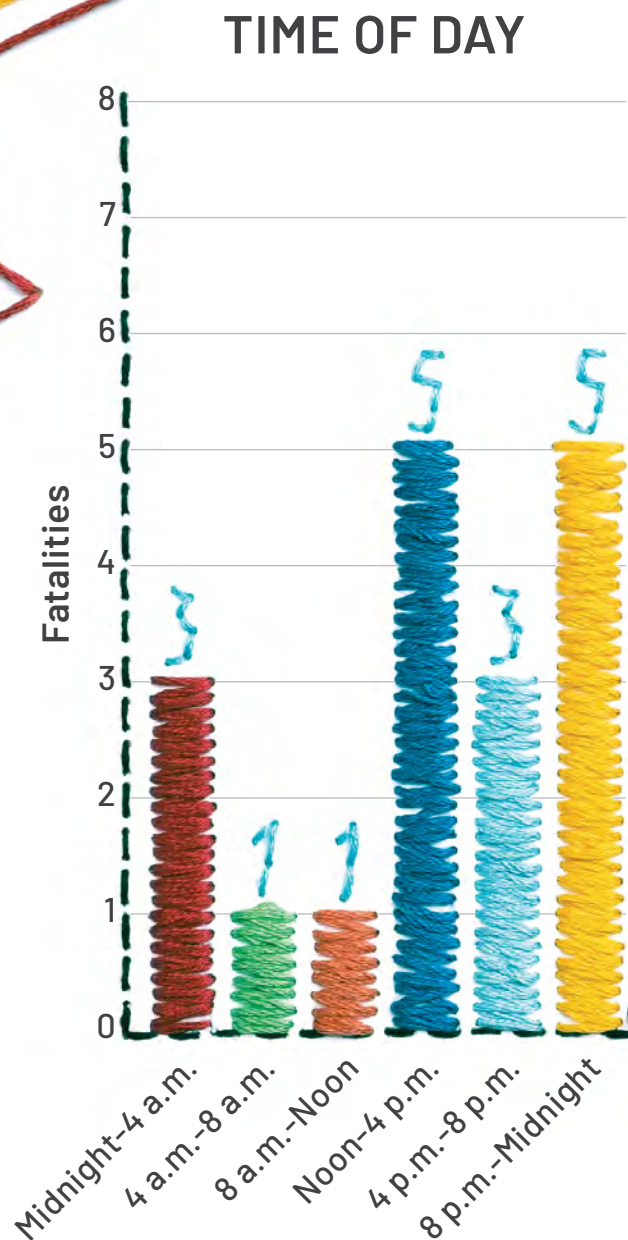
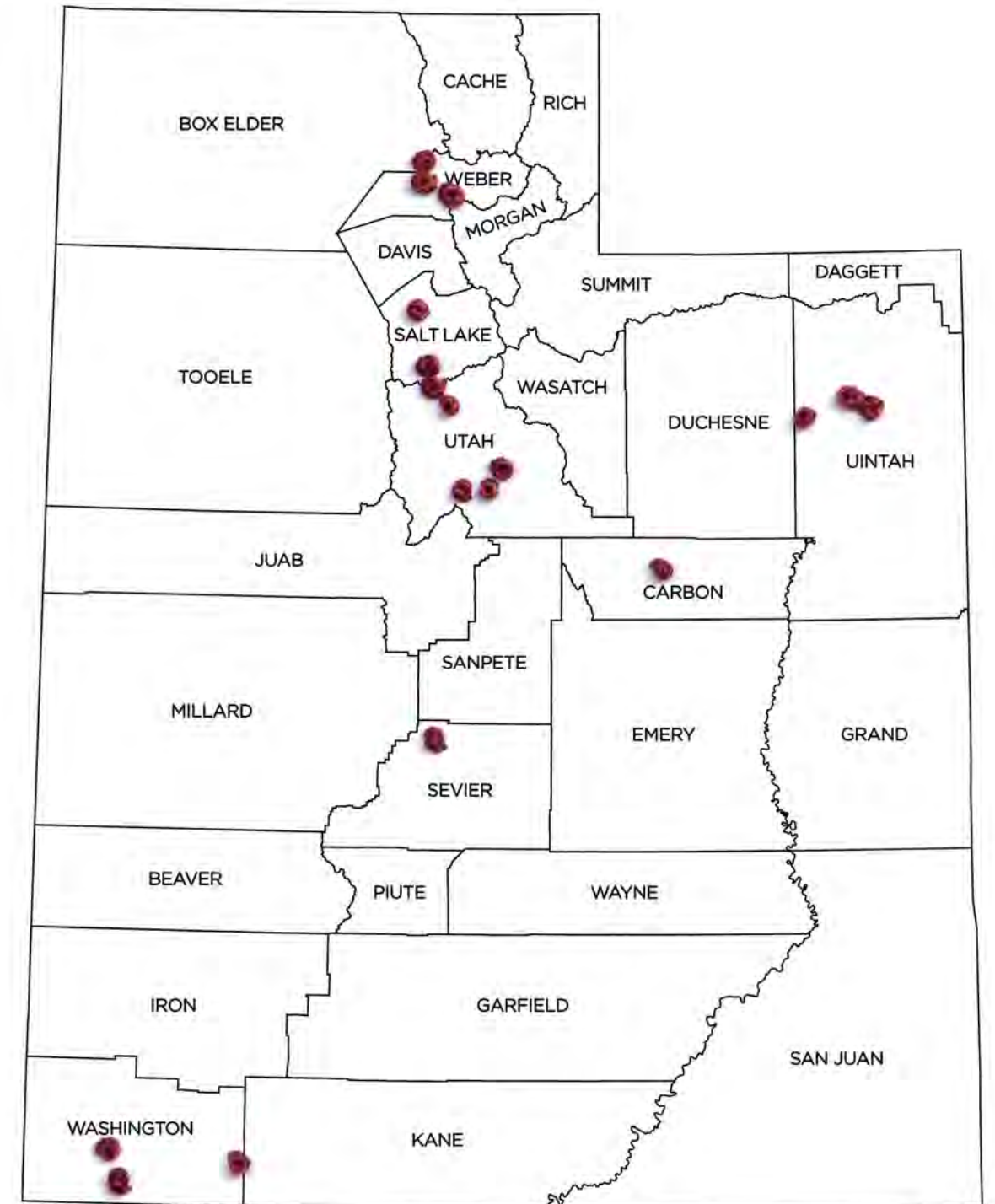


GENDER





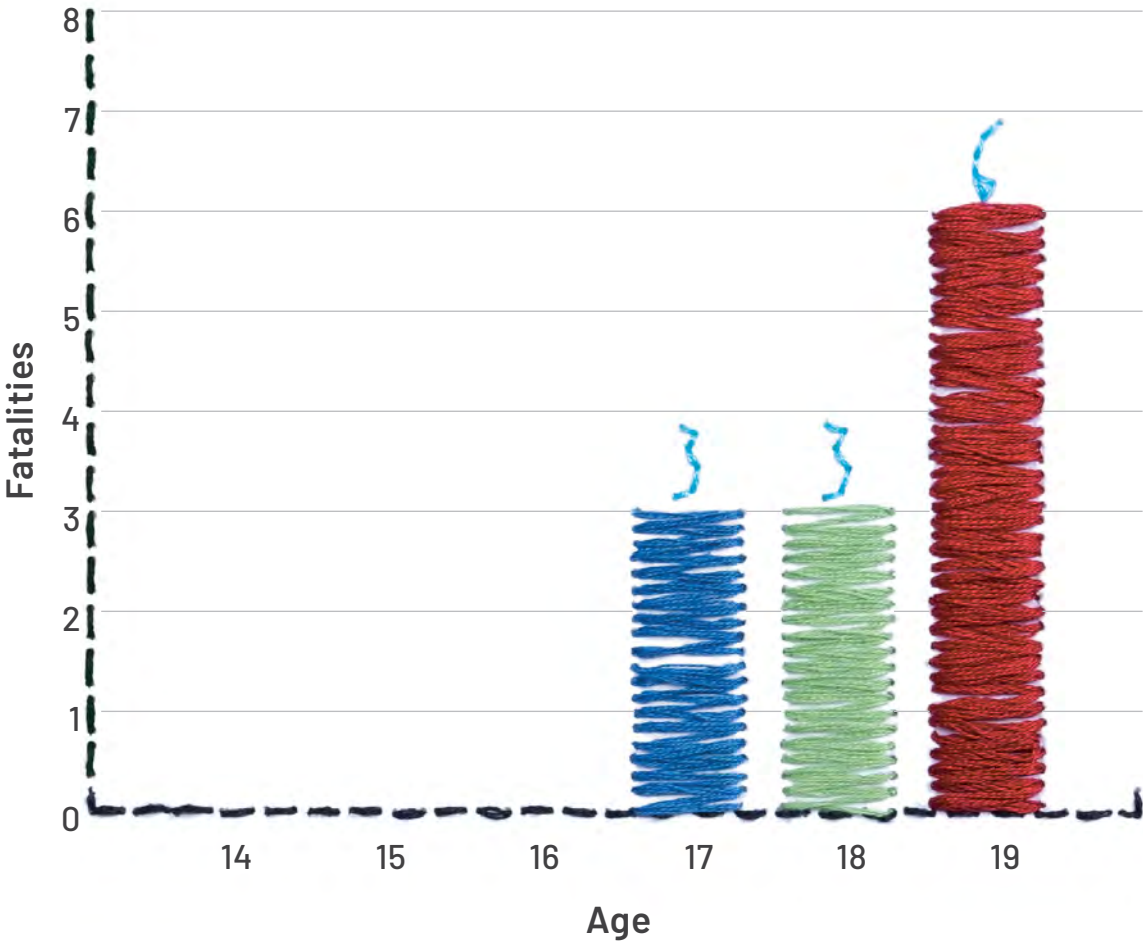
2024 UTAH TEEN MOTOR VEHICLE FATALITIES



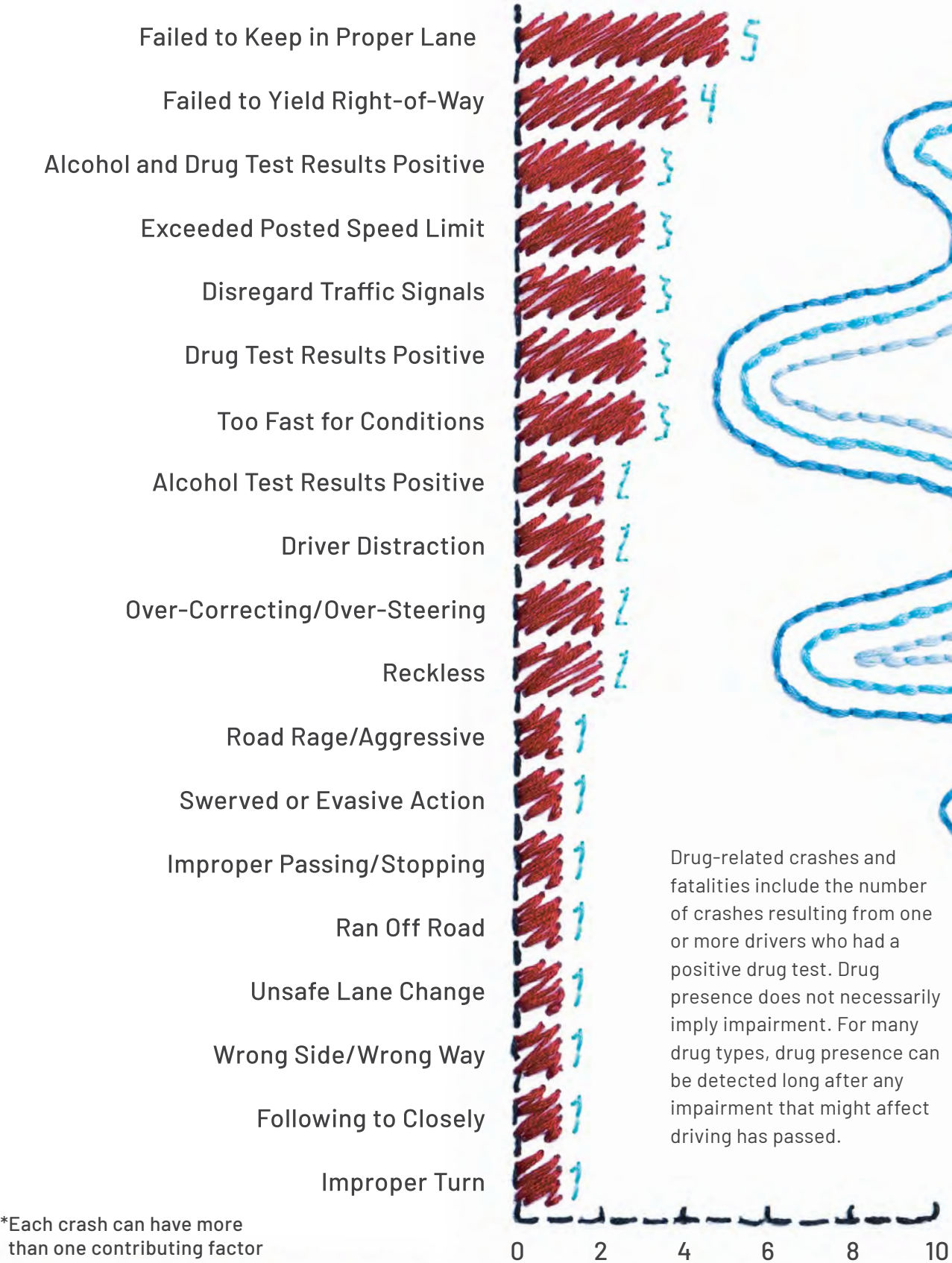
2024 TEEN DRIVER CRASH STATISTICS

In 2024, 36 teen drivers were involved in a fatal crash; a total of 36 people were killed in these crashes, including 12 of the 36 teen drivers.

AGE OF TEEN DRIVER

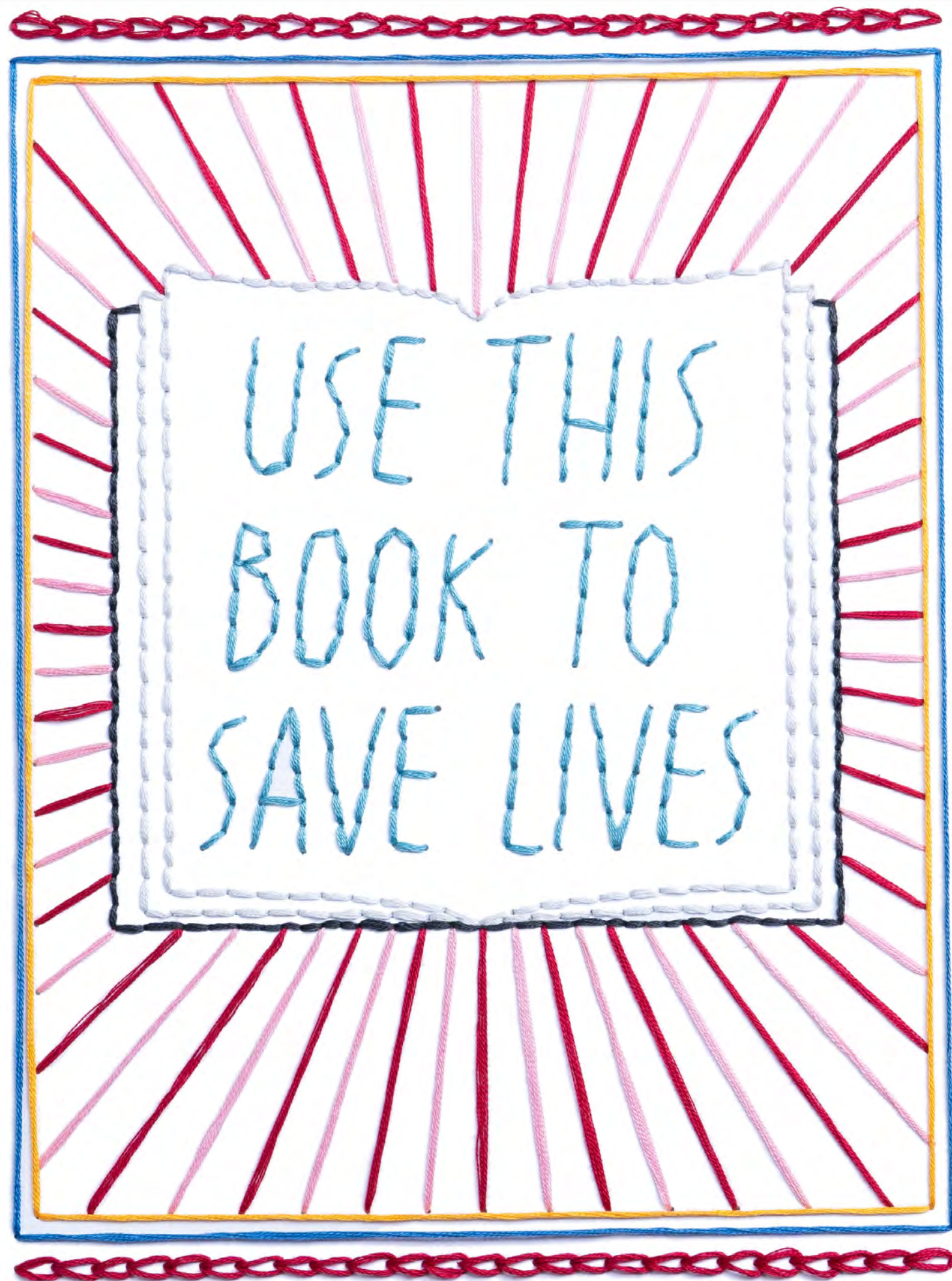


CONTRIBUTING FACTORS*



Drug-related crashes and fatalities include the number of crashes resulting from one or more drivers who had a positive drug test. Drug presence does not necessarily imply impairment. For many drug types, drug presence can be detected long after any impairment that might affect driving has passed.

*Each crash can have more than one contributing factor



For the past 17 years, families have courageously shared their stories about how they lost their teen on a Utah road. Their hope in sharing these stories is that others never have to feel the pain of losing a loved one in a car crash. Please learn from these stories. Talk with your loved ones, friends, classmates, and students about these tragic stories and set rules for your car and whenever you ride in a car. When reading these stories, please consider the following questions:

What caused the crash?

Could it have been prevented?

What rules can you set while you are driving or riding in a car that can help avoid this type of crash?

Remember to be sensitive and not to place blame on any one person. Rather, focus on the principles that can be applied to encourage safe driving. Point out actions that are dangerous and should be avoided.



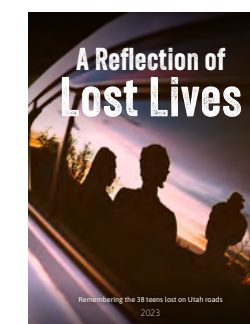
2018-2020



2021



2022



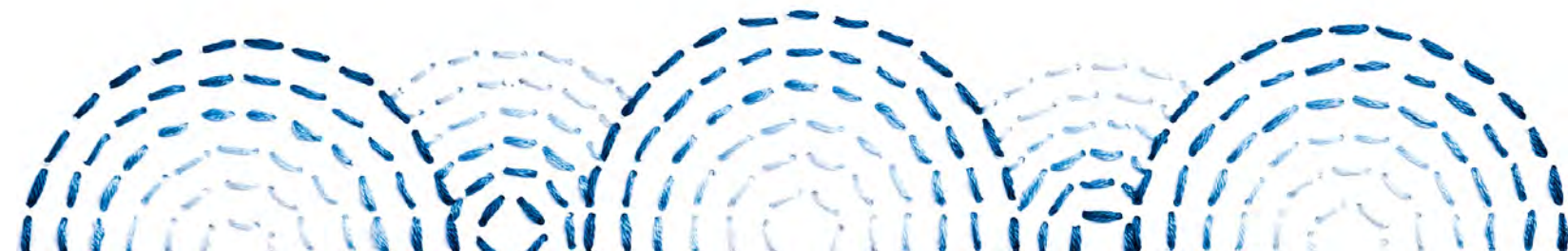
2023

To view Teen Memoriams from previous years, visit
ZeroFatalities.com/teen-memoriam-books

This book would not be possible without support from the following organizations:



Utah Teen Driving Task Force



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A Goal We Can All Live With