

To Create Your Own Destiny: Ken Snyder

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Ken Snyder

Ken Snyder lost his daughter, Katie Snyder Evans, to a drunk driving accident in October 2017. She was driving home from UCLA Medical Center after caring for her 8-week-old preemie twins when a drunk driver crossed the median and crashed into her head-on, killing her on impact.

In the months following her tragic death, Ken struggled to make sense of what had happened. An international businessman with years of experience in the auto industry, Snyder had closely observed the technological advances in automobile safety systems during the last four decades. He spoke to his friends and colleagues about this senseless accident and learned that driver negligence monitoring technologies exist but are not required on cars. Since an estimated 10,000 people die every year in drunk driving accidents, and oftentimes the victim is not the actual drunk driver, he began to wonder why this technology is not a standard feature.

Wondering how he could make a difference, he felt impressed to reach out to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), whose mission is "No More Victims." Realizing he was in a unique position to help with this mission because of his many connections in the auto industry, Snyder started researching what technology could be used, and how, to prevent drunk driving accidents. He worked with auto engineers and programmers who understood the capabilities of the different tech systems to learn how each could detect negligent driving and activate sensors before impact.

Through MADD, Snyder connected with a network of advocates who all shared his same horrible story. He put together a training video about auto safety technologies for these advocates to share with members of congress in their home states to raise awareness. With widespread bipartisan support, key members of congress championed legislation to mandate driver negligence monitoring technologies on new vehicles. The Infrastructure and Jobs Act, signed into law in November 2021, requires the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration to create a plan for implementation of these technologies on all new cars after 2027.

Snyder feels encouraged that some auto manufacturers have already begun to implement monitoring technologies. For example, Hyundai recently announced development of a new technology, called Smart Cabin Controller, that will monitor drivers for signs of distraction and distress, and will help bring their cars into compliance with the coming mandate.

Snyder and several of his key MADD partners see the hand of Providence in bringing them together, in front of the right people, with the right information, to share their stories of loss. And moreover, that their combined efforts were able

to create meaningful legislative change in a relatively short period of time. Even so, they are alarmed that fifty to sixty thousand more lives could be lost to drunk driving accidents before monitoring technologies are fully operational on vehicles. They're working on a PR campaign that will track recent auto accidents and explain how technology could have been used to prevent these accidents, hoping to put pressure on car manufacturers to implement these technologies well before the mandate goes into effect in 2027.

In December 2021, the Center for Auto Safety (CAS) presented Snyder with the Cally Houck Award, named after a woman who also lost her family in a preventable auto accident and who, like Snyder, advocated for legislative change. As part of that award, CAS Executive Director Jason Levine observed, "Ken's unwillingness to take 'no' for an answer makes him a hero to thousands of families who will never know he helped to save their lives."

"Despite the success of the bill and this meaningful recognition, I'd trade it all and more for Katie to still be alive," said Snyder. "This is dedicated as a legacy to her. We are now one step closer to no more victims."