Section -E-
Testimonies
Ralph will forever be in our hearts and thoughts

My nephew Ralph was only 19 years old when he died in a car accident on Tabarja Highway. He was a brave, smart, fun loving and handsome young man! Unfortunately, he lost his life in a car accident before he was able to graduate college and move on to the adult chapter of his life. Ralph left behind his mom, sister, grandparents, many aunts, uncles and cousins. I am sorry to say that my wife and children as well as a few of his cousins will never have the chance to know him. Unhappily family parties haven’t been and never will be the same but I hope his tragic accident will teach all his cousins and other young people to drive cautiously!

I want you to understand that you are not untouchable…drive safely and slowly especially near road construction and narrow roads. My nephew Ralph was wearing his seatbelt but he lost control of his car because he hit a tire rim in the middle of the road that was supposed to be holding a sign to warn drivers about the construction on that road. However, there wasn’t lighting so it was dark and Ralph as well as his passengers never noticed the tire rim. Always be aware of your surroundings, pay attention, follow the speed limit and wear a seatbelt.

Ralph was a son, big brother, grandson, nephew and cousin and he will forever be in our hearts and thoughts. God bless my nephew!

Uncle Wissam Farhat
b • Charbel, we miss you

Twenty six years old, life could not kidnap from Charbel his smile. However, the road safety easily kidnapped his whole life. All the people who knew Charbel, loved him and knew his kindness and devotion to help others. Today, in his memory, I would like to present this tribute as a way to express my faithfulness to his voice that still echoes in my life. His memory is camping in all the corners of our home, planted deep in our veins. In my heart and will stay forever. Telling our heartbreaking tragedy is in an aim to help such tragedy from hitting other families. The avoiding of such tragedy can be as simple as applying the basic rules and principles of traffic safety.

Charbel Faaour was born after fifteen years of praying in a beautiful house in Bteddine – el – Laksh in Caza of Jizzine in south Lebanon. He is the only child of his family and his nice, sympathetic soul which is full of love for life had driven his mother to behave as if Charbel was her only reason to survive. Her days were sacrificed in the honor of his protection so she made from his friends siblings.

He challenged his poverty and changed an abandoned restaurant to a busy place full of happy people. He had a special way to communicate with customers and quickly made them friends. His nice smile attracted everyone who knew him and pushed them to repeat their visit searching for Charbel's speeches and jokes.
On 23 August 2006, he drove from Jezzine to Beirut, to settle the mobile invoice to his mobile provider in the morning since he could not settle the dues on time because of the July War on Lebanon.

Charbel did not know that the safety of people was the least focus on the destructed roads and also did not remember that our roads are neither safe nor lit. He did not know that there were road works with no proper lighting and signing. This lead his car to fall from the top of the Damour Bridge leaving behind a family shedding tears and burning eyes on their loss.

Who are we to blame now? Faith or government?

To our government we say: “stop the carelessness towards people’s lives! Our youngs are killed either in car crashes or in the war.”

To politicians we say; «Your signs and photos are spread around many street, Please change it to traffic signals to keep the life of people.”

We are all wordless towards Charbel, he was a best friend as well as a sibling to all his friends. “We miss you very much, Charbel”.

c • Testimony of an Emergency Doctor Helpless in saving her father after a Traffic Crash

On Friday 17/10/2008 a car driven by a 23 years old guy killed Mr. Georges who was crossing the road in Ain Alak– El – Metn. This tragic loss led to great misery and deep sorrow to the victim’s family.

Dr. Rosette Daaboul Farah who is an Emergency Doctor in Levant Hospital in Sin El Fil talked to YASA hoping that such tragedies would stop invading families in spite of her knowledge through her work that traffic crashes are increasing in Lebanon as a result of the negligence of the youth toward traffic laws and respect of other lives She called on the judicial system to enforce stricter penalties to help in hindering those who disobey the laws. She also continued to emphasize the importance of awareness to the public on the respect of the traffic law especially focusing on the youth between the ages of 15 and 26 who constitute the bigger portion of those at risk and those who are involved in road traffic injuries.

Dr. Rosette was so affected by the fact that through her work she had saved many lives on daily basis however this time she found herself completely helpless towards saving the live of the most precious person in her life who is her father.

She hopes and wishes that this tragedy does not knock the door of another home around Lebanon and does not cause misery to more families like it has done to them. She wishes that this serves as a lesson to others and that human lives should deserve more respect in Lebanon.
Aya’s father, Khaled Saleh, expresses his sorrow and bitterness in this letter that denounces the cruelty and indifference in face of road accidents causing the death of innocents. Aya was the victim of a road accident in the area of Kefraya in the western Bekaa, her father received the bad news of the accident while he was in Canada. She got in coma on 7 June and has died September 26, 2009, she was 3 years old.

Until when will our children live in the risk of death on the roads in Lebanon?
Why don’t we respect the traffic rules in our country?
Why don’t we apply laws on all citizens?
When will we begin to respect the principles of prevention of traffic accidents posed by Yasa in the Lebanese society?
For those who do not care, I’m addressing the speech to my daughter:
Forgive me because fate has been that I was far from you when this coward and irresponsible hit you ...
Forgive me because I have not hugged you strongly to my heart when the blood flowing in your body ...
Don’t they know that the musk comes from deer’s blood?
Don’t they know that God knows EVERYTHING
Don’t they know that God gives and does not neglect?
Forgive me because we're in an area where men have become Wolves!
Forgive me because in our time the criminal becomes the victim
Don’t be afraid my dear, I saw you singing and chirping with birds in the paradise, I saw you playing with the angels and meet the saints and prophets.
Flower fragrance; know that you are a descendant of the prophets.
My angel, tell me how to forget you and the Cedars of God mourn your absence?
How can I forget the girl who is the perfume of flowers, the honey of the bees, and the joy of my soul?
How can I forget you and the sun adore your breath?
How to forget you and life mourned your disappearance?
Khaled Saleh, father of the little Aya
It is so difficult to believe the reality that the person, who kept warning me about speeding and its dangers, and about car crashes, was deceived in a car crash. The bitter side of the story is that person, my father, passed away due to someone else’s mistake.

I was young at the time and had no idea what a car accident could bring to my family. I never really believed thought that it could ever happen to me or to any one I loved or care about I have never really realy believed that it could ever happen to me or to anyone I loved or cared about. I never thought that the sad side of life was just next to me every second.

I don’t think that I have the right to speak for my other family members or friends, but at that time all a person will need is to look at their faces to feel the deep sorrow they were feeling.

Few days after the tragedy had hit our family; we were all frustrated and felt completely lost; my mother had just lost the partner of her life. My younger brother and sister faced even more sorrow than I did. We all depended on him and we were just unable to think about our life without his support. The 17th of October 1999 changed our life forever, and a simple preventable mistake took away years to be lived with love, hope, and happiness.

Days after the black 17th of October, a TV program by the Youth Association for Social Awareness (YASA), aimed to educate people about car accidents just woke me up. Thought that no one can tell about the sorrow of car accidents more than myself, and I just wanted to make better use of the negative feeling I had in my life by helping people avoid such tragedies. Therefore, I contacted YASA and showed interest in becoming a volunteer. Being Syrian, I was the first non Lebanese member in the association.

YASA is doing many interventions in Syria. It is crucial to attract other Syrian individuals to join us and help in planning and implementing different activities to raise public safety awareness in Arab countries.
Elie Kallas: Teenagers do not think about what’s right and wrong.

He has been subjected to a maritime injury which has disabled him.

Elie Kallas is a young man that could have lost his life at a sea show. Fortunately, he only lost his ability to walk. Elie, being at a young age, he wasn’t careful about the dangers of the real world. He acted carelessly and irresponsibly. He wasn’t aware of the horrifying fact about the deadly accidents of the sea. Thankfully, Elie was able to hamper being physically challenged. He now works with teenagers to educate them about accidents that may occur and is doing this through YASA. While conversing with others, Elie explains how the accident took place, how he got through it, and how he lives on with his life regardless of the horrifying accident itself.

Q: How and where did the accident occur?
   A: I was seventeen at the time; I had been on a beach trip with a few friends. We headed towards a sea show and were foolishly jumping off the Lanch, unfortunately, my foot got stuck between the metal bars, and when I jumped, I hit my head on a rock.

Q: What did you feel at that exact moment?
   A: I felt an electric vibe rush through my head and knee. I could not move right then. My friends thought I was swimming, but when they saw me motionless with my head underwater, one of my friends grabbed my arm and pulled me to shore.

Q: What happened after that? Where did they take you?
   A: They put me on shore, and we waited for the Red Cross, where I was later moved to a nearby hospital. I spent ten days there, and then I took the IRM test and was moved to another hospital. I was then told that I had to go into surgery as soon as
possible. Until it was too late and I became paralyzed.

Q: What was going through your mind while at the hospital?
A: At that moment, I realized that I couldn’t walk after that. It was devastating for me, but everyone has to accept the consequences, especially because they informed me of the possibilities of my death right there.

Q: Why did you volunteer at YASA?
A: I spent a while trying to find a way for me to warn others about the dangers. When I met Mr. Ziad Akl I knew that he would be able to help me through YASA. And I have been volunteering at YASA for the past seven years.

Q: Do you consider being a help to anyone?
A: Yes, I was able to prevent 50% of all maritime accidents.

Q: What can you say to teenagers to prevent them from repeating your mistake?
A: I know that teenagers don’t think about the right and the wrong. If I had any idea about the danger I would’ve been more careful and helped others understand the message.

Q: What drove you into participating in SuperStar?
A: In addition to talent, I wanted to encourage disabled people to do such things. I think that I reached my goal.

Q: Do you think your disablement was the reason you didn’t make it to the next part?
A: Yes, also because I had a problem breathing. After the accident, there was a while in which I couldn’t even speak. But I consider just being in front of the judges, and singing to them is a fabulous accomplishment.

Q: Do you think you were treated differently after the accident?
A: Yes, I felt it, but I overcame it.

Q: How do you look at the accident after fourteen years?
A: I think that the accident was the will of God.

Elie has been recording a few special songs. He performs show every Saturday night in Ashkout.
Charbel Khoureich: A split of a second changed our life, we lost our son!

They were a happy family driving to see grandparents and enjoy the fields, but in split of a second Bassam Khoureiche’s life changed drastically. He lost his 4 years and 6 month old son, Charbel, in a car crash while his other son, who was sitting in a car seat, survived with injuries. He wishes today that if he had known the importance of the car seat he would have saved his eldest son’s life.

Tell us about the accident in which you lost your son?

We were driving to the south as a happy family, my wife was sitting beside me and in the rear seat we had our neighbor and our sons who are: Charbel 4.5 years, Carl 9 months. On the highway in Zahrani, there was a car which was passing from one side of the highway to the other through an opening in the barrier which is between the two highways. I tried to escape it but instead we hit the pole on the side of the road. My neighbor died on the spot, while my wife, Carl and Charbel were severely injured.

Upon the crash I checked my family. Some people around...
helped me with Carl, and after I made sure my wife was awake, I carried Charbel, whose injuries were more severe, to a Taxi from the other side of the road who offered to drive me to a hospital 10 minutes away.

When we reached the hospital, Charbel was still breathing so they took him in the emergency and then to intensive care. The hit was on his head with heavy bleeding. I do not know what happened next but all I know is that at 3 pm I was notified of his death.

**What do you regret and what do you wish?**

I wish many things. I wish we never faced this, I wish I had traveled since I was supposed to travel; I wish I knew that children over one year old should also sit in a car seat. This is something that I learnt from YASA, but unfortunately after I lost my son. I wish I had placed Charbel in a car seat since I would have saved his life like I saved Carl’s.

I wish… I wish that Charbel is the last child who dies in a traffic crash but I know this will not be true. I had dreams for my family but now I had lost my eldest son.

What about the legal aspects?

I was shattered between my family and the legal aspects. My wife was hospitalized for one month, and my young son was also hospitalized and needed help. Thank God my relatives were
following legal aspects.

I am shocked because the law does not help us. Why do I have to follow rules in insuring my car, doing the mechanical maintenance and inspection regularly and then we see others that do not care about all this and risk our lives? The car that was in the middle of the highway was not in the condition to be on the road. No mechanical inspection has been done since 2004. It's state was not suitable for the road and especially for highways. They do not have insurance. Why are some people above the law and we have to pay the price for this?

We were a happy family and in a split of a second we lost a lot. We were a happy family driving to see grandparents and olive oil factory and enjoy the fields and in a split of a second our live changed drastically.

**What did you do after this tragedy?**

Immediately after my tragedy, I thought of YASA. I wanted to help people avoid going through what I went through. YASA is helping me legally and technically, they are also helping me in giving message to people.

I call on people asking them not to use cars that risk the lives of others; I also call on people to keep their children in car seats even after the age of one because this would help them to save their kids lives and keep them next to them.

A lot of neglect exists and a lot of change is needed. YASA delivers the message but we people have to listen and abide their recommendations.

Why when we travel out of Lebanon we follow the rules and in Lebanon we want to break the law?
“My Love to my Sons Killed Them” - The Tragedy of the Sleiman Family

By: Joelle Sleiman

The love of a father to his sons killed them in a tragic car crash in 2001. Joelle, the only sister left tells their tragedy to help spread the message to others and avoid this misery from haunting families.

I am Joelle Sleiman, the eldest in a family of three, one girl and two boys. We managed to survive the whole Lebanese war with no tragedies to our family, but were struck by the tragedy when my two brothers were involved in a car crash in August 16, 2001. Nicolas was 18 and Andy was 17. Nicolas used to love cars and speeding. Lack of law enforcement allowed him to drive without having a driving license as well as speeding while driving. We knew that he used to over speeding but he did not listen to us. Two weeks before their tragedy, Nicolas had a car crash and my parents’ punishment was to forbid him from driving the car. Nicolas was upset which made him stay at some relatives until my father gave him the car again. Later on, this made my father say with deep sorrow: “My love to my sons killed them.”

Few weeks before the crash, Andy and Nicolas watched a TV program about organ donation and were impressed and told my parents that if anything happens to any of them they want their organs donated. The horrific night of August 16, 2001, my mother was watching TV while waiting for the boys to arrive. They were expected to arrive home at 11pm but instead the news of the crash arrived. Rushing to the hospital, we found Andy dead and Nicolas not responding. Hoping to give Nicolas a better survival chance my parents decided to transfer him to another hospital in Beirut. The transfer was expected to take 1 and a half hour,
however they had to stop, many times, on their way to stabilize his situation since his blood pressure was dropping very low. The transfer took 2 days during which we were told that he was in a coma and he may be better.

We held Andy’s Funeral on Friday during which my father was told that Nicolas’s situation was not promising. We spent the following week waiting for a miracle, but nothing could be done when the brain was already dead. Nicolas died one week after his brother’s death. Upon the confirmation of the brain death, it was a tough decision for my parents to donate his organs knowing that he wanted this.

When the crash was analyzed, we were told that they were trying to escape from a driver coming in the wrong direction when they hit a wall. This was the price of the lack of law enforcement in our area and the misbehavior of an unknown driver.

When I talk to some teenagers about speeding they sometimes say “We are free to die if we wish to”, however they forget that it is not only them who are affected, but all those around them and those who love them. I just hope and pray that no one ever goes through what we went through. Please do not think of yourself alone, think of your mother, father, sisters and brothers. Just take one minute per day to think of others, which I hope will make you change your driving behavior.

Losing my two brothers changed my whole life. I am now alone at home with my parents. Joining YASA helped ease my deep sorrow and gave me hope that I might be able to help a sister to avoid going through what I went through by the loss of Nicolas and Andy. I join hands with YASA to spread awareness on injury prevention to help avoid such tragedies. Finally, it gives me great pride to address the youth on these issues especially since it makes me feel that I am doing it for the memory of my beloved brothers Andy and Nicolas.
That unforgettable 21st of July 2004, a young boy, one year older than Zeina, had come to the house to pick her up to go and see the prom night pictures; it was only 8.00 PM.

She kissed me goodbye as usual, and promised not to be late. Three hours later, I received a life-changing call from a stranger, informing me that my daughter had had a car crash and was taken to the hospital. I refused to believe the shocking reality of the situation and simply imagined a minor scratch or a broken leg. I rushed to the hospital and arrived at the same time with the Red Cross Ambulance. As they moved Zeina to the hospital, I tried to talk to her: “Zeina…. Zeina…. habibe…”, but she did not answer. They admitted her to the ER, and I was left alone behind the doors, not understanding what she was going through. It was then that I realized the gravity of the situation, wondering why she did not answer me, and why she was unconscious. The events happened so quickly, as though I was watching a movie; the doctors, the X-rays, the operation, the intensive care room… She did not survive the extremely dangerous hit on her head and passed away at around 3.00 a.m. As time passed by, and everybody went back to their normal routine, I was left alone with my sorrow and I could then retrace back the events with a better perspective with a million questions unanswered; who is there to blame? Who is responsible? The young boy or myself? Whatever the answers are, they will never
bring back my Zeina, however there must be something I can do, in her name. That is why I joined YASA, not to look for answers, but to keep other mothers from feeling the loss and tragedy I went through.

Randa Hauch: “The loss of a child is unbearable, you can avoid going through it”

I am a mother who has lost a child, the most precious treasure that a woman can dream of. I would like to share my feelings, my thoughts, and my pain, in these few words. Maybe in this way, I can prevent other mothers from suffering the pain I am carrying with me for the rest of my life. I lost my 18 year-old daughter in a stupid car crash. It is true that we always say: “It is the will of God”, but that is only applicable in 5½ of car crashes. She had just finished high school, had attended her Prom night, and was ready for a long and beautiful summer vacation in preparation for her first year in university.

• During the World Youth Assembly for Road Safety.

That is why my appeal is addressed to all mothers; never get fed up. Your children are the most precious thing in the world and you are the best example for them. Teach them the good way while setting a positive example. Do not exceed 60 km/h when the signs indicate so. Wear the seat belts whenever you drive, even if you are only going to the grocery store across the corner. Do not pass the red light even if there is no one on the road, and even if other cars behind you are hammering you to clear the way.

Whenever your children are with you in the car, let them watch you abide by the rules; they will do the same. My daughter was not wearing her seat belt; had she worn it, she may have survived
the crash. The young boy had just earned his driver’s license; how much driving experience could he have acquired to be in control of the car? Most parents are always so excited to offer their children a driver’s license, the easy way, when they should be passing an exam to earn it after proper driver education. It is said that the wound is never really felt, but by the injured person itself. Don’t let the same happen to you. Don’t give up. Keep encouraging your kids to do the right thing. Don’t let them convince you that they are free to do whatever they want, when you know that they don’t know what they want. Let them know how much you care about them, and how much you cannot bare their absence.

Zeina’s absence is unbearable to me; there is no substitute for a child, any child, not even another child. Each child has a different place in the parent heart and love.

j • Toni Abou Abboud : Justice can prevent tragedies

Perla died the 7th of March 2007 during her stay in a daycare, because of the irresponsibility of the people in charge. This tragedy happened because safety regulations have not been followed. Perla’s brother, three years of age at the time of the incident, has been traumatised, and he is still praying every night for his sister “to come back”. Toni Abou Abboud, Perla’s father, pursued the case in justice. His objective was simple to understand: creating a juridical precedent in order to spare other innocent lives.

Since then, Mr. Abou Abboud became an active member with LASSA. He assured that his daughter’s case would protect other children by assuring more professionalism from the professionals.
On the last day before Christmas, I hurried to go to the supermarket to buy the gifts I didn’t manage to buy earlier. When I saw all the people there, I started to complain to myself: «It is going to take forever here and I still have so many other places to go...» «Christmas really is getting more and more annoying every year. How I wish I could just lie down, go to sleep and only wake up after it.» Nonetheless, I made my way to the toy section, and there I started to curse the prices, wondering if kids really play with such expensive toys. While looking in the toy section, I noticed a small boy about 5 years old, pressing a doll against his chest. He kept on touching the hair of the doll and looked so sad. I wondered who was this doll for.

Then the little boy turned to the old woman next to him: «Granny, are you sure I don’t have enough money?» The old lady replied: «You know that you don’t have enough money to buy this doll, my dear.» Then she asked him to stay here for 5 minutes while she went to look around. She left quickly. The little boy was still holding the doll in his hand. Finally, I started to walk towards him and asked to who he wanted to give this doll to. «It is the doll that my sister loved most and wanted so much for this Christmas. She was so sure that Santa Claus would bring it to her.» I replied to him that maybe Santa Claus would bring it to her, after all, and not to worry. But he replied to me sadly. No, Santa Claus cannot bring it to her where she is now. I have to give the doll to my mother so that she can give it to her when she goes there.»

His eyes were so sad while saying this. «My sister has gone to be with God. Daddy say that Mummy will also go to see God very
soon, so I thought that she could bring the doll with her to give it to my sister». My heart nearly stopped. The little boy looked up at me and said: «I told daddy to tell mummy not to go yet. I asked him to wait until I come back from the supermarket. Then he showed me a very nice photo of him where he was laughing. He then told me: «I also want mummy to take this photo with her so that she will not forget me.» «I love my mummy and I wish she didn’t have to leave me but daddy says that she has to go to be with my little sister» Then he looked again at the doll with sad eyes, very quietly. I quickly reached for my wallet and took a few notes and said to the boy. «What if we checked again, just in case if you have enough money?»  

«Ok» he said. «I hope that I have enough.» I added some of my money to his without him seeing and we started to count it. There was enough for the doll, and even some spare money. The little boy said: «Thank you God for giving me enough money» Then he looked at me and added: «I asked yesterday before I slept for God to make sure I have enough money to buy this doll so that mummy can give it to my sister. He heard me «I also wanted to have enough money to buy a white rose for my mummy, but I didn’t dare to ask God too much. But He gave me enough to buy the doll and the white rose.» «You know, my mummy loves white rose. A few minutes later, the old lady came again and I left with my trolley. I finished my shopping in a totally different state from when I started. I couldn’t get the little boy out of my mind. Then I remembered a local newspaper article 2 days ago, which mentioned of a drunk man in a truck who hit a car where there was one young lady and a little girl. The little girl died right away, and the mother was left in a critical state. The family had to decide whether to pull the plug on the life-assisting machine, because the young lady would not be able to get out of the coma. Was this the family of the little boy?
Two days after this encounter with the little boy, I read in the newspaper that the young lady had passed away. I couldn’t stop myself and went to buy a bunch of white roses and I went to the mortuary where the body of the young woman was exposed for people to see and make last wish before burial. She was there, in her coffin, holding a beautiful white rose in her hand with the photo of the little boy and the doll placed over her chest. I left the place crying, feeling that my life had been changed forever. The love that this little boy had for his mother and his sister is still, to this day, hard to imagine. And in a fraction of a second, a drunken man had taken all this away from him.

I • The story of Elie Rahbani

In 1998, at the age of 18 years and one month (18 years is the minimum age to get a driving license in Lebanon) and just one night before the scheduled driving license test, Elie Rahbani had a car crash that left him paralyzed from the waist down.

He was driving his father’s car from a party where he had a few drinks. He was not wearing the seatbelt when they crashed in an electric pole.

Elie admits that he had a passion for speeding and always thought that he will not crash, thinking he was a “good driver”. He was the only one in his family with this love for speeding. To worsen the situation, his circle of friends encouraged speeding.

The continuous reminders from his parents against speeding were viewed by Elie as something typical a parent had to say, and they were therefore neglected.

Effects on Family:
The crash changed his entire life as well as his family’s. His
father blames himself for the crash because, first of all, Elie had his car and secondly, he did not do anything before about his son speeding, especially since he knew about the matter. He used to ask his son not to speed as a friend, and not as a father. Elie would not listen. In spite of all this, Elie’s father had to put the guilt feeling aside and face what happened bravely. He continues to explain that the results of the crash Elie had were not ones they would see after few hours. They would have to wait for many days and maybe months to see the results and learn to live with the consequences. At all times, his main concern was to keep Elie’s spirit high to make it through this situation.

Elie’s mother says that she was totally shocked when she knew of the crash. She refused to accept the fact that her eldest son had been injured. During the night and whenever she was alone, she cried. She did not want her son to see her crying. The refusal continued until the day Elie was discharged from hospital. She had to face the reality that her son would never walk again and that he was in need of rehabilitation. In spite of all this, she still has hope that one day he might walk again.

As for Elie’s sister, it was very difficult for her to visit her brother at the hospital and try to assist him to drink with a straw. She kept thinking about how things will be when her brother returns home. Flashbacks of how Elie was very active and involved in sports kept haunting her, making things even more difficult for her to believe the change that was going on in their lives. She strongly believes that Elie’s strong spirit is what made them all get over what happened.

This crash positively influenced Elie’s younger brother greatly. During the time that Elie was in rehabilitation, his brother was starting to drive, however, he was very cautious.
Elie: I felt guilty because of what my parents had to go through from sorrow and suffering. I appreciate their support that made me get through all the difficult times. It was all so hard but belief, strong will, and conviction is what made us all get over the crisis with a smile.

What I went through taught my brother a lot. I was almost away in rehabilitation for 2 years during which my brother started driving but was much more cautious than I was.

I stayed in the hospital for 36 days after which I was sent to rehabilitation where I spent my weekdays for several months. Everything changed after I got discharged from the hospital.

It was a shock when I was told that I am being sent to rehabilitation. The doctor came and told me to get prepared to go to rehabilitation. I had not even thought of it. All I was thinking of was why my hands were not strong. I did not remember that I had lower extremities bad enough to prevent me from any movement. For me, a wheel chair was something I only saw in movies. I realized what was awaiting me even clearer when the wheel chair arrived to my room.

It was a very difficult step for me to realize and believe that I was going to spend several months in rehabilitation. There, things were very different. I was alone without my parents and friends. I did not have nurses watching me like in the hospital, and I had to start to learn to live with my disability like many others at the center.

I was not referred to psychiatric help, but my family and friends were of great help.
m • Story Of Mariam
Will we see bad drivers condemned?
When we were children, stories always had the famous “happy ending”. This morale was there to make us understand what was good and what was bad.

However, nowadays stories are real tragedies, ending with the death of our preferred heroes: our children. As if destiny or fate are obliging us and killing the future of our country, the reason why we reconstructed this country so many times.

Sunday the June 15, 2008, after the end of school final exams, Maryam went to do sport with her friends in Kaskas neighbourhood, a very well known place among youth of her age for sports, where people can practice what they want.

After a long run, the girls were thirsty so Maryam volunteered to buy some water from a nearby store. While she was crossing the street, a car that driven by an irresponsible adolescent, hit her.

Maryam died six hours later, after a long fight against death. The young driver was speeding a lot, his irresponsibility was too strong. The death of Maryam represented for us victory of evil against good, a victory of irresponsibility, of ignorance and of disrespect towards basic laws. Life of Maryam ended, her dreams too. Her wedding that was planned was transformed to a funeral and misery to her fiancé.

What can we say? What is the excuse of this young irresponsible driver who is lover of speeding? Can he realise what he did? Or is he still driving crazily and risking other people lives? Will somebody do something to stop these persons? How to explain that these tragedies can occur also on rich families?
n • All Roads Lead to Heaven

By Alice Howard

August 17th was the date to look forward to and my time was getting nearer to depart London on the 18th which was just the next day to come to Lebanon. Alas all of my dreams turned into a nightmare when my beloved fiancé was killed in a fatal accident on the 17th of August with our bright future ending.

However this was not like any ordinary road accident. This was an accidental accident. My fiancé Ara Elmayan was standing outside his garage on ‘Corniche du Fleuve’ waiting for a client. But little did Ara know what was waiting for him. Whilst observing his clients arrival a truck that was laying tar on the road nearby began reversing and continued to reverse directly onto Ara.

And because of the driver’s ignorance and due to a lack of responsibility to serve the Lebanese public his careless movements took Ara’s life away.

Ara Elmayan was a legend in life (and leaves a legacy) his middle name was ‘safety’. Each year he skied Lebanon’s snow covered mountains without any problems never taking any risks and every step that he took in life was always a cautious and careful one.

Ara’s departure from this world must not be in vain and much is to be learned from this painful chapter.

Road awareness saves Accidents and saves lives too! – You and I have become a new family and our connection has happened through death. We are all Elmayan’s who have lost loved ones through heartbreaking circumstances but you can be sure that all roads do lead to heaven!

We must see the end of the increasing frequency of road accidents that keeps occurring here in Lebanon.

This piece is in memory of Ara Elmayan who died on the 17th August 2012.
Message to Youth

Road safety and traffic crashes are two major issues that have arise during the past decade. According to statistics 1.2 millions persons worldwide loose their lives because of car accidents. The shocking evidence is yet to come. The major victims are we, youth! Why shall we let things go that way! Why shall we stand still with crossed hands watching our friends, parents and siblings die on daily basis? Why shall we accept ourselves to be passive members in the society; whereby, we as youth nowadays can play a vital and fundamental role in our community? We shall believe in ourselves and our capabilities people, and believe as well that someday we can change the world making earth a safer place to live on. It isn’t an impossible mission.

The key term element for accomplishing the mission successfully is raising road safety together with traffic awareness. YASA is one of strongest and most effective NGOs in the Middle East that deals with those issues. The organization was launched by youth who refused to be considered passive members and took the initiative of spreading road safety. Despite the community service, voluntary, and relationship experience that one can gain being a YASA member, the most important benefit is raising one’s own basic knowledge regarding road safety in early stages, and sharing this knowledge and spreading it in the whole society in later ones. Think about how many lives a YASA member can save through spreading traffic awareness. Think about altering people’s behaviours positively and making them more aware of road safety.

Joining us at YASA means you are playing a significant role in breaking the destructive relationship between youth and other harmful issues like youth and speed, and youth and alcohol. On
the contrary you would be building a tight relationship among youth themselves on one hand to unite and work for a better future, and on the other hand build a strong positive relationship between youth and the seatbelt or the helmet for example. Friends, do not hesitate to support YASA’s initiatives and missions and do community service work and even do not think twice about joining YASA. If we have a chance to save lives, spread road awareness and increase road safety why don’t we make a full use of this chance. Remember, the rate of fatal car crashes is rising worldwide…

However, safety isn’t strictly related to road safety. Because we are young, we do all practice various types of sports and recreation activities. Unfortunately, our low awareness regarding certain sports leads to us suffer from severe injuries that could have been prevented. Lebanese Association for Sport Injuries Prevention (LASIP, www.lasip.net), a sister organization of YASA, is specialized in preventing sports injuries that mainly target youth.

Do something! Join YASA and LASIP be the change.

This text has been prepared by two young YASA volunteers Roberto Caponera -19 years old - student in political sciences at Sciences Po Paris, and Fidaa Al Fakih, a junior business student at the Lebanese American University.
Habib's, This is a sad story. My sad story, that I want to share with you. I decided to tell everyone, on my husband's 35th birthday, how the story of a lifetime was interrupted in a second. My tragedy is unfortunately not uncommon, as so many people are living similar ones every day, especially in Lebanon. So many people's lives are turned upside down every minute, because of tragic accidents on our roads.

If reading this helps you think twice before you step on that gas pedal, then my grief would not have been vain, as Habib’s death would have saved your life.

Habib Chamat, my husband and the father of my two baby girls, Cindy, 4 years old, and Romy, only 53 days old, lost his life when he was hit by a speeding car, as he was peacefully driving to his work on August 15, 2012.

Habib Chamat was born on February 18, 1978. He and his twin brother were the eldest sons of a young Lebanese couple. He was raised to love and respect others, in a harmonious and supportive family.

He received his school education at Notre Dame de Jamhour and Orthodox Annunciation colleges.
He was a sensitive man, who loved sports and music. He studied oud with Mr Maurice Awad and delighted friends and family with his lovely performances.

Habib was also very passionate and he pursued many hobbies, including hunting, music, classic cars, motorcycling and skiing...

After earning a marketing degree from USEK in 2002. Habib further consolidated his skills by joining Federal Bank, where he worked as a senior clerk from June 2002 till October 2005.

From September 2002 till September 2003 he enrolled into the Lebanese army for his military service.

When Habib met Celine Adas, they both knew that the love they shared was beautiful, true, and meant for a lifetime. They got engaged on June 24, 2006, and shortly after, they decided to start a family. They got married on May 12, 2007 in Our Lady of the Holy Annunciation church in Achrafieh.

Shortly after, they were blessed with a beautiful little girl, Cindy, who was born on March 15, 2008. This little bundle of joy brought great happiness to them, as well as hopes, dreams and confidence in a wonderful future.

All those who knew Habib appreciated his integrity, his generosity and sense of humour. This driven and compassionate young man enrolled as a volunteer in the Civil Defense during 1998 till 2002 while simultaneously studying at the university.

He joined the family business in 2006 thus becoming a key member in a long tradition, as his ancestors have worked in the marble and granite industry for more than one hundred years. He modernized the manufacture and infused it with youth, hope and enthusiasm.

Four years later, their small family welcomed another little girl, Romy, who was born on June 24, 2012.
But fate had decided otherwise. On August 15, 2012, Habib kissed his wife and babies goodbye in the morning and left his house in Mansourieh at 9:00 AM. On this holy day, he only wanted to go to work for a few hours to finish some urgent business, then come back to take his family out. Romy’s first true day out. He put his helmet on and confidently rode his motorcycle. Death waited for him a few road loops down.

A reckless, over speeding driver missed the road turn and hit him. A whole lifetime of his parent’s love and caring, and Habib’s hopes and dreams, all his young family’s expectations for a happy future… all of this was shattered, just because of one single driver, who had no respect for life and other peoples’ right to live.

Habib survived less than seven hours after the accident. He spent them in painful agony, screams and cries… At 3:45 PM, he became an angel and flew away, leaving behind his heartbroken parents, his desperate brothers, his wretched young wife and two innocent children who would never get to have him by their side anymore. He also left scolding pain in the heart of all those who knew him and loved him. Pain that will never subside from now on...

How many young men and women are dying every day? How long should we still watch horrors, and shy away? How blind and deaf should we remain before we say: “This is enough”? I am only hoping that you will read and share my story, think of the suffering of wives and husbands, parents and children, and draw a lesson.

Love your family, more than speed. Realize that life is a responsibility, and a precious gift that you should cherish and deserve"
The Love of Speeding Leads to Disasters
By: YASA

One day I got a call from a friend during which she told me the sad news of the death of a young adult on a motorcycle. The guy was 25 years old and had a passion to speeding. Since the parents were old family friends I headed immediately to their home.

Upon reaching their home, you can feel the sadness filling the air, every single person crying and mourning the death of the young guy. Sadness filled not only the house but the entire neighborhood.

Upon giving condolences to the devastated father we asked him, how and what happened, and to our shock he said: “he was speeding and lost control of the motorbike.” Continuing to talk to the even more devastated mother who was full of tears, she reminds us of the time we met her son how he told us how much he loved speeding and how she always begged him to be caution.

She continues to cry and morn her beloved eldest son and at times she loses consciousness due to the disaster that has hit their family.

Still sitting among all the devastated people, I hear two of the visitors talking and saying: “Why can’t the young boys and girls imagine what would happen to their parents when they commit this reckless driving. We wish they can see so they do not go crazy while on any motorized vehicle on the road.”

YASA would like to tell all the youth and all those who love speeding to always think of their beloved ones, what would happen to them if they get hurt. We emphasize that death due to a traffic crash is the last result but before might come long days of suffering and pain. There might be permanent disability that would not only affect the person but all the family and beloved
ones.

Many times while we travel on the roads we see people on their motorbikes most of them are without a helmet and unfortunately many bikes usually carry more than the permitted number of passengers.

YASA would like to remind all the people who use or wish to use a motorbike to always use their helmet and ask their accompanying passenger to use one too. Keep in mind that while you are on the bike you are less protected than while in the car due to lack of the protective shield around you.

YASA also urges all motorbike users likewise the ATV users to always wear the helmet and always drive with extreme caution while on the road.

Keep in mind that the road is shared with many road users such as: heavy vehicles, trucks, cars, motorbikes, ATV, bicycles and pedestrians. The smaller users are the ones at higher risk since they might not be seen by the other users.

YASA also calls on all the road users especially the bikers to drive slowly and help us avoid tragedies.

Keep in mind, that the Motorbike and ATV is for our transportation and not for our death and certainly not to ignite a flame in the heart of all those who love us especially our family and friends.