

Text-messaging while driving exacts a terrible toll



BARB GUY

I was just sitting here at my computer when word came that Stacy had died. Even worse, she had died a year ago but I just found out.

Stacy was already living in Washington, D.C., when I got sent there in 1991. I was to follow in her, and others', footsteps as a Scoville Peace Fellow, working for an arms control group while the fellowship paid my salary.

Stacy helped with orienting me when I flew to Washington for my interview and later when I arrived to settle in for my peace fellowship. She attended socials for present and past fellows; there were fewer than 20 of us, so we were a small, friendly group.

Stacy was a nice young woman with an easy smile. She was trained as an electrical engineer

and she cared deeply about peace. She used her training in engineering during her peace fellowship, working at Physicians for Social Responsibility to expose links between nuclear weapons production and environmental destruction.

Later, she worked for the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research and earned a master's degree in environmental engineering.

Last summer Stacy was living in Arizona with her 6-year-old daughter, her fiancé and his two kids. She was designing a community of energy-efficient, healthy, "green" homes. On the Scoville Web site, where we all are supposed to report in from time to time, Stacy said of her green project, "This will promote peace by allowing people to rely on locally available energy sources and thereby decrease dependence on foreign oil."

The, out of nowhere, a car hit Stacy's car head-on, killing her. What caused this accident? A teenager who was text-messaging while driving.

Stacy's fiancé, Vinnie Sorce, is a newspaper columnist in Arizona. In his paper, *The Daily Courier*, just a couple of weeks after losing Stacy, he wrote, "Everyone has asked me what they can do to help. Right now, this second, as you read this, I

would like to ask you to make a pledge to yourself, out loud:

'I will not text while driving. I will not use my cell phone while driving without a hands-free device. I will use common sense while I'm driving. I realize it is a privilege to drive, and other innocent souls, as well as myself, depend on my total concentration on the road and in the handling of my vehicle.'

"Talk to your teenage drivers about this, your neighbors, friends and family. Whoever will listen. Have them take the pledge as well."

I can't imagine how Vinnie felt watching that squad car pull into his driveway, officers walking up to deliver the news. Now, a year later, I read on his newspaper's Web site that he's just taken Stacy's daughter and her two almost-stepbrothers to Disneyland.

I'm glad to know that Vinnie's out there, loving little Becca and teaching her that life goes on. I only wish Becca's mom was still around, too.

No text message on Earth is worth the risk of ending someone's life.

BARB GUY is a regular contributor to these pages. © Salt Lake Tribune.