

Ryan Post - Story Behind the Story for Middle School Presentations

Ryan was a funny, smart, and friendly 13-year-old. She was someone who could light up a room the moment she walked in. She became friends with almost everyone she met. Ryan and her 16-year-old sister, Riley, were very close. They hung out together all the time.



The Day of the Crash:

One day after school, Riley and Ryan started to drive home from school. Riley's friend asked for a ride home, so she got to sit in the passenger seat while Ryan sat in the back seat of the car. Riley made the good decision to give her friend her cell phone to choose some music as they began to drive home. *They were driving on a rural two-lane highway with no shoulder.**

About a half-mile from the school, Riley's friend was trying to shuffle the playlist. A crash had happened about a mile up the road on the other side of a small rise in the highway. As a result, the crash started to cause traffic to back up. Riley was not aware of the traffic that was backed up as she drove over the rise in the road and due to inexperience, she was not scanning the horizon to look for hazards. When Riley realized that traffic was stopped in front of her, Riley slammed on her breaks and lightly tapped the car in front of her.

The car behind them was driven by a 17-year-old girl who was driving her brother home after school. The driver was talking to her mom via speaker when she came over the hill. Due to inexperience and that moment of inattention, she did not start to slow down in time and crashed directly into Riley's car. Trapped between the two cars, Riley's car became like an accordion. Ryan and Riley were both taken to the hospital, and Ryan was pronounced dead from her injuries.

Better Choices That Could Have Prevented the Crash:

- Riley and the passengers in her car could have made sure the cell phone was put away so it would not distract them.
- The driver in the car behind them could have put away her cell phone so she was not distracted.
- The young, inexperienced drivers could have chosen not to have passengers in the car with them.
- Riley's friend could have chosen not to ask for a ride home, remembering that teen passengers are distractions.
- Riley could have scanned the horizon for hazards, seeing the traffic up ahead and stopping with enough distance between her car and the car in front of her.

Message: This crash and Ryan's death were both preventable. As a passenger, it is important that you encourage everyone in the car to put away distractions. You have the power to speak up and use your voice to keep the car ride safe. It is important that the driver always keeps their attention on the road and puts away any distractions. Even hands-free cell phone use can be a dangerous distraction as it takes your mind off driving. It is important that young drivers get plenty of experience before they start adding passengers to the car with them, even siblings can be a distraction.

*optional to share depending on the audience (ex: if you are presenting in an urban area, sharing this information may not relate to the audience and can be excluded).