

I've thought about Mr. Summers everyday since May 12<sup>th</sup>. I've never met him, and until today I'd never even seen him, but suddenly he became a very real part of my life. In all my thinking about Mr. Summers, the thing that most often comes to my mind is this: If he were my husband, my father, my brother, or my son, what would I want for him? I've tried to keep this in mind as I've contemplated what I would say today.

I am a mom to 4 little boys from 4 to 11 years old. We've had a simple saying in our home since our boys were small: "There is a consequence to every action, whether that action is good or bad."

As their mother, I can often make painful consequences go away, but I've seen that if I always step in and "save my kids," they miss out on important opportunities to learn, and in turn, they make the same poor choices over and over. Sometimes it's frustrating and painful to watch them experience the consequences of their poor choices, but growth can come from those consequences.

I've thought a lot about this over the last 6 months—since that day when a very intoxicated Mr. Summers hit me while I was riding my bike. I'm not a vindictive person, and my immediate response to learning he was driving drunk was to feel sadness for him. Granted, I could feel this way because while I was very hurt, I was alive. But truly, I felt sorry for him. Because here was a man who was completely drunk, on a weekday, mid-morning. To me, that says addiction loud and clear.

This isn't the first time Mr. Summers made the decision to drive drunk. He had a previous DUI some 30 years ago and yet still, he again got behind the wheel of an SUV far too drunk and far too irresponsibly to be excused. This time, he nearly killed me. I am aware was told that because of the felony charge Mr. Summers had to retire from his job early. I am also aware that a felony charge requires a certain amount of jail time with it. While I feel sorry for him that these are the consequences of his poor choice, I believe that it is necessary for him to have these consequences so that he can learn and grow.

although I learned this morning that may not be the case

The most frustrating part of this whole thing for me is that I have had to deal with the consequences of Mr. Summers' actions every day for almost 6 months now, and the consequences of his actions will last for years for my family and me.

I was out doing something that day that was a huge part of my family's and my identity. I'm a stay at home mom and I give all of my energy and my time to my family. I rarely have time for myself, but when I do, I try to spend that time doing something to improve my physical and mental health. Riding my bike was something I absolutely loved. It was my outlet. And, it was something my family and I loved, and we often did it together. My husband loved racing bikes, my youngest two learned to ride a bike at the age two, and I've watched one of my five-year-olds pedal on his own for 18 miles. Cycling was our thing. I count my blessings every day that my preschooler was at school that morning and not in his trailer behind me as he so often used to be.



But on May 12<sup>th</sup>, the thing we loved to do the most was taken from us. At first, I physically couldn't do it because of my injuries—surgeries, recoveries, physical therapy, bruises and pain that continue to linger, dizziness, forgetfulness, not being able to take care of my kids and the exhausting emotional breakdowns—all physically kept me off of my bike. Even if I could do it now, I just can't bring myself to, because I have a huge fear, that somewhere, someone else is making the same dumb choice to drive drunk. So, that day, Mr. Summers took something from my family and me. I hope with time that might heal. But it certainly hasn't healed it yet. The magnitude of that loss is difficult for me to express.

What I want most of all for Mr. Summers, is to get help so that he can get control of his addiction and not let his addiction control him. Mr. Summers wrote me an apology letter in which he stated that he underwent an 8 week rehab program at the University of Utah. This is a great first step, but it's just that—a first step. Alcohol addiction is a battle he will have to choose to fight every single day. And I certainly hope for his sake, and for the safety of those with whom he comes in contact, that he will choose to WIN that fight every single day.

I don't believe that the time he has spent in rehab is enough time to overcome a life-long addiction.

Additionally, I have seen in my friends and family that rehab only works for someone who truly wants it to work. While I am hopeful that Mr. Summers wants to be sober and wants rehab to work, only he knows if it will. Further, I'm afraid, additional prison time might lead to a vicious cycle of depression, which might be fed by further addictive behavior, and which would stand in the way of the healing Mr. Summers clearly needs.

For these reasons, instead of sentencing him to additional prison time, I would like to see the court mandate an additional comprehensive recovery program, beyond the 8 weeks he says he has completed, with proper monitoring to ensure compliance and successful completion.

I've talked to therapists and recovering addicts, and they have told me that the addiction recovery success stories happen with those that invest their time and themselves in helping others fight their addictions and overcome them. So I ask the court please to additionally mandate him to community service in the form of volunteering at a rehab facility or as sponsor to a recovering alcoholic. I am hopeful that a comprehensive rehabilitation program and community service related to helping those suffering from alcoholism will give Mr. Summers the greatest chance for success.

I've forgiven Mr. Summers. It's been a process for me, but I'm there. I hope that this can be a massive turning point in his life. This is his chance to change, and I hope he takes it.

It's not often that a drunk driver with his blood alcohol level hits a cyclist and she lives to tell about it. I'm lucky. He's lucky. It is my sincere hope that someday Mr. Summers can use this experience, where our worlds collided, for good. I don't want it to bring him down. I want it to empower him and I want him to use it to empower others.