"Stay Safe- Arrive Alive!"

Distracted driving has become a huge issue in recent years with the development of cell phones. People always say they won't text and drive but most of them do without thinking of the danger they're putting themselves in and the danger towards other. No text or call is worth a life. I never thought I would be involved in a situation involving texting and driving but here I am two years later writing about it. During my sophomore year of high school in March 2017 I was rear ended by someone who was texting and driving. The date was March 3rd and I remember almost every single thing that happened that night like it was yesterday. I went to a team dinner for basketball and a teammates house in Garland, Maine. I was in the backseat of my teammates car along with four other girls on my team. It was the night before the state championship game and we were on our way home from the dinner. Another teammate was following behind us in her car because she didn't know how to get home. The teammate in the car behind us was speeding and texting on her phone. She happened to text us asking us where we were going and we told her to get off her phone and to stop driving so close. I remember being stopped at a stop sign when all of a sudden I felt this huge impact and the sound of metal crushing that was so loud I couldn't hear anything. I got the worst of it because I was in the middle of the backseat that didn't have a headrest and my seatbelt only went across my lap. The impact made the car I was in shoot twenty feet forward into the main road. Everything that happened once the car stopped is something that I will never forget and I still have dreams about it. All of my teammates screamed and I was crying telling them to get out of the car but the thing was, I couldn't

move. My neck was stiff and I tried to move my head but nothing would work. I so badly wanted to make sure my friends were okay but they were the ones who had to take care of me until the ambulance showed up. My basketball coach rushed to the scene and it didn't take him very long. He sat with me and held my hand until a paramedic came. Luckily there was a paramedic that lived on that road who was off duty and he held my neck for what felt like forever. I had hit my head off the dash in the backseat since I didn't have a headrest and I blacked out for a few seconds. I wanted to call my parents to tell them what had happened but my phone had flown out off my hand, hit the window, and went under the driver's seat. I could feel my phone vibrating and I maneuvered my foot under the seat to pull it towards me but I couldn't reach down to get it. I was in so much shock my body was shaking and everything was a blur. All I could do was cry because a million things were running through my mind at once, one of the biggest things was what if things had been much worse? What if one of us had been killed? Or all of us? What would my family and friends do if I was no longer here? When the ambulance finally arrived, they had to pull me out of the car and I attempted to walk to the stretcher. I felt so nauseous and I almost passed out but I made it. I saw my friends getting checked out by the other paramedics and I told each and everyone that I loved them. The hardest part was trying to convince the driver of the car I was in that the accident was not her fault. She was one of my closest friends and she felt like she caused it. She even came to the hospital with me to make sure I was okay. The other hard part was having to face the person who caused the accident because she was my teammate who I saw everyday. I couldn't even talk to her because I was at a

loss for words. How could she do this to someone? To her teammates/friends? What if she had caused something much worse? Was it really worth risking your own and others lives to send that text or Snapchat? How could we play in a state championship less than 24 hours away in this condition? The whole team was up all night worried so we were exhausted the next day. Even though I had whiplash I was lucky I didn't have any other injuries. I convinced my coach and athletic trainer to let me play in that game but I had to be subbed out frequently because of my neck. On top of it all we lost that game even though we should have won. We should have been state champions that year. We weren't ourselves and we didn't play the way we usually do. Since that day I still have a hard time driving myself places or riding in a car with friends. I refuse to be on my cell phone when I drive because it's not worth risking people's lives or my own. I still have neck problems and I struggle with it everyday. I used to be able to play basketball so well and since my injury it has affected me in every sport I play. I encourage others to stay off their phones and if you absolutely need to use it pull over and be safe. It's really not worth it to be using your phone while driving because you can ruin someone else's life or even your own. People think taking your eyes off the road for a split second can't do any harm but I promise you that it can change someone's life in an instant. To drivers who are just starting out or have been driving for years, please stay off your phones, stay safe-and arrive alive!

-Kaylee Deering