



# Reference Manual and Tool Kit

By

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**\*Designed for June but good For ANYTIME of the Year.**



**The** tragic accidental death of my son, Mickarl D. Thomas, Jr., (affectionately known as Mikey) on June 14, 1997 was a devastating experience for me and my entire family. To lose a child who you have loved, nurtured, guided, and disciplined for so many years seems unimaginable; yet my loss happens to thousands of families every year. Before I could crawl into a corner of my home and dissolve into a ball of tears, tragedy struck three other mothers who I knew that same year.

#### **Four Young Men Gone In A Flash**

Three days following my son's funeral one mother's son drowned trying to save another teen who also drowned. The sons of the two other mothers (Harvard University sophomores living and working on the West Coast during a summer internship) died in a car accident while traveling from San Francisco to Los Angeles. It struck me then, that I was not alone in my grief!

My own misfortune, and the

# **A Mother's Message**

## **Why I Started Student Safety Month**

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misfortune of many others formed the impetus for **Student Safety Month**. It has been especially created to assist young people in making the right choices when driving automobiles, attending graduation parties, proms, and socializing with others where alcohol, other drugs or the possibility of violent behavior may be present.

#### **Peer Pressure & Social Drinking**

I did not know that my son drank and smoked marijuana with his classmates. As the only person in the car at the time of his death, his blood alcohol level was twice the legal limit here in Massachusetts.

He was a great kid, always wanted to become a lawyer, and yet like so many young people, was susceptible to the vices of society. A high achiever who took honor classes at Milton High School and the co-captain of the football team, all of Mikey's dreams and aspirations of attending Morehouse College on a full academic scholarship blazed away as his life shot into eternity.

#### **Spreading The Message Of Safety**

It is with that background that I

am reaching out to you, in order to help young people find more effective ways to live, play and safely develop into productive young adults.

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As a parent, educator, community leader, or student, safety issues affect all of us. From the various school shootings that ripped across America and beyond, to the myriad of socio-economic factors that influence our youngsters, this special observance is designed to save lives.

### **Spread The Word**

We welcome your comments, suggestions, resources, websites and materials as our project goes forward. Maybe you have a story to share or wisdom to pass on...we want to hear from you. Write, call, or email us, and help in this nationwide campaign to save our young people. Our children are our future, and keeping them safe will guarantee the progress that we must make throughout the coming years. Enjoy Student Safety Month.

Warmly,  


Carole Copeland Thomas  
Founder





**Mickarl Darius Thomas, Jr.** was born on August 7, 1979 in Norristown, Pennsylvania to Rev. Mickarl D. Thomas, Sr. and Carole Copeland Thomas, twenty minutes before his twin sister, Michelle.

Following is family's 1981 move to the Boston area, Mikey, as he was affectionately called, matriculated through the Milton Public School System. He attended Tucker Elementary School, Pierce Middle School, and graduated from Milton High School on June 8, 1997.

### **Graduation Celebrations To The Graveyard**

A short six days later God called Mikey to his heavenly home when he died as a result of injuries sustained in a single occupant car accident on Saturday, June 14th. Mikey was attending a birthday party with friends who were mostly over 21 years old. Alcohol was served at the party, and Mikey participated in the festive celebration. With no warning he took the car keys of a trusted friend, jumped in the car and took off joy riding. He had only earned his driver's license two months earlier in April. He soon accelerated his speed in the fast sports car, drove up a hill, and soon lost control of the car. On its way down the hill Mikey turned right and crashed into a neighbor's stone retaining wall.

Party goers raced to the scene of the accident a block away from the host's home. It was too late for Mikey. He died within five minutes of the accident.

### **A Young Man Full Of Promise**

He was a happy, healthy, seventeen year old with a bright and promising future, who never wavered from his childhood goal of going to Morehouse College and then becoming a lawyer like his uncle, Attorney Wilson A. Copeland, II.

# **Who Was Mikey?**

## **The Biography of Mickarl D. Thomas, Jr.**

*The Reason Why Student Safety Month Started in 1998*

As a talented and gifted African American student, Mikey had been accepted under the early admittance program at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was due to start his freshman year in August, 1997. Because of his academic excellence and high test scores on the SAT exam, Mikey was awarded a full academic scholarship to Morehouse, the Eleanor Morton Scholarship from the Norfolk-Plymouth County Area of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and a third scholarship from the James E. Sweeney Memorial Fund at Milton High.

### **Student Leader**

He served as a leader and role model for his friends and classmates at school, at his church and in his community. His passion was football, and he was an active player and sportsman. A former member of the Canton Pop Warner Football League, Mikey went on to become the 1996 Co-Captain of the Milton High School Varsity Football Team, "The Wildcats." Though the year was a disappointing one for the team, Mikey made innumerable big plays with great hustle, effort, and style. Named the unsung hero by his coaches and players, he received the Daniel E. Duggan Trophy for his untiring efforts.

### **Teenage Choices Deadly Consequences**

Even good kids make poor choices, including young men like Mikey. Without his mother or father's knowledge, he would drink beer with his high school buddies and smoke marijuana recreationally. Fitting in with the crowd and succumbing to peer pressure was as real for Mikey as it was for many high school students in the community. As a student taking honors classes, Mikey was impacted by the achievement gap, did not want to be labeled a "geek," and wanted to relate to his friends who were not a part of the honors curriculum.

Serving his beloved church and community became a lifelong commitment to Mikey. He joined Charles Street African Methodist Episcopal Church under the pastorate of his father before his ninth birthday. He continued his role at Charles Street in the Children's Choir, the Junior Usher Board, the Young People's Division of the Women's Missionary Society, and later served as the founding President of the Junior Steward Board. As a child, Mikey became a cub scout and briefly was a boy scout before his love of sports took over. His community involvement was equally as important as Mikey became a member of the Leaders of Tomorrow Youth Program of the National Black MBA Association. He also served as President of the Teen Group of the South Shore Chapter of Jack & Jill of America.

**Family and Friends Left Behind**

Left to mourn Mikey's death are his beloved parent, Carole Copeland Thomas of Massachusetts and Rev. Mickarl D. Thomas of Chicago, his twin sister, Michelle and an older sister, Dr. Lorna Thomas Farquharson. A stepmother, cousins, relatives, godparents, godbrothers, teachers, classmates and cherished friends were also left behind to bid farewell to Mikey at his overflowing funeral at Charles Street AME Church on June 19, 1997.



Mikey & Carole 1996



Michelle & Mikey Off To The 8th Grade Gala



Michelle (l) and Mikey (r) arrive on 8/7/79



Carole with Daughters Lorna (l) & Michelle (r) Around 1998



# Alcohol Fact Sheet

1. Alcohol-related accidents are the #1 killer of teens.
2. College students spend more on alcohol than on textbooks.
3. One 12 ounce beer = 5 ounce glass of wine = 1.5 ounce - shots of 80 proof liquor.
4. How alcohol affects you depends on:
  - how much alcohol is consumed
  - the time period in which it is consumed
  - how much food is in the stomach
  - body weight
5. Alcohol is a depressant.
6. Alcoholics don't know they are becoming alcoholics-- "it just happens".
7. When someone has a problem, they follow certain patterns:
  - lie to sober friends
  - hide it from sober friends
  - party more with drinking friends
  - deny they have a problem
8. The best thing to do for a friend with a problem is to tell a counselor or someone who can help.
9. The body takes about 1/2 hour to feel the effects of alcohol. If you drink before that time, you may drink too much.
10. The worst thing to do when a person has had too much to drink is to leave them alone or lying down. They need to be kept awake and moving-- and they need medical help.
11. Alcohol is the most abused drug in the world.
12. The younger you are when you start drinking, the more likely you are to have a problem with alcohol.
13. 1.4 million teens a year are injured in some way through an alcohol related accident.
14. A BAL (Blood Alcohol Level) of .1 means you have 12 times more likelihood of being in an accident.
15. A BAL of .2 means you have 60 times more likelihood of being in an accident.
16. There is nothing that will sober you up except time.
17. It takes approximately 1 hour for each drink to be used by the body.
18. Up to 2/3 of date rape cases involve alcohol.

Sources: Public Broadcasting Service, The Center For Disease Control, and the University of Michigan



# Best Practices

part of what really happens when an accident of this magnitude takes place.

The accident was planned each year by dedicated medical professionals of Milton Hospital in partnership with high school personnel. To maximize the event, the town videotaped the incident by the local cable access station.

## Milton Mock Car Crash

For several years following my son's death the Town of Milton, Massachusetts produced one of the most effective ways to help students understand the dangers of car accidents by staging an annual Mock Car Crash. Using real ambulances, a hearse, police, and a screaming mother, the accident took place at the athletic field



next to Milton High School. Staged for all high school grades, the school decided from year to year which grades would witness the accident.

I was invited to address the student body prior to the start of the accident.

The accident did involve a fatality, and was dramatized as graphically as possible, so that the students would get the full im-

## Teen Diaries

For several years Milton students also produced vivid accounts on what it is really like to be a teenager in today's world. Daily Diaries by Anonymous described the struggles, joys and anxieties of teenagers navigating homelife, school, friendships, and part time employment after school. It

This type of accounting by young people may help guide your Student Safety activities by getting young people involved in sharing their feelings about life in today's fast paced world.





# 25 Ways

## To Bring Student Safety Month To Your Community Anytime of the Year

1. Develop a "Prom Weekend Game Plan" with the goal of achieving a 100% accident-free weekend.
2. Organize a youth "rap discussion" group and discuss ways that teenagers can stay safe.
3. Create an essay contest on



student safety and offer prizes donated by local merchants.

4. Create a public service announcement (PSA) on teen safety tips that can be broadcast on your local TV, Cable, Radio Station, or upload to YouTube.
5. Create a blog on alcohol, drugs and violence prevention. Create one for free at [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com).
6. Hold a Student Safety Dance Marathon and donate the proceeds to the charity of your

choice.

7. Start a student safety group in your school, church, synagogue, mosque, worship center, or neighborhood.
8. Hold an all night party designed to keep kids off the streets.
9. Plan a special midnight basketball game in honor of student safety.
10. Hold a mock car crash.
11. Create a daily diary for students in your community.
12. Honor the memory of a deceased young person by starting a scholarship in his/her name.
13. Create a Student Safety Book by compiling the essays of young people in your class or group.
14. Designate Family Safety Night in your home, and talk about



different ways to keep each member safe.

15. Create a safe environment for your son or daughter to talk with you about alcohol, drugs, inhalients, and/or violence.

16. Create a safe environment for your students to talk with you about alcohol, drugs and/or violence.

17. Use Facebook and Twitter to spread your messages about Student Safety.

18. Send in student articles to your local newspaper about the value of making the right choices and staying safe.

19. Invite a speaker who has experienced the loss of a child due to drugs, alcohol, violence, or accidental death.

20. Create a student-run half day conference (Saturday morning) on student safety.

21. Write your local congressman and share your opinion on ways to keep young people safe (to find your congressman, go to the website [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)).

22. Take the plunge and write a letter to your parents sharing with them your real thoughts on life as a teenager.

23. Create a written agreement with your children that will ensure new ways to keep your home a viable, open, two-way communication household.

24. Organize a regular time for family prayer. Pray for the safety

of students everywhere.

25. Create an at home, one-hour candlelight vigil where your family, friends, students, neighbors, and colleagues can individually reflect on the importance of keeping children safe.





# Story Ideas

**To 14 Ideas To Jumpstart  
Your Program  
Anytime of the Year**

1. A parents' "safe driving" plan for inexperienced teen drivers.
2. Getting to know your child: Building communication bridges between teens and adults
3. Straight talk about drugs and alcohol.
4. Characteristics of school related violence.
5. How to detect if your child is at risk.
6. How to detect if your friends are at risk.
7. Stay safe and have fun at your senior prom.
8. Even suburban kids can be at risk.
9. Peer pressure: How to survive it without being called a nerd.
10. Drinking and driving: the ultimate flirt with death.
11. Keeping young children safe.
12. What a community can do to minimize teen fatalities.
13. Media moments: How television, radio and the Internet can make a big difference.
14. Kids leading kids in student safety.



# Resources

**Books, Websites, &  
Speakers For  
Anytime of the Year**

## **Books**

Crashproof Your Kids: Make Your Teen a Safer, Smarter Driver by Timothy C. Smith, 2006

Saving Our Teen Drivers: Using Aviation Safety Skills on the Roadways by John Loughry, 2005

Teens Under the Influence: The Truth About Kids, Alcohol, and Other Drugs- How to Recognize the Problem and What to Do About It by Katherine Ketcham & Nicholas Pace, 2003

Marijuana - What's a Parent to Believe? by MD Timmen L. Cermak, 2003

## **Websites**

Mothers Against Drunk Drivers: [www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)

Finding your US Congressional Representative: [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

Finding your US Senator: [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

National Alliance For Safe Schools: [www.safeschools.org](http://www.safeschools.org)

The Partnership At Drug Free America: [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

## **Youth Speakers**

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Sporty King • [www.sportyking.com](http://www.sportyking.com) • 708-805-9279

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