

December 1, 2008

Around-the-clock Checkstops could prevent tragedies like the one that struck little Zachary's family one year ago

By [MICHAEL PLATT](#)

It'll never be known what Zachary Morrison might have asked for, as a two-year-old boy sitting on Santa's knee.

Zachary was killed before the concept of Santa Claus and the awe of Christmas could really sink in.

Chances are, he would have been like any other toddler, full of wonder, hopes and Christmas wishes -- mainly for new toys under the tree.

Would have. Should have.

For Herb Grieder, Zachary's uncle, there's only one wish that matters now. That it never happen again.

Sunday marks the one-year anniversary of the terrible Macleod Tr. crash that claimed Zachary, his mom and three others, when a cement truck rammed their car from behind.

"We're still having a hard time dealing with it," said Grieder.

"We'll never have closure -- he'll always be on our minds, the little guy."

It was a wreck that had police officers near tears, the crushed car with five victims inside.

Along with Zachary and mom Melaina Hovdebo, the dead were Chris Gautreau, and his daughters, Alexia Devina, 9, and Kiarra Christa, 6.

The trial is still three months away for the cement truck driver, a 50-year-old Cochrane man charged with refusing to provide a breath sample and dangerous driving.

Daniel Tschetter is currently out on bail.

Grieder said it's up to the court to decide if the accused was impaired when his truck hit the car at 7 p.m., but he says a new plan to conduct police Checkstops during the day might prevent similar grief for other families.

"I'm definitely glad to see this, even though in my mind, it shouldn't just be for the holiday season, it should be happening 365 days a year," he said.



Sun sources say police are on the verge of launching the daytime sobriety stops, to bolster more traditional, after-dark Checkstops.

Given an earlier announcement of Alberta sheriffs providing extra Checkstop manpower in Calgary over Christmas, it could be the hardest holiday season yet to get away with it.

For once, the morning-after drunks -- those on the road with last-night's booze still in their system -- risk Checkstop scrutiny, and the same applies to those sucking a few back at the afternoon office party.

Twenty-four hour Checkstops mean there is no "safe" time to avoid police.

Grieder said preventing traffic deaths is to prevent heartache and tears.

"The more Checkstops the better," said Grieder.

He describes a year of anguish for Zachary's family, including the tot's father, who visits his son's grave every day.

"It still hits me all the time -- about once a week I'll have a bad day, where I just think of my little bud all day long," said Grieder. With the anniversary of the wreck approaching, and Christmas close behind, Grieder said his family is doing all it can to try and make the holidays positive, while still mourning their loss.

"When we wake up next Sunday, we'll just have to take the day as it comes," he said.

"I'll be going to the grave site, just to say hello."

Grieder's hope of seeing the around-the-clock Checkstops year round might become reality, with Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart pushing for more resources focused on drunk driving.

As a member of the Calgary Police Commission, Colley-Urquhart says she's spoken at length with Police Chief Rick Hanson about using newly hired officers for an increased number of sobriety checks. She says the top cop is on side.

"The chief is genuinely committed to the program -- this is coming right from the top," she said.

Colley-Urquhart said Calgarians need to reassess their driving habits if they want to avoid losing their licence, especially the morning after a night on the town.

"People will be quite surprised to find they are still drunk in the morning," she said

"The old liver can only metabolize so much alcohol, and you can wake up still under the influence."