

## Noah Dreblow's story



Let me tell you a story of a little 15-month-old boy whose life was taken to soon because of the lack of security features on a large cargo van. This little boy was a son, a brother, a grandson, nephew, and cousin. This little boy loved life, loved playing outside, loved basketballs and loved playing with his brother. This little boy should have been here to celebrate his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday in January with us and be preparing to finish his junior year of high school looking forward to his senior year and graduation.

Instead, on May 18, 2007, was a day that changed my entire family's life forever. It was a beautiful day outside, the sky was clear, the birds were singing, and the sun was shining bright. My children Tyler age 3 and Noah age 15 months normally went to daycare during the day while I worked, but on this day, the daycare was closed. So instead, they went to my parent's house for the day. They spent a lot of time at their grandparent's house, playing outside, digging for worms, and playing with their older cousins, so it was common for the boys to be outside with either their grandma or pap-pap, sometimes even both. That afternoon, like any afternoon, also consisted of Tyler and Noah's cousins Shannon and Christopher getting off the school bus there until their mom was home from work. The layout of my parents' driveway was initially gravel, which then turned into a large concrete area with a basketball goal and then back to gravel again which led down to the barns. On this particular day, grandma and Tyler were digging for worms in the flower beds along the 2nd gravel section, while Noah was running around the basketball area, as well as back and forth to Tyler and grandma. Christopher and Shannon got off the bus and Pap-pap returned home from work in his Chevy Cargo Van which he normally parked where the concrete met the 2<sup>nd</sup> gravel portion of the driveway but on this day, he parked under the basketball goal, this was to keep the majority of the area open for the kids to play.

After a long day of work, Pap-pap went inside the house and sat down to relax for a few minutes, while grandma, Tyler and Noah were still outside. Christopher and Shannon were inside eating after school snacks, watching TV, and playing on the computer. Christopher decided he was going to go outside with the boys as he waited on his friend to come over. While he was waiting, he ran inside and asked pap-pap if he could move the van so when his friends got there, the basketball goal would be open, and they could shoot some hoops. Pap-pap said of course and got up to go and moved the van into his normal parking spot. Pap-pap went outside, mentioned to grandma and the kids that he was going to be moving

the vehicle. Grandma looked to make sure she had Tyler next to her. Christopher and Noah were in the garage getting a basketball. Pap-pap then got into his van and started to move it. What they did not know is that Noah had grabbed his basketball, but it rolled out into the driveway. As pap-pap continued to move forward, he hit Noah, even though Christopher was screaming STOP STOP and banging on the side of the van. Pap-pap did not hear him and kept moving. Pap-pap ended up hitting Noah and because of the lack of security features on his van, he had absolutely no idea what had happened or why everyone was screaming until he got out of the van, walked to the back of van, and saw grandma holding Noah in her arms.

I was at work that day at a local bank and it was close to quitting time. I was finishing up with a customer when a co-worker of mine told me that I had a phone call. She said it sounded like my dad. At 4:45 PM I got the call that no parent should ever receive. When I picked up the phone, the only thing I heard was "You need to come quick. The baby has been hit by a car!" I instantly screamed, grabbed my keys, and ran out the door. At this point, I was in tunnel vision. I had one goal, and it was to get to my parent's house which was less than 15 mins away from where I worked. As I drove down the road, I was not sure which "baby" it was because we commonly would call Tyler and Noah, the boys, the babies, the kids, it was not until my niece Shannon called me screaming and crying telling me that I needed to hurry up because Noah was hurt really bad. As I drove as fast as I could, blowing my horn and running red lights, I ended up behind two fire trucks going the same way I was headed. I just knew they were going to the accident. When we arrived at the 2<sup>nd</sup> stop sign prior to my parents' road and the fire trucks turned left. I knew something was not right. They had 2 more roads to go, why were they turning so early!? My parents lived on a hill. When you came out of their drive, if you went to the left, you went down the hill, if you turned right, you were already at the crest and the top of the hill so it was flat, and you could see down the road. When I finally turned on their road what I saw was nothing but flashing lights. I was not able to get in the driveway, so I whipped my vehicle into their neighbor's yard, jumped out and ran. I was not able to run very far because a state trooper and two sheriffs stopped me. They asked me if I was mom and I said yes and as they held me, I screamed at them to let me go, let me get to my baby, that I need to get to my baby and as hard as I tried to get to him, the harder they fought to keep me back. I finally just looked and said please let me get to my baby, please tell me my baby is OK. The words they said next have been burned in my brain forever. They said, "I'm sorry but we can't tell you that he's OK!" At that point I fell to my knees and screamed and cried. I could only scream his name, Noah, and as I screamed and cried and punched the ground, the world as I knew it, came to a stop. By this time other neighbors started coming over and the media started to show up, so they put me and my mom in an ambulance for privacy. What seem like a lifetime was only a few hours.

As time continued to pass and they worked on the scene, I was never able to go up there. I was never able to hold my baby or even see him. At one point, I needed to use the restroom so family that was in the ambulance along with neighbors we knew, circled around me, and took me into the neighbor's house to use the restroom. When I came back out to ambulance, my biggest fear became a reality. When I stepped back into the ambulance, the coroner was sitting there waiting to ask me questions with regards to what I wanted to do with my baby boy. I do not remember what he originally said to me, but I do remember I yelled and screamed at him to go away, to get out of the ambulance, that he was not supposed to be there, that everything was supposed to be OK. As family proceeded to calm me down, with my hands over my face, I began to answer the questions he asked. He wanted to know if I wanted my child to be buried or cremated, what funeral home that I had planned to use and if I wanted him to

be a tissue donor. The last thing I saw was another ambulance pulling out of my parent's driveway and I knew that my baby boy was in the back. When they finally allowed us to go up to the driveway, all I wanted to do was sit, sit where my baby boy was. So, I sat in their driveway where his sweet body laid. All I had left at that point was his car seat and sippy cup, and all I could do was cry. As the day turned into night, I refused to go inside. I did not want to leave him, even though he was gone, I could not pull myself from the driveway. I do not remember much from that night, but I do know that I slept a good portion of the night in the driveway, in the spot where my child had passed away.

The next day was pretty much a blur. The only thing I can remember from that day was that I was able to go out to the funeral home and I got to hold my baby. That's right, the last time I saw my baby, held my baby, and kissed my baby. My baby was gone! The last pictures I have of my sweet little boy is his lifeless body in my arms. Noah had not even had his first hair cut yet, but I was able to ask the funeral home to cut me off some so I could keep it. The 2<sup>nd</sup> day after the accident, I was still receiving calls from the media. They had the nerve to ask me how I was doing. I screamed at them and hung up the phone. My family and I had to go back out to the funeral home to make the arrangements. Picking out which coffin you want to lay your baby in for their viewing was just one of many difficult choices I had to make during the days following. I had decided to have Noah cremated because the thought of putting my sweet baby in the ground and walking away was not something I was able to do. Noah was laid out in his spiderman jammies, a denim baseball cap, his little yellow ducky, and a small basketball. We had to put a hat on him due to the trauma his head that he had sustained during the accident. During the funeral service, walking to the casket to say my final goodbye, my entire body was numb. I couldn't believe that my perfectly healthy baby boy was forever gone. I kissed my sweet boy on his forehead, touched his sweet cheek just one last time, and returned to my seat so others could also say their goodbye.



Pictured above is the last time I held my baby after he passed.

Today is the 16-year anniversary of that horrific day and I can still remember it as if it was yesterday. Had the cargo van that my dad was driving had automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection on it that is available today, I know Noah would still be with us. Knowing that automobiles today have sensors that will cause the car to break automatically if it gets too close to something in front of it breaks my heart even more. If vehicles were required to have these safety features, the number of deaths related to frontovers would not be what they are today. Children and others do not have to die.

My life has been changed forever. Pictures I have of Noah just stopped. I never got the opportunity to take him to school for his first day of kindergarten. I don't get the opportunity to pick out his yearly school pictures, and I don't get to celebrate his birthdays year after year. I don't get the opportunity to plan a Class of 2024 graduation party or see him off to prom. I only get to "think" about the person he may have been today. What would he look like? Would he be tall like his older brother? Would he still love basketball like he used to? What kind of personality would he have? All these questions I will never know the answers too. Had the large cargo van my dad was driving, had even one of the security features, all those questions I have, I may not need to worry about because I would know the answer to all of them!

Written by: Erica Boyer, Noah's mommy

Below is a wonderfully done report with an interview about my son's death.

[Millions of vehicles have unexpected, dangerous front blind zone](#), Bob Segall, WTHR