

## *Story 1 - Andrea Summers, Lewes, DE; Crash date: February 15, 2001*

*I've always believed it's important to wear a seatbelt. But I never thought I'd be able to share first-hand experience on just how important it is.*

*I confess that until I went to work for the Office of Highway Safety as the Community Relations Officer, I was a part-time seatbelt user. I'd generally wear it while driving, but not always as a front seat passenger, and almost never as a backseat passenger.*

*But when I started working for OHS and read tons of statistics about the benefits of wearing seatbelts, and heard dozens of stories from police, doctors and nurses about the devastating injuries they had seen to people who weren't buckled up, I started wearing it full-time no matter where I sat. Whether I was driving down a highway or through shopping center parking lots I was buckled up.*

*And on the morning of February 15th, I was really glad that I was. I was on my way to work, and as I came to an intersection just west of what's known as the 5-points area in Lewes, Delaware, I saw that my light was green.*

*I thought it was my lucky day since that light is almost never green when I get to it. I proceeded to head straight through the green light, when all of a sudden I heard a crunch, and felt a solid jolt as another car slammed into the left front end of my 1997 2-door Honda Civic.*

*I never saw the other person coming. I heard the crunch, felt the jolt, heard tires squeal, and felt helpless as my car was driven diagonally off to the right, and over the median separating the east and westbound lanes of Rt. 9.*

*At that point I was able to snap out of my shock and yanked the steering wheel to the right just in time to avoid heading into oncoming traffic. However, I still managed to sideswipe a vehicle sitting in the left turn lane, just over the median. Luckily, I only took off some of its paint and was happy that the driver wasn't injured.*

*My car came to a stop on top of the median. Shaken, I reached for my cell phone to dial 911. The phone was in my purse which was now upside down on the floor in the passenger side of the vehicle. Others who had seen the crash also dialed 911 and the police came quickly.*

*I realized that my head and my knee hurt, but I wasn't bleeding. I had bumped my head on the inside of the door frame when the other car hit me. I have no idea where I hit my knee, but when I looked, there wasn't even a little scrape.*

*I was very lucky. My car wasn't so fortunate. According to witnesses, the driver of the vehicle that hit mine went around stopped traffic and through the red light. And although neither of us were going very fast, my car sustained \$6,000 dollars worth of damage.*

*As I climbed out of my car, I saw my bumper laying a few feet away from my car. My front end was crunched in, there was fluid leaking onto the roadway, another piece of my car was laying in the middle of the eastbound roadway and my left rear quarter panel was smashed in.*

*The officer at the scene said the driver of the vehicle that hit mine had broken his leg. I don't know if he had a seatbelt on, but it made me think about what could have happened to me if I hadn't had mine on.*

*The impact of the crash was violent enough to make the items sitting on my front passenger seat flip upside down and land in the floor, and for me to bump my head on the inside of the door frame. If I hadn't been buckled up, there is no doubt in my mind that I would have had a head injury from cracking my head on the driver's side window, or both a head and spinal injury from the force of my head being driven sharply up into the frame of the door.*

*It wasn't just luck that spared me from being seriously hurt in this crash. It was my decision to actively buckle my seatbelt that did it. I was an advocate for seatbelt use before...now I'm a survivor because of it!*