

EDITORIAL

with Frances Niblock

Did Jeffrey Sandles die in vain?

No amount of time served will ease the trauma and ongoing pain for the families and victims of Todd McGowan, the 23-year-old Mississauga man sentenced this week to seven years – minus two years for dead time awaiting trial – for a horrific single-car crash that killed his friend, Jeffrey Sandles, 23, and injured four others, one who is now a quadriplegic.

Some of the victims relived the tragedy on Monday in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice as they read their victim impact statements, detailing how in an instant on April 3, 2010, their lives were changed forever, and how their scars constantly remind them of their emotional and physical pain.

The details provide a cautionary tale – six young people out for a high speed ride after a night of drinking – the three teenaged girls had met McGowan, his cousin and Sandles just scant hours before the crash, but willing got into a car with some one they knew had been drinking. The car belonged to Sandles, but McGowan was behind the wheel.

It is McGowan's cowardliness that stood out in all of the bloody, horrible details. After the crash at the Queen Street-Young Street curve, he climbed over his dead friend – who he told the court was more of a "brother" – and over the bodies of the four people in the back seat, including the three girls who were screaming in pain.

In a remarkable show of compassion, outside of the court, Sandles' dad Brian said he could forgive McGowan for the accident, but not for fleeing the scene in hopes of avoiding arrest. Sandles' mother Cindy said if the prison time forces McGowan to straighten out his life – he has a criminal record stretching back six years – then her son didn't die in vain. They hope the sentence might stop others from drinking and driving.

Hopefully, they will be right.

Looking Back



Ten Years Ago

- Six Hamilton teens were arrested following a high-speed 35-kilometre chase of a stolen vehicle through Acton.
- Several local business owners were unhappy with the Town's plans for dramatically more restrictive smoking rules as the Town moves towards being 100 per cent smoke-free by 2003.

Five Years Ago

- For their 25 years of organizing the Acton Santa Claus parade for the Acton Firefighters Association, Acton's Diane and Bill Spielvogel were named Citizens of the Year.
- A fitness centre, restaurant, daycare and medical offices were approved as allowable uses for a site on the northwest corner of Queen Street and Tanners Drive, adjacent to the Honeyfield subdivision.



GREAT GRUB: The Men's Toonie Breakfast at the Bethel Christian Reformed Church on Saturday morning was well attended as Gert Kollenhoven helped serve the hungry boys and men as they lined up for the monthly event. – *Melissa Paul photo*

Science Matters

By David Suzuki



Cities cover just two per cent of the world's land area, yet they account for about 70 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. According to the United Nations, 59 per cent of us now live in cities; in developing countries, 81 per cent of people are urbanites. And those figures are rising every day.

Even though cities are a major source of emissions fueling climate change, "they are also places where the greatest efficiencies can be made," according to Joan Clos, executive director of UN-HABITAT. "With better urban planning and greater citizen participation we can make our hot cities cool again."

The benefits of doing so go beyond reducing the risk of global warming. Cities designed for humans rather than cars are better places to live, with lower pollution levels, less traffic congestion, more parks and public spaces, improved opportunities for social interaction, and

healthier citizens.

Making cities more livable with lower environmental impacts requires a range of solutions, including growing food so we don't have to import so much, improving energy efficiency in buildings, increasing population density, investing in public transit, and reducing reliance on private automobiles.

Gil Peñalosa, who will open and close the conference, says Vancouver has done a lot for cycling but it's "not great yet." Peñalosa, director of the Canadian non-profit organization 8-80 Cities and former commissioner of Parks, Sports and Recreation in Bogota, Colombia, believes North American city dwellers could learn from Europeans when it comes to encouraging cycling.

"Even in Europe, a lot of the bicycle infrastructure has been done in the last 30 years. And it didn't get there by chance," Peñalosa said in an interview with the European Cyclists' Federation, noting that in Amsterdam, cycling infrastructure and rates increased only after active campaigning by citizens. He also said that bicycle-friend-

ly planning can complement well-designed public transportation systems.

One of the first steps is to reduce local traffic speeds. "It's a real paradox," he said. "People actually want to have 30 kilometres an hour in their own neighbourhood, but where they don't live they want to go fast."

Reducing speeds also saves lives. According to the European Transport Safety Council, if a car hits you at 30 kilometres per hour, you have a five per cent chance of being killed, but at 65 kilometres an hour, you only have a five per cent chance of surviving.

The next step in encouraging cycling is something Vancouver is moving toward: "You need physically separated bike ways. And you don't just need one separated bike path. You need a whole network," Peñalosa said.

The European Cyclists' Federation says that providing segregated bike lanes on arterial and other busy roads in urban areas isn't as big a task as many would expect, as these roads typically represent only about five to 10 per cent of the urban landscape.



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