



Daniel Davidson

Nonnewaug High School

Attending: Hofstra University

[Assembly takes place on bleachers of football field where a "lane" the width of a traffic lane and the length of the football field has been lined off with plastic tape.]

DWD--"distracted while driving". That's also my initials--DWD. I'm Dan Davidson, and I'm not going to tell you what the "W" stands for. But I am going to tell you today about the dangers of driving while on a cell phone, or "driving while distracted". But first, let's do an exercise.

You would be surprised how far a car can travel in a few seconds. If you're doing highway driving, and look down for five or six seconds, your car can easily travel the length of a football field. So let's try it, but without the four thousand pound car to increase the danger. I invited my mom today to see this, and she is here today. She needs to be at this assembly, too. My mom has a bad habit that we need to fix. If we can fix our parents, then we can fix a lot of kids too. Statistics show that about half of us kids admit that we learn our driving habits from our parents. The rest of us just don't want to admit that we're like our parents at all.

[Ask for volunteers, and have them try to travel the length of a football field blindfolded without touching the tapes. Instruct them to walk or run as fast as they can. Time each of them can to see how many seconds they travel before touching the tapes.]

So Mom, this is for you. Mom, what makes you think you can do this, if even a high school student can't?

When I look back on my childhood I see many important mentors, but my mom has been the most influential person in my life. We've been through a lot together.

My mom adopted me from Bolivia as a single parent when I was just seven weeks old. When I was ten years old, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, and we had to sell our house. We went through hard times with money, and my mother at the same time lost a family business that had helped us. My mother wanted me to have the best, and I already could play the piano and clarinet. So she got me a scholarship at Neighborhood Music School in New Haven, to learn to play the bassoon. For seven years she has made sure that I have been

at Neighborhood every Monday, not including all the concerts and recitals and 10 minute mock auditions on the weekends.

When my mother got breast cancer she was very strong and determined to see it through in order to take care of me and my sister. My mother is fine now, but she has worked very hard to give me the best. She works as a psychologist in nursing homes, and is the hardest working person I know. She works very long hours, and she drives a lot. She has raised us without much family support, because all our family is in Tennessee. Because of my mom, I know that life can be hard, but I also know it can be full of joy.

I already know what I want to do with my life. I want to continue to bring joy to people's lives through my music. Several weeks ago, I was accepted to Hofstra University, where I will major in music in their music marketing and merchandising program. I want to work in the music industry to identify new music and artists who will make wonderful contributions to our culture. I want to make a life-long contribution through music through finding new creative music artists, and increase people's awareness of new and innovative contemporary sounds.

I don't want everything to end.

Mom, you scare me. I know you've got way too much to do. But you scare me when you're driving and you get on your phone.

[Pass out pens and paper on Carter Mario letterhead and ask students to write a brief letter to their parents. Take five minutes]

This is your love letter to your parents. Take it home today. It may be the most important letter to them you will ever write.

So Mom, are you willing to be a better example for all of us?