

**FOCUS ON SAFETY SYMPOSIUM**  
*A Practical Look at Automated Traffic Enforcement*  
Friday, October 12, 2007  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida



**Shawnee Ulrey**

Submitted in Her Behalf By  
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Warsaw, IN

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## KEYNOTE SPEECH—Ann Sweet

As I look at you folks this morning, my first impression can be summed up in the word *DIVERSITY*—*Age diversity, ethnic diversity, certainly career diversity.*

What would bring this diverse group together this morning? The answer is EAGERNESS—I call it the *Eagerness to Learn More to Do More*. The end result: less slaughter on our roadways, the ability for all highway travelers to safely share our highways, reducing the casualties of a senseless epidemic precipitated by careless drivers who care more for a few seconds of time than for their own safety and the safety of others. This eagerness is what brought the organizers of the Focus on Safety Symposium together, and I truly hope that the Eagerness to Learn More to Do More is what each of you take from here today.

This symposium is an overview of traffic safety applications of photo enforcement. Four panels will detail how successful photo enforcement programs are created, what makes them successful, and how that success can be replicated in your own communities.

Other folks will quote statistics—beyond the facts that 1000 fatalities, 200,000 additional injuries and billions of dollars of property damage are caused annually just at intersections, by careless drivers. I prefer to refer to a statement made a couple of years ago by a paramedic, a 20-year veteran, from San Diego who says that “statistics are simply tragedies with the tears wiped away.” I know this very personally.

As Leslie said, my name is Ann Sweet. I live in rural northern Indiana and have worked for our local telephone company for 13 years where I am responsible for phone system sales to businesses throughout the state. I am a volunteer disaster manager at the national level with the American Red Cross, responding to disasters throughout the U.S. I serve on our local Traffic Commission. I also have had the privilege of serving as the volunteer National Survivor Spokesperson for the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running and a founding member of its Advisory Board since 2002.

The National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running, a very unique organization and extremely vital to the cause of increased traffic safety, was founded in 2001 to provide the public and elected officials with a better understanding of the seriousness of the red light running problem and law enforcement practices and tools, including photo enforcement, that can make our roadways safer. In more recent years, the emphasis has broadened to include speed photo enforcement and enforcement in work zones and school zones. The National Campaign includes an independent Advisory Board comprised of the very best minds from the most respected traffic safety organizations in the country and is blessed with the support of the leading traffic safety product vendors, including ACS, Nestor, and Redflex.

This Advisory Board provides statistics and guidance to the Campaign. You can find a full listing of the Advisory Board's current membership—including the Governors Highway Safety Association, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, American Trauma Society and me, founder of a grassroots traffic safety organization also called Focus on Safety.

Usually left unsaid is the personal commitment of Leslie Blakey, Jeff Agnew and Lu León of Blakey & Agnew, the original organizers of the National Campaign. The goals of the Campaign blend well with my own personal commitment to further the safety of all families. This is an organization that I am very proud to be a part of.

Unfortunately the events that brought me to the Campaign are ones that I would give anything to change. My story goes back 10 years—in fact 10 years this month. Until October 1997, I THOUGHT I was an average American citizen with a good family, a great job, the mother of 2 adopted sons in their

twenties—working out these things called COLLEGE and LIFE—and one beautiful daughter—Shawnee, age 21.

Shawnee was a recent college graduate with a new job. She was kind to and liked by those who knew her. She was to be married to her sweetheart within weeks, and we were busy planning her wedding. She was the very love of my life—and everyone who knew us both knew that.

Then October 27, 1997, happened, and my family's lives were changed forever. I picked up the final information for Shawnee and Jeff's honeymoon that day from the travel agency and called her to let her know that I had it.

She said, "Mom, will you fix a casserole for Jeff and me this evening? We need to drop my car off for service at 5:00. We will see you then. Mom—I love you!"

But that evening Shawnee and Jeff were late for dinner. Instead, two men stood on my front porch, and asked, "Is this where Shawnee Ulrey lives?"

I invited them in, but what they had to say I refused to believe. Not MY Shawnee!! You have the wrong house!! Just go away!!

My world was destroyed. Ralph, Shawnee's stepfather, was called at work. Jeff and his family were at my door. Neighbors. Telephone calls. The casserole, forgotten, sat in that oven for 3 days.

Shawnee's wedding plans were hurriedly replaced by her funeral. There were hundreds of friends in that church and at the gravesite as Shawnee was laid to rest beside her grandparents, and my heart was replaced by a big, gaping hole.

As the coroner explained, Jeff in his pickup, waited for a red light at an intersection a few miles from our home. Shawnee followed in her car. As they waited—on their way to drop her car off, Jeff looked in his rearview mirror. Shawnee smiled and waved. They had dated for 4 years. They were looking forward to a lifetime together! The light turned green. Jeff proceeded to cross the 4 lanes of U.S. 30 with Shawnee following.

Suddenly Jeff looked in his rearview mirror again. Shawnee's car seemed to explode from the impact—a semi hauling a loaded flatbed trailer. No brakes until the point of impact. Shawnee's life was already gone by the time Jeff reached her side. In shock, the semi driver ran down the highway away from the horror of what had been done.

Like an earthquake, the aftershock of Shawnee's death devastated our family—and we struggled to face each new day without her.

Ralph—Shawnee's stepfather, 54 and very healthy—was our foundation through this nightmare. Fourteen weeks after Shawnee's death he was also gone—a massive heart attack—stress-related the doctor said. He had served our country as a Naval Intelligence officer. Following a local memorial service, I flew with his casket to Arlington, Virginia for a military burial in Arlington Cemetery.

My sons—and I am proud that Justin is with me today—struggled with me to keep our lives together. The civil lawsuit dragged on week after agonizing week, stretching into nearly two years.

For a good six months I slept in a chair in the living room. Surely if I watched the driveway hard enough and long enough Shawnee would drive in and this nightmare could finally end. But Shawnee never did come home, and our hearts are still broken. Though life has continued in our family and my sons both have families of their own, Shawnee's absence is a constant source of sadness. Last month marked her 31<sup>st</sup> birthday and this month marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death.

By sheer coincidence, I became acquainted with two very special folks in 2000, both are panelists here today.

Dr. Bryan Porter, a Behavioral Psychologist at Old Dominion University, is one of those special people. When I met Dr. Porter he was conducting a study of driver behavior patterns related to red light running.

He found that 98.5% of drivers surveyed believed that red light running is dangerous, yet 55.8% of drivers surveyed admitted to running them anyway. Less than 6% had ever received consequences for doing so. When asked what to do about red light running, the most common answer was to increase legal consequences for breaking this law.

Dr. Porter encouraged me to become involved in fighting this highway epidemic by telling my story and urging drivers to behave responsibly on our highways.

After soul searching, I did become committed. But how could I—who had no public speaking experience except in front of my customers—convince anyone about anything related to traffic safety? As in ANY sales job, I knew that I must know my product (in this case, ways to increase traffic safety) thoroughly.

That is where another long time friend, and also a panelist here today, Mr. Richard Retting, senior transportation researcher for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety entered the picture. Mr. Retting supplied me with much more technical data than I could adequately take in, but I was determined to gain knowledge and studied the materials he and Dr. Porter provided to me.

I shortly learned that for ANY traffic safety program to be successful it must include 3 important ingredients: proper engineering, public education and consistent enforcement.

Engineering innovations to make each stretch of highway as safe as possible, given the specific topography and traffic volume.

Education—public awareness programs such as National Stop on Red Week, and local programs that provide handouts to schools and organizations, media blitzes, bumper stickers. All are ingredients that may save a life today, tomorrow—perhaps one of your loved ones.

And consistent enforcement—Police enforcement where possible, supplemented by photo enforcement as necessary. Engineering and education aside, traffic safety IS a behavior problem. There IS a portion of our driving public who would NEVER point a loaded gun at anyone much less pull the trigger. But they still WILL—with their families on board—disobey the “rules of the road” and cause the very same devastation—injury or death. In order to change this behavior there must be an incentive to do so—a 6% chance of getting caught by traditional methods just doesn’t provide enough. *Change comes by consequences that are consistent for unacceptable behavior.* That consistency has been found worldwide and in an ever-growing number of U.S. cities by the use of photo enforcement—cameras—simple tools used by police officers to be their eyes when they cannot be present.

Talk to a dozen people and you will find a dozen answers to increase traffic safety—more public education, higher police presence, lengthen the yellow phase of stoplights, include an all-red phase, better engineering, roundabouts, photo enforcement.

None of these is an answer by itself. The challenge is how do we use these tools, success stories, and yes, the failures, to make our own stretches of highway safer?

This is the challenge I faced in 2001 and the challenge I present to each of you today. Drivers who care more about a few seconds of time than the safety of others have created a social epidemic. Epidemics of any kind do NOT just go away if we sit and stare at them long enough!! With that realization I became a traffic safety advocate.

Dr. Porter and Mr. Retting put me in contact with the Washington, DC based Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety and, at THEIR encouragement I joined the newly formed National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running and became a volunteer member of its independent Advisory Board in 2002. On September 4, 2002, Shawnee’s birthday it was announced that I had been appointed the National Survivor Spokesperson of the Campaign.

In this capacity the rest has evolved. I have traveled throughout the United States—from California to New York to Washington, DC, and MANY cities between—even being a weekly guest for

several months on a West Palm Beach, Florida radio talk show featuring traffic safety—and now here in your beautiful city.

I have worked at the local, state and national levels with law enforcement officials, media, city leaders and legislators to find ways to decrease this senseless loss of property and life on our nation's highways.

Photo enforcement cameras—including red light, speed, work zone and school zone enforcement—are tools that have a solid proven record throughout Europe, Canada and Australia, and within the past 10 years in the United States, to help change driver behavior to one of more personal responsibility. Great tools for a traffic safety toolkit.

When I first became a traffic safety advocate in 2001, only 23 cities in the U.S. were operating photo enforcement programs—the largest being in New York City. Through public education by groups such as the National Campaign, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, through legislative lobbying, and through many grassroots efforts those 23 cities have grown to over 200 U.S. cities that today are actively saving lives and property through photo enforcement programs.

The eagerness that I see here today, surely MUST come from your determination, no matter what career you have chosen, to contribute to this effort.

As a side note, please let me assure you, from where I have been for 4 years as a member of my local traffic commission, photo enforcement IS coming. It may be 10 or 15 years, but it is coming with or without our efforts. Increases in gasoline prices and budget cuts currently mean fewer officers patrolling highways—at the same time that our roadways are experiencing an explosion in the number of drivers traveling them. Unless chaos is to reign on our highways, common sense will dictate that jurisdictions, at some point, will be forced to move to photo enforcement in order to maintain ANY semblance of order. However, in the meantime, more and more lives will be lost, more and more families will face the hardships of being injured or of caring for those who are injured, and billions of dollars of property damage will be experienced. We MUST NOT wait. So, where do YOU start?

Today you will receive a copy of the newly printed Focus on Safety booklet. Although as a member of the National Campaign I have been part of its many projects, I must say WE REALLY DID GOOD with this new guidebook!!!

A panel at this symposium is devoted to reviewing with you this Focus on Safety publication and how it can be used as a tool in your own traffic safety efforts.

EVERY page has been considered by the National Campaign, its Advisory Board and researched thoroughly. The actual publication of this guide book was funded by a combined effort of photo enforcement vendors. Although the National Campaign does not promote any particular vendor's services, I would like to personally thank all those vendors for their contributions—several are in the room today. The National Campaign is widely regarded as THE standard for those wishing to increase traffic safety within their own jurisdictions. Without the financial commitment of these supporters, the efforts of the National Campaign would be seriously jeopardized.

In a nutshell Focus on Safety is one of a kind—a wealth of information—a little encyclopedia—a compilation of

*The History of photo enforcement in the United States*  
*How Photo Enforcement technology works*  
*Stories of highway casualty survivors*  
*Snapshots of the most brilliantly administered programs*  
*The latest in related statistics*  
*And, very importantly, a 10-step Best Practices program for*

*folks wanting to initiate a photo enforcement program in their own local communities*

The inside cover of Focus on Safety states

*The increasing use of photo enforcement has been fueled by escalating violations combined with growing public support, advances in technology, and mounting documentation of their safety benefits. Photo enforcement technology has been shown to be a promising tool that*

*Leads to safer driving habits*

*Saves lives*

*Reduces traffic crashes and dangerous driving*

*Reduces health care costs*

*Increases police officer safety and public safety*

*Responds to public concerns*

*Creates a violator-funded system that can be used to pay for increased public safety.*

We know that highway safety is a topic on which you CANNOT remain neutral. Like a light switch, either you are determined to stop senseless killing on our highways or you are not. In a country that finds every human life so very precious, we ARE obligated to NOT sit idly by while an increasing number of drivers endanger themselves and others.

My hope is that each of you will find this Focus on Safety publication a great tool to use as you join the growing number of folks who are willing to take back our highways from those drivers who care more about their time than the safety of others.

USE THE DIVERSE TALENTS I see here today.

EACH of you can contribute—and you all MUST contribute. You must exhaust all avenues available—to increase the chances of travel on our nation's highways being a safe, enjoyable experience for ALL who share them.

In my own case, I have been there. I know the misery of having my only daughter just not come home anymore, of choosing a casket, burial clothes and a burial plot while her wedding dress hung unused. I could either sit in a corner and feel sorry for myself while more and more lives were lost or I could fight. Back in 2001, I chose to fight. I could make a difference by telling my story. I could talk to my neighbors/legislators, to the media, city leaders, and to beginning drivers (school students). I could help educate the public of the dangers on our highways.

Wherever I travel, as difficult as it is, I tell and retell the story of Shawnee's needless death, always with just one goal—to motivate others to take the steps necessary to ensure that their families and their loved ones do not suffer through the misery mine will never recover from. If my story is a wake-up call for you, please don't feel sorry for me and my family. We don't have time for that. *Time lost means lives lost.*

Look at your own life experiences. Do you know the folks in the media? The engineering community? Do you have influence in the judicial or legislative systems? Put those life experiences to work to provide highways on which drivers can pass safely, to educate the driving public of the extreme dangers on our highways, and for those drivers who just don't get it, to consistently hold them accountable for their actions.

Please use the tools that have been so carefully prepared for you today and the knowledge you gain here to LEARN MORE TO DO MORE. Florida's citizens are ready to provide safer travel on its highways through pending legislation—please ensure that happens. You are not alone, we are here to assist you—I personally am available anytime, anywhere—and my services ARE very affordable—they are free!

Please, have a productive day!!  
Thank you!!