

VISION ZERO.....SAFER STREETS

By Serenity C. Jackson

City of Worcester Youth Poet Laureate

Read at the Launch of the City of Worcester's Vision Zero Safety Action Plan

February 29, 2024

What is Vision Zero you might ask?

A global movement to end traffic-related deaths and injuries is its task.

It's a systemic approach to road safety

And with its implementation the risks will be reduced greatly.

The goal of Vision Zero is to be reached by designing a system

Where it will accommodate all road users, regardless of income.

Whether by car, on bicycles, scooters, by foot or public transport

Traffic crashes, injuries, and death on our streets, it strives to abort.

In order to do this, a robust data framework will first need to be created

With the design and operation of safe streets, as well as a culture of safety to be instated.

Lowering speed limits around schools, houses, medical facilities and parks

Will help reduce the fatalities that happen around all these as well as other types of landmarks.

Speed bumps, wider crosswalks, smoother roads and reconstruction of sidewalks

Should all be included in the design and implementation talks.

Streets full of potholes are unsafe and may cause drivers undue strife

Leading motorists to swerve to avoid them and potentially bring about the loss of life.

Crosswalks should double as speedbumps and be wide and bright

Ones that will also light up when day turns to night.

Texting and driving become so normalized and addicting

Your surroundings become surprising and more problems at once, conflicting.

A growing hunger for rage and anger

Lead up to uncertainty and danger.

Swapping unkind and offensive words with strangers

It all adds up to hidden disclaimers.

Some may think with the count of deaths from driving

That the streets of Worcester become less exciting.

But let's take a walk along the way and realize today
That each street is special in its own kind of way.
Entering the long street that brings you onto your feet
And greetings from neighbors that are all so sweet.
And short roads with lots of lumps and bumps
Escorted by pretty trees with pretty tree trunks.
The dark ones, the scary ones, and the timid
The bright ones, the fun ones, and the vivid.
Myths of creepy little monsters crawling from that corner that scare children away
Instantly becomes a path that turns this street with the grumpy old lady that everyone repels from to the
sweet old lady that everyone attracts to in a magnetic way.
Either way, an act of kindness can save someone's day.
A beautiful 13-year-old girl with a long life ahead of her
One wrong decision and her life becomes a blur.
A girl I once looked up to and adored the way she appeared
In her pretty little dimples all troubles disappeared.
Her life was on the line as soon as she stepped into that car
Where they ignored the street signs, creating an unsafe situation which caused her to be ejected into the tar.
All danger stood at the baseline, and I will never blame anyone for the situation
I just took a tragic lesson into consideration.
The streets are not made for fun and game
But on no one should we place all the blame.
Some things are in control by the use of your own hand
By simply lowering the speed in which you drive on command.
You can help save the lives of so many
By putting down your phone and it doesn't cost a penny, but it does decrease accidents by plenty.
I think the most important take away from Vision Zero
Is we are one city, with one vision and we all can be the hero.
So make no excuses because in this city, we move safely together
Exchanging kindness in heart and words and avoid being an offender.
No matter the roller coaster of emotions and struggles
Love, understanding, and compliance overpowers all the troubles!