

# CONNIE RUSSELL

SPEAKER

Connie Russell is the mother of Matthew Beard, a Florida State University Marine Biology student who was struck by a DUI driver on December 21, 2006. Matthew sustained life-threatening injuries and was in a coma for eight days, before succumbing to his injuries, dying on December 29th, 2006 at the age of 21.



Since that time, Connie has become a tireless advocate for impaired driving prevention and traffic safety, and has spoken to audiences across the state of Florida. In telling Matt's story, Connie strives to change behavior and encourage individuals to make smart decisions and not operate motor vehicles while impaired. She has shared her impactful program with offenders, law enforcement, prosecutors, students, parents, church and

fraternal organizations, prison inmates and more. Additionally, she has been a powerful and outspoken voice in the media being the subject of numerous newspaper and television stories including a guest appearance on Good Morning America. She has partnered with multiple safety organizations including countless law enforcement agencies, MADD, the Dori Slosberg Foundation, the Florida Department of Transportation, NASCAR, the University of Central Florida, Florida State University, the Florida Department of Corrections, Compassionate Friends, the Leon County Multi-Agency DUI Strike Force, and more. Her efforts have been recognized through numerous awards including receiving the MADD Florida Hero Award twice, the Agnes Furey Victim/Survivor Award, and the Dori Slosberg Traffic Safety Foundation Award. Connie has also been a voice in the Florida legislature, advocating for more effective traffic safety laws to include impaired driving penalty enhancements, implementation of distracted driving laws, and support for laws related to leaving the scene of traffic crashes. In June of 2015, Connie, her husband Jim, and her stepson Grayson were struck by a drug impaired driver in Winter Park, Florida, where Connie sustained permanent injuries.

Rather than be silenced by this crash, Connie has forged ahead with her efforts to make a difference and save lives.