



## **Remember, Support, Act**

My name is Lorri Coey and I have been a cyclist since I could first balance on a bike. On June 4<sup>th</sup> of this year I was running errands on my bicycle and was hit by a car running a red light.

I'm just going to take a few minutes of your time to relate my experience to the theme of this year's World Remembrance Day: Remember, Support, Act

Here's what I remember about what landed me in the hospital for 19 days.

I was waiting at a red light to cross Springfield Avenue at Country Fair Drive. My light turned green, but I knew the driver waiting to turn left off of Springfield was likely to still take the turn on the red light. I highly suspected that the second car in line would as well. That's exactly what happened. I checked to make sure there weren't any more vehicles running the red light and started into the intersection. A few pedal strokes later a car came barreling through the intersection also turning left and I knew I was in trouble. That car was traveling fast and there was no way I could get out of the way.

The vehicle hit me and I hit the ground. Thank goodness I was wearing a helmet. Witnesses stopped to help as did the driver and the ambulance arrived shortly.

I had multiple abrasions, a broken knee cap, a broken shoulder, a compression fracture in my back, 6 broken ribs (3 of them in pieces) and a punctured lung. I was in the ER for hours while they inserted a chest tube to drain the fluid out of my lung and stitched me up in several places. Later that day they put two screws in my knee cap and 4 days later added two titanium plates to hold several ribs together.

I came home June 23 with my right arm in a sling, a back brace, my left leg in a brace and riding a wheelchair. I had so many medications that I needed a daily chart and multiple alarms set to keep all the different schedules. I wouldn't have been able to come home at all without the support of my partner and friends and family. Truly.

So let's talk about Support.

If you've ever been hospitalized, you know how much support is necessary after you're healthy enough to come home.

I have a new understanding of how serious non-life threatening injuries can be. I'm still in physical therapy to regain my flexibility and strength. It was months before I could shower standing up and on my own. Driving myself to multiple appointments each week didn't happen until the end of summer. I have nerve damage from the titanium plates and I'm yet to sleep through an entire night. I'm not yet back to work full time.

The support I've gotten from doctors, physical therapists, friends and family is 100% responsible for the progress I have made. I couldn't have done it without them.



I have health insurance but have taken a financial hit while I heal and gain the strength to get back to my upholstery business, but I can survive this. We all know not everyone has those luxuries and those folks need all the support we can give them.

And finally we come to Act.

One of the things that shocked me after my accident was a recurring reaction I got from acquaintances, friends and even my automobile insurance agent. Upon hearing that I had been hit by a car while on my bike, they said “What did you do?”

What did I do? As in what did I do wrong to cause the accident? Not a thing. Not one thing. But that is the automatic reaction from some folks (we know they’re not cyclists, right). Automatically they assume the cyclist was somehow at fault. And it’s a short hike from assigning blame to assuming cyclists don’t belong on the roads.

I even had one friend ask me where the accident took place and then proceed to tell me that it was a dangerous intersection and they would never ride their bike there. Every intersection, every road, every driveway can be dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians if drivers assume they are the only road users.

What did I do? I’ve thought about that question a lot and I know that until we can change that mindset, our streets will never be safe.

So instead of What did I do, I’m asking myself, What will I do? What will you do?

As for me, I’m going to continue to follow the rules of the road when I cycle and encourage every other cyclist I know to do the same. Perception is important and people notice when cyclists run stop signs and red lights.

I’m going to continue to support organizations that promote safe cycling and safe streets. I’m going to educate myself about possible legislative action and the Vision Zero initiative.

And finally, I’m going to find ways to offer support for those whose lives have been severely impacted by unsafe streets.

Thanks for listening and to everyone who made this event possible.

Stay safe out there.