

Richards Family Statement

My name is Brian Richards. I am the father of Sean Patrick Richards. This is Kristine Richards, Sean's mother.

Most people never get to live their dream. I was blessed because for almost 21 years I lived my dream of being a father in a complete and wonderful family. Unfortunately, that dream turned into a nightmare on a sunny summer day in Hinsdale because of the reckless actions of a few individuals.

We are, and always will be, completely heartbroken and devastated by Sean's killing. A large part of us was killed that day along with Sean. Even after 5 months, it is difficult for us to comprehend that Sean is dead. We have lived every day since July 17 and will live every day of the rest of our lives in intense pain and deep sadness.

Sean was a healthy teen with a tremendous future ahead of him. Sean was an altar boy and a Boy Scout and he embodied the principles of both of those roles. Sean spent the last full week of his life at Boy Scout camp. While there he earned a special merit badge for completing a one-mile open water swim. After returning from camp on Saturday, Sean served the 9 am Mass at St. Isaac Jogues on the last full day of his life.

Sean loved and was loved and the world lost a truly special person. What made Sean special was that he always found the best in others and never said anything bad about anyone else - ever. Sean was a friend to all. Sean had the unique ability to make those around him better people and at the same time make them feel better about themselves. He was sunshine, goodness and a positive influence on everyone around him.

He loved instinctively – with warmth, with energy, and with ease. Even at age 14, Sean was generous with hugs for family members. He would hug us often, openly and fully with two-armed full body squeezes. He was always sincere, earnest, humble and kind. Sean loved to smile, and his laugh was infectious.

One of Sean's good friends put it best when he told his mother, "Mom, I know that sometimes when someone dies, people make that person out to be greater than they really were. But everything people say about Sean is true. He was that good."

We have three objectives in pursuing this litigation:

- The truth
- Accountability
- Public Safety

Truth

There is a lot of misinformation out there with respect to how Sean was killed and who is responsible.

We have seen social media posts stating that there are three victims in this tragedy – the Contreras family, including Martin Contreras Jr., the Fullers and our family. That is wrong. There is one victim: Sean Patrick Richards, a 14 year-old boy who was innocently walking on the sidewalk to the library in his hometown of Hinsdale and was killed due to the reckless behavior of others. We would like to make it very clear – none of Martin Contreras Jr., his family nor any of the Fullers is a victim. They are directly responsible for the violent death of our child, Sean.

Based on the Hinsdale Police Department's thorough investigation of the incident, reviews of video from multiple angles and a review of the vehicle's black box, here is the truth:

- There was no vehicle malfunction – the Jeep did not lurch on its own - and the floor mats were not an issue. Sean's death was 100 percent caused by the direct actions of Martin Contreras Jr. and Fuller's.
- Contreras fully depressed the accelerator of the vehicle. The vehicle was moving at 35-40 miles per hour when it struck Sean and when it went through the Fontano's building.
- At no time did Contreras depress the brake pedal.
- Contreras did not turn the vehicle at any point in its journey even though standard practice is an immediate 90 degree turn to the left upon exiting the car wash.

Neither Contreras nor any other Fuller's employee attempted to assist Sean or Kristine. Kristine witnessed the entire event and was laying on top of our son, holding his lifeless body and trying to get help.

The incident was so violent and disturbing that there are complete strangers who are in therapy for having witnessed it.

We have subsequently learned that there have been multiple similar incidents at Fuller's in the past and Fuller's has taken no action to either warn the public about the risk or to protect the public from the car wash. Furthermore, knowing cars have dangerously gone over the sidewalk and into the street in the past, Fullers allowed a 16 year-old inexperienced driver to pull a vehicle out from the car wash bay.

Accountability

Martin Contreras Jr. killed Sean. His employer, Fuller's, put him in the position to do so.

No criminal charges have been brought against any of them for Sean's death. None of them have been held accountable for their inexcusable reckless behavior that directly caused Sean's death. Sean's death was preventable. Contreras and Fuller's failed to take reasonable precautions to prevent this foreseeable incident.

We believe that individuals and entities should be held responsible for their actions and want to hold Contreras and Fuller's accountable for killing our beautiful son.

Public Safety

After Sean was killed, Fuller's installed bollards to try to protect against a repeat of the incident that killed Sean. Why did it take our young son's death for them to take any action to protect the public, especially given their knowledge of prior incidents at this site? And even when they did install bollards, Fuller's did not do any work to determine whether the bollards would stop a car moving at over 35 miles per hour. The fact is that those bollards do not protect the public even to this day.

Fuller's car wash services hundreds of cars on many days, with porters jumping in and out of various makes and models of cars and driving against traffic on Lincoln Street. Given the prevalence of Jeeps and SUVs, which are very dangerous for anyone outside the vehicle, and the ability of all modern vehicles to accelerate so quickly and powerfully, we do not believe that it is safe for Hinsdale to have a car wash in an area of downtown Hinsdale that is very busy with pedestrians, bike riders, kids on scooters and families with strollers.

Further incidents, perhaps even further fatal incidents, are inevitable. If they will not do so on their own, Fuller's should be made to move the car wash to an area with less foot, bicycle, scooter and stroller traffic, such as Ogden Avenue.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Sean should be alive today. He should be finishing final exams, attending swim team practice and getting ready for Christmas with his family. Instead, he is dead because of the reckless actions of Martin Contreras Jr. and the Fullers.

We want the world to know the truth about how Sean was killed, we want the people responsible for Sean's death held accountable and we want to make sure that no other family has to go through the hell that we are living and will live for the rest of our lives.

God Bless Sean.

To learn more about Sean, please see his parents comments about 1 hour into: [July 25, 2023 - Mass of Christian Burial for Sean Patrick Richards \(10:00am Mass\) \(youtube.com\)](#)