



*Vanessa Montague*

Vanessa is a Christian woman who lives with her husband of 13 years, Scott, and her 7 year old child, Madison. She has been a speaker for MADD for almost 9 years and is grateful for every opportunity she's been given to tell others about Mandi's Story. Vanessa has written a book titled "Who Am I Now?" about Mandi's death and the changes it made in her life. She shares openly about her daughter's death in hopes to make a difference in the lives of others.

Vanessa Montague's daughter was killed in an accident 9 years ago when a drunk driver was behind the wheel. "I just kept telling God, 'No, not Mandi, not my baby.' I can't tell you what that feels like. It's like somebody punches you in the stomach and you can't breathe. You literally can't breathe," Vanessa said. Since the accident, she isn't the same person she was nine years ago.

Mandi Machen was 18 years old the night she went on a date to a party in the country. The boy who was the driver already had a deferred adjudication for a previous DUI. After drinking at the party, they were driving home on a narrow, dark, rural road. The driver lost control, flipping the car and crashing into a ditch. The driver walked away, leaving Mandi alone, upside down, trapped by the crushed dashboard and her seat belt. It was hours before anyone arrived at the scene and by then it was too late.

Vanessa said she hasn't quite forgiven the driver, but she chooses not to think about him. He served five years in prison for intoxicated manslaughter and is still on probation for failing to stop and render aid.

It's the sad story of a young artist, daughter, friend, and sister whose life ended all too early. Now Vanessa is speaking out to make sure her daughter didn't die in vain. "I just don't want anyone else to have to feel what I felt. I don't want other kids to have to die because it's preventable," she says.