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Good morning. I am here to talk to you students as well as faculty about an extremely important problem that we are faced with everyday, but first I would like to start with why I decided to share with all of you.

This past July, along with three other Verdian editors and our advisor, I traveled to Gettysburg to participate in a Jostens Yearbook workshop and trust me I know what all of you are thinking “oh no she is going to talk about boring yearbook camp”. But I promise that yes I may talk about yearbook camp it will only be for a very short while. Throughout our stay in Gettysburg we were asked to participate in different activities and classes. One activity that stood out in particular was the “yearbook swap”. Jostens asked that we bring with us one case of yearbooks to trade with other schools, and I thought to myself “what are we going to do with 15 yearbooks from schools that we had never heard of”. Although I thought this would have been a waste of perfectly good yearbooks I must thank Jostens for this “swap”. If it were not for this trade I would not be up here today talking to all of you.

After the swap was over Mr. Montesano, our advisor, asked each editor to take a couple of yearbooks back to their rooms and browse through to see what we liked and disliked. While browsing through random yearbooks I came across one that struck my curiosity. Within the last few pages I noticed a strange D.P.S. and in yearbook lingo that means, a double-page spread or two pages next to each other. Before I read any of the text my first thoughts were “oh maybe they are the two editors” or “maybe their parents bought pages in the yearbook and designed them together”. It wasn't until after I read the text that their real story became clear.

The pages contained two names, two pictures and four dates. The names and pictures were of two high school seniors that attended this school and the four dates consisted of their birth dates and the day they died. This came as a complete shock to me. I would have never thought that a yearbook would contain a memorial for students that had died within the school year and unfortunately I only remember a few details. They were two teenage boys who were best friends that died in November of their senior year because of a drunk driving accident.

I had to put the yearbook down for a few minutes to regroup and try to wrap my head around everything. All I could think about was, I am going to be a senior in two months and I don't know what I would do if anything like that happened to any of my friends or classmates. I could never imagine having to deal with the death of a classmate because of something that could have been prevented so easily.

That night was one of the most difficult nights I have had in a while. I was unable to sleep for most of it and the thoughts about these two boys were on my mind for the majority of the following day. The thoughts that went racing through my head were a mix of worry and fright. I was worried that something could happen to me on my drive back

to Buffalo or that something could've happened to anyone of my classmates that I had not been in contact with all summer. The thought of these possibilities scared and confused me. The thought that my graduating class could be minus one was overwhelming. I was scared that I would eventually have to face this type of crisis.

All night long the worst-case scenarios ran through my head and when I came up with all that I could think of I started placing faces. I tried to map out how I would react if it were someone I had any connection with. I was kept up many nights thinking about two boys that I had never known because of two pages in a random yearbook; I couldn't imagine what would happen to me if it were someone I knew.

As one of the editors of the yearbook this year I hope that I will never have to create a memorial of any type. I feel that our community is extremely lucky that we have not had to experience anything like this school has in recent memory. I am happy that our students and faculty have made wise decisions and I hope that everyone will continue in this fashion.

And this is the main reason for writing this meditation and presenting it to you this morning because even though we have not experienced this type of tragedy it can happen to us. I have a few statistics I would like to share and please keep in mind these are to scare you but inform.

On the New York State DMV website I found statistics of alcohol involved accidents for 2004.

Total: 5,277

Deaths: 185

Personal Injury to Driver: 5,043

Males:

16-17: total-101 deaths-5

18-20: total-559 deaths-32

Females:

16-17: total-45 deaths-1

18-20: total-183 deaths-5

I hope that after hearing what I have said this morning that it will leave an impact on all of you as it has me.

Thank you so much for your attention so early in the morning and I hope that everyone will make wise decisions in the future and please be safe.