

Spotlight on Non-Profits Tiff's Initiative: To Inform Families First

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By Jo Ann Glim, Flounder & President
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Little did Christine Olson know how the tragedy in her life would affect the lives of so many as she stood outside Manatee Memorial Hospital December 7, 2005 at 1:30 in the morning waiting for word about her 22-year-old daughter, Tiffany. She and her boyfriend had been riding to St. Petersburg on a motorcycle earlier that evening.

All Olson knew through sketchy phone calls from her son was there had been an accident. Tiffany was possibly involved.



The driver of the car that killed them had rolled through a stop sign into the path of the oncoming motorcycle. Tiffany was thrown 90' and died on impact. Her boyfriend lived for a short time after. However, it took 6 ½ hours for both family notifications.

"All I could think of is, this is unacceptable.



Tiffany Olson &
Dustin Wilder

our country is 5 hours if the family lives locally and possibly 2-3 days if they are out-of-state. "When tragedy strikes, family and loved ones need to know. There was nothing I could have done for my child but there may have been time for final good-byes for the other family."

The only document Tiffany carried that evening was her Florida driver's license. Olson began to investigate the feasibility of emergency contact information imbedded in it. A grass roots campaign began... petitions were signed and presented to Florida State Representative (68) Bill Galvano's office.

Within 10 months, Tiff's Initiative: To Inform Families First was in place statewide through the Department of Motor Vehicles thanks to Representative Galvano, DMV, and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). On October 3, 2006 Olson was the first to have her information placed into the DAVID system, (a secure site accessed only through law enforcement). It took less than a minute to enter 2 contact names and up to 6 phone numbers. The information appeared in the system within seconds. In the first month 500,000 Floridians entered their contact information.

Olson's web site, ToInformFamiliesFirst.com boldly states: Our mission is to improve notification of loved ones by law enforcement. "At first, the idea met with resistance from law enforcement," Olson said recently, "but once the officers realized that this was a process to accelerate the family notification process, it has had

No parent should have to go through this," said Olson. Her research from the past 1 ½ years indicates the average notification time across

overwhelming support." This new program has been accessed 28,000 times within the first 6 months. That averages out to over 1,000 requests per week.

The issue now is getting the word out to all Floridians, seasonal and year-round. Our state has 15 million residents.

Imagine, a loved one being unable to respond from a physical ailment or an accident! Contacting a family member as quickly as possible is critical, especially if medical information needs to be relayed to a hospital in that first "golden" hour.

Tiff's Initiative needs the help of the business community to bring the program to the attention of employees, clients, offices, and vendors within the state. Think of ways you might help to sign up our older population... children... families... workforce.

Do you have a newsletter? Would you include the web site on your billing statements? Would you ask everyone to eMail family and friends and spread the word? Would you display a 4" x 8 ½" information flyer in your place of business? Would you dedicate a time and place for those who do not have access to a computer to be able to sign up?

Anyone with a valid Florida driver's license or a Florida ID card (which is now issued to anyone 5 years of age and older), may register on-line by visiting:

ToInformFamiliesFirst.com

Click on the little ambulance icon and it will take you directly to the DMV web site sign-up page. If you have any questions, comments or ideas, please, eMail ChristinesJourney@yahoo.com.

This program is gaining national attention and has already gained the support of representatives in several other states. In August, Olson was presented an international award through the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for this innovative, voluntary idea that protects us all.

Writer's Note: Tiff's Initiative is an autonomous program supported through the Children's Memorial and Gardens, Inc.



Representative
Bill Galvano