



## SSF dad mistakenly runs over toddler

### Police won't charge father in weekend's 'tragic accident'

By Michael Manekin, STAFF WRITER Inside Bay Area  
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SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO — A family gathering on a pleasant Sunday afternoon ended in tragedy when a 3-year old girl was struck by her father's SUV as he backed out of the driveway, police said.

The toddler, identified as Katelyn Yu by the San Mateo County Coroner's Office, was struck at about 6:45 p.m. and died later at San Francisco General Hospital.

"The family is beside themselves," said South San Francisco Police Cpl. Bruce McPhillips.

McPhillips waited at the hospital three hours Sunday evening to try to interview the child's parents, but ultimately left with second- and third-hand accounts of what occurred from the extended family.

"Everyone was really distraught," said McPhillips. "It was like the Wailing Wall."

The child's mother had to be sedated and police were still unable to contact parents Monday to complete the investigation, police said.

Police will not file charges in the incident, McPhillips said, because "there was no negligence, nothing, it was an accident — it's a tragic accident."

For neighbor Helen Huang, the shock of what happened in the 3200 block of Julie Lane lingered into Monday afternoon as she recalled the events of Sunday evening: Her daughter was feeding the cat when she heard a scream. Moments later, Wong's son called her outside, where three police cars and a fire truck were crowding the narrow street lined by single-family homes.

"I didn't see any body, any blood, anything," said Huang. "I was afraid to see."

McPhillips said the accident occurred as the family gathering in little Katelyn's home was about to break up.

"When there are a lot of people, it's easy to lose track of the smallest of the people," he said. "Unfortunately, that's what happened."

For Janette Fennell, of Kids and Cars, a nonprofit devoted to improving safety around children and motor vehicles, "it fits the mold perfectly: At a large family gathering, everyone thinks that someone else thinks that someone else is watching the baby."

Some 50 children in the United States are backed over by vehicles every week, Fennell said, "and in at least 70 percent of these cases, it's a direct family member." Of the 50, an average of 48 are treated in hospital emergency rooms, and two die, according to Fennell.

"You had your accident Sunday in South San Francisco, but at the same time, on Saturday, a child in Rochester, N.Y. and a child in Fort Pierce, Fla. were backed over and killed," Fennell said. "It just keeps happening and happening and happening."

One of the problems, according to Fennell, is the "blind zone" behind many vehicles. The driver of a typical full-size SUV, such as the one which police say backed into Katelyn, cannot see some 20 to 40 feet behind the vehicle, Fennell said.

Currently, auto manufacturers are not required to create vehicles to adhere to a standard rear visibility, but Kids and Cars is promoting a safety bill, which would change the status quo, Fennell said.

For the time being, there are several measures which parents can take, such as ensuring that children are supervised at all times and even installing rear sensor cameras so that drivers can eliminate the blind zones.

But for children like Katelyn, it's already too late.

What's more, these kinds of accidents often fray family ties and can often result in divorce, Fennell said.

"Imagine you have a perfectly healthy, happy, beautiful 3-year-old child that doesn't have a care in the world — and in the one second all of that is taken away from you," she said. "This happened right in front of their eyes. And then try living with the guilt that you're the one who was behind the wheel."

"We're supposed to bury our parents, our parents are not supposed to bury us. Now add to that, it's a family member who was behind the wheel — I think that's off the radar screen as far as the tragedy that's involved."