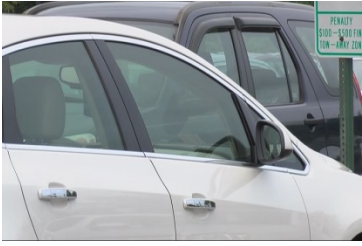


Pastor speaks on ten-year anniversary of daughter's hot car death

Posted: Aug 06, 2014 8:44 AM CDT Updated: 5:22 PM CDT By Heather Sullivan - [bio](#) | [email](#)



MECHANICSVILLE, VA (WWBT) - It was ten years ago this week that a 3-year-old girl died after being accidentally left in a hot car for several hours at a Mechanicsville church. Her father, a former church pastor, is speaking out for the first time, only to NBC12, to try to prevent more children from dying in hot cars. And now a state delegate is proposing a bill to fight the problem, too.

It's been a long road to recovery for former Cool Spring Baptist Church recreation minister Doug Grote.

"I was living in shame," Grote told us. "No one was putting that on me, but that's where I was living."

He accidentally left his 3-year-old daughter Kristen in the car on a hot day while he went in to work and she died.

"I was living as an event had defined me. So there are times during the years when you have a realization and you have a moment where you correct yourself and healing takes place," he said.

On the ten year anniversary, Grote returned to Cool Spring Baptist Church to thank the congregation for the support they showed him and his family throughout the ordeal.

"Because of what you did, my family and I are standing today," he said to a full auditorium.

About 40 children die in hot cars every year, according to the advocacy group KidsandCars.org. After hearing about so many cases in the news, Delegate Chris Peace (R - Mechanicsville) just proposed a bill to help stop it.

"It may be that one person that sees that child helpless that could really save a life," said Peace.

Peace's bill would relieve a passerby from liability for damaging someone's car if they break in to rescue the child. If time appears to be of the essence, they could not be sued for damaging the car. Peace hopes it will encourage witnesses to get involved without fear of a lawsuit.

"You'd actually be breaking into someone's vehicle to save a child, but that's the right thing to do," explained Peace.

The state of Tennessee just instituted a similar law in July and some other states are considering it, too.

Grote believes it would be a helpful measure, recalling that investigators discovered someone had seen his daughter in the car but did not report it.

Grote recently began working with [KidsandCars.org](#), which is trying to collect 100,000 signatures on an [online petition](#), calling for funding for technology that could help reduce these incidents.

"We have a switch to make sure the airbag doesn't come on if someone is underweight in the front seat or no one's there. Why can't we have something to remind us that there might be something in the back seat?" said Grote.

Doug and Dianna Grote moved to South Carolina with their two sons several years ago. Grote hopes telling his story reminds parents to always, as KidsandCars.org suggests, look before they lock.

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