

Organization demonstrates the danger of vehicle blind spots

The death of a KC toddler last week illustrates how hard it is to see someone behind your vehicle.



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At a stretch of painted asphalt in a parking lot near the [Old Navy](#) store near 119th Street and Metcalf Avenue in Overland Park, people in the driver's seat of a parked car Saturday learned that the blind spots they first estimated to be 6 to 8 feet in fact approached 20 feet or more. "Some people don't even know these zones exist," said Amber Rollins, director of [KidsAndCars.org](#).

Nearly 100 shoppers took a moment Saturday in Overland Park to estimate their cars' blind zones. Almost always, those zones were much bigger than imagined.

"Some people don't even know these zones exist," said Amber Rollins, director of [KidsAndCars.org](#), a national [nonprofit](#) child safety organization based in Kansas City.

The shoppers stopped at a stretch of painted asphalt in a parking lot near the Old Navy store near 119th Street and Metcalf Avenue. A handful of shoppers, Rollins said, climbed into the driver's seat of a parked car and routinely were surprised to realize that the blind spots they first estimated to be 6 to 8 feet in fact approached 20 feet or more.

"This is just to demonstrate that a child can be behind you and literally you cannot see them," Rollins said.

Saturday's demonstration had been scheduled before the tragedy of a backover death last week.

Benjamin Kyle Thompson of Kansas City, who would have been 3 years old in November, died when he was struck while his father was backing up this truck. Investigators, who have called the death accidental, said the toddler's dad checked his rearview mirrors before backing up but didn't see Benjamin running toward a trampoline in the front yard.

Benjamin's devastated parents have donated his organs. As of Thursday, four children have benefited from the organ donations, receiving his corneas and two heart valves, according to The Associated Press.

Benjamin was the 52nd child to die this year by being backed over, Rollins said.

Many of those shoppers who stopped Saturday were recent parents or expectant parents, Rollins added. Almost all of them had heard about the tragedy.

"Nobody really understands or appreciates how large the blind zone is behind their vehicle," said Janette Fennell, formerly of Leawood, who is founder and president of [KidsAndCars.org](#).

"We can turn our heads and adjust our mirrors, but often we cannot see that child."

[KidsAndCars.org](#) long had advocated the passage of a children's transportation safety act, which was signed by President George W. Bush in 2008. That act requires the federal government to set rear visibility standards for vehicles. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will finalize a rule by the end of this year that will require rear [backup cameras](#) on vehicles by 2014, according to [KidsAndCars.org](#).

An average of about 50 U.S. children a week are backed over by [vehicles](#), according to the organization. In more than 70 percent of these incidents, a parent or close friend is behind the wheel.

For more information, go to www.kidsandcars.org.

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<http://www.kansascity.com/2012/09/15/3817036/demonstration-shows-the-danger.html>