

When the Phone Rings Late at Night

My son Johnny was in a serious accident Saturday night, coming back to Belleville from New Athens. How often I have worried about those late-night car rides of his, taking his girlfriend home on those country roads.

It wasn't his driving I was worried about, I'd try to explain to him as he muttered, frustrated and annoyed that I might be criticizing his skills and maturity. But mothers learn to let go of their college teenagers, and so I'd say a little prayer every time he left and wait for his key to turn in the front door on his return.

Saturday I got a phone call instead ... 1 a.m., not his number calling my cell ... but his voice.

"I'm OK mom, a guy tried to pass me and there wasn't room, so I slammed on the brakes and spun off into a field ... that guy hit another car almost head-on ... they took them to the hospital."

Two hours later, in the aftermath of ambulances and police reports, I heard his key in the front door and jumped up to hug him. I realized ... this teenager, who turns 20 on Thursday, is a man ... a man who just handled a major life challenge, without me.

Sunday I got a phone call from a witness who had been a few cars back and had called 911. It was her cell that Johnny had used to call me after his went dead. She wanted me to know how responsible, mature and helpful he had been at the accident scene ... that I would have been proud of his behavior ... one mother to another. I hung up with tears in my eyes.

Do our children ever really know how much we love them? Yes, I was proud, and so overwhelmingly grateful to be able to hug my son and wish him a happy 20th birthday!

Claudia Perry
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