

## Ashley Smith's Victims Impact Statement written 12/15/25

My name is Ashley Smith and I was the driver of the silver 2017 Ford Edge that was involved in the head on collision that occurred shortly after 4pm on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025.

July 3<sup>rd</sup> was like any other day, except it was the day before the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. My family and friends were ready to celebrate at the lake, but instead I watched the fireworks from the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of Wesley Medical Center in Wichita, KS.

July 3<sup>rd</sup> changed my life forever. I have always been very active and always on the go. I now struggle to do anything that I used to do. I have traveled US77 almost every day for the last 5 years and that was nothing new.. I had worked for Stillwater Medical since 2016 and I commuted for work from Ponca City to Stillwater on 177 for several years. I have witnessed many accidents, but I never expected to be in one myself and not one that was horrific as this one.

I struggle everyday with anxiety over this accident and every time that I have stepped foot into a vehicle, whoever is driving has gotten to experience this firsthand. I have many fears that I am overcoming every single day. I have surpassed the fear of driving again and I got into a vehicle and drove for the first time on December 9, 2025. It had been 6 months.

I played soccer beginning when I was just 3 years old and I played on a traveling team up to my teenage years, so my legs have always been very strong. The injuries that I sustained to my legs in this accident are unimaginable, but I do believe it could have been a lot worse.

I broke both of my legs on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. My left leg, I broke my tibial plateau, fibula, femur and my left hip I had a femoral neck break. My right leg, I broke my tibia and fibula(also had bone loss. This was an open fracture and paramedics had a cup of my bones that they got off of the floorboard of my car & they delivered this to the ER with me). My right leg also sustained a femur break. This was all they knew once they got me into the trauma bay as a level 1 trauma victim and took X-rays, ultrasounds, full body CT's. I remember having trouble breathing and my blood pressure was low. Once they got my lab results back they knew I was bleeding and had lost quite a bit of blood. They ended up giving me 3 units of blood overall.

My first surgery was July 3<sup>rd</sup> around 7pm. My trauma/orthopedic team took me in for emergency surgery to stabilize all of my breaks and to clean and debride my open fracture and the large wound I had on my right leg. This was all they could do at this time because I was very unstable. They did not know if I would survive or get to keep my right lower leg. When I woke up, it was after midnight (now July 4<sup>th</sup>) and I was in the ICU at Wesley Medical Center. Several of my family members were there and were able to come in and see me for a short time. I had a 15lb weight pulling on my left leg from below my knee to keep everything together. My right lower leg had an external fixator and a wound vac and my upper leg had an external fixator for my



femur. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, I had my second surgery on my left leg. I had a rod placed in my femur and 4 screws in my femoral neck (hip). They repositioned my left tibia.

On July 7<sup>th</sup> I had my 3<sup>rd</sup> surgery to reposition my upper right femur with an internal fixation of a rod and screws.

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, I had my 4<sup>th</sup> surgery to reposition my left tibia and they placed a plate and screws at this time.

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, I had my 5<sup>th</sup> surgery which was very complex. They had to reposition my right tibia/fibula with internal fixation. I have two rods from my knee down to my ankle in my right tibia and fibula with screws to hold everything together.

During the process of all of these surgeries, I also had noticed significant hearing loss and blood drainage from my right ear. They took me in for a head CT specifically to look at the temporal lobe and noticed that I also had a fracture there. Thankfully, nothing needed to be done for this and it has healed on its own and my hearing has come back.

The pain from all of these fractures and surgeries was more than I could ever imagine and still today, I am struggling with pain and swelling. My surgeon has told me that I will have pain for the rest of my life and my swelling and full recovery could take a couple of years.

My legs and left hip are full of hardware and this hardware will stay in forever.

On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, I was transferred to Wesley Inpatient Rehab for 2 weeks of physical therapy and occupational therapy to learn to navigate life and daily living in wheelchair since I would be bilateral non weight bearing for 3 months. This was so hard.. emotionally and physically. Everyday was 3 hours of rehab and I learned how to use a slideboard to transfer from my bed to a wheelchair and a bedside commode. We worked on range of motion and strengthening of my legs... I could not even lift my legs on my own at the beginning, my physical therapist had to help me do everything. I would not be where I am today if it wasn't for them giving me the strength they did. They saw me during all of the hard times and helped me push through. I was the youngest one there, being 29 years old and I was stuck in a wheelchair while mostly everyone else was walking with a walker. This was hard to accept, but I was determined to get back on my feet.

I was discharged to home on August 6<sup>th</sup>, and it was my first time to ride in a vehicle again. I was established to receive physical therapy and home health at home. My family had to help me with everything at first, but on August 25<sup>th</sup>, I was able to get myself up and around for the day and go to the restroom on my own, although still in a wheelchair full-time.

I had been employed with Stillwater Medical working at the clinic in Ponca City prior to this accident. I was placed on FMLA benefits, but unfortunately FMLA is only 12 weeks, so on October 7<sup>th</sup>, I was let go from my job since I was unable to return to work. I was denied unemployment benefits because of my condition at this time which was still in a wheelchair. I



lost my job, lost my car, lost trust and lost my independence. This next year will be devoted to getting my life back and trying to get back on track financially. I'm trying to recover from major injuries, but I can't help but worry about finances either. My medical bills are astronomical and at this time, I am not sure what I will owe altogether or how I will pay it.. Just my hospital EOB billed over 1 million dollars alone. How can you ever prepare for a loss like this?

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, I stood up for the first time with the help of my Dad and my physical therapist. On October 17<sup>th</sup>, I took 4 steps with a walker for the first time in 3.5 months!

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, I walked 15-20 steps with a walker.

This increased weekly and I worked so hard for this and pushed through the pain.

I truly had to learn to walk again and that is no understatement.

I am now able to walk with a cane through the day and I am working hard to increase my strength everyday.

I will not let anything stop me.

No amount of time changes anything or brings back what anybody has lost during this time.

I believe there is a reason for everything and I am trying to find the reason I had to experience this.

I am so thankful to be here today and doing as well as I can be. I just hope and pray that my words can be felt in the hearts of many people and that everyone thinks and pays attention while on the roads.

Thank you, - Ashley Smith 12/15/25 1111