

Memorializing Traffic Crash Victims

Roadside Memorials

- In recent years, there has been an increase in roadside memorials placed by individuals near the scenes of fatal traffic crashes.
 - Typical memorials include flowers, wreaths, crosses, balloons, teddy bears, photographs, candles or personal affects.
- While there is no law specifically addressing roadside memorials, federal and state laws prohibit placement of anything on state property along state roads – roadsides, medians or in utility poles – except highway related signs and devices (mile markers, guard rail, etc...).
- Stopping along many highways is unsafe for those placing memorials and is prohibited by law unless in the case of an emergency on interstates and controlled-access highways.
- Roadside memorials placed in SHA right-of-way present potential problems for spring and summer mowing operations as the memorials must be moved or removed. In some instances, a memorial may not be noticed and could become entangled in the blades of the mower and become a projectile into the roadway or potentially injuring drivers, passengers or workers.
- SHA must comply with the law and has an obligation to motorists to keep roads safe, which includes removing distractions and illegal items from State right-of-way.
- When doing so, crews keep any intact memorials at the nearest shop to be reclaimed within two weeks. If the owners of the memorials are known, SHA tries to contact them.
- Other memorial options:

Adopt-a-Highway (AAH) program:

- The Adopt-A-Highway Program was created in 1989 to allow for volunteer participation in roadside litter removal along designated roads.
- Family members could adopt a section of road to memorialize a loved one. All AAH participants are provided training, safety vests and supplies to safely keep the roadside litter-free. Groups are recognized with a sign. In some cases, families and friends will note the loved one for whom they have adopted a stretch of road on the sign.

Partnership Plantings:

- SHA develops partnerships with local governments, community organizations and garden clubs for the purpose of beautifying highways and improving the environment.
- Community gateway plantings, reforestation plantings, streetscapes and highway beautification plantings are examples of the types of projects that have been completed within the Partnership Planting Program. In some cases, the plantings are done in honor of someone and can be noted with a sign.

Living Memorial for Traffic Crash Victims

- More than 600 people die on Maryland roads each year. The tragic, sudden loss of loved ones impacts thousands of people – families, friends, co-workers, schools and communities.
- The State Highway Administration is proposing a living memorial for traffic crash victims. SHA will plant a grove of trees to memorialize the approximately 600 people killed in crashes each year.
- Families and friends of victims will have a safe haven to honor their loved ones. Each year, a dedication ceremony will be held for the previous year's victims.
- The memorial groves will be similar to other memorials for groups of people who lost their lives in different locations. Similar memorials are located in Maryland along:
 - MD 450 at the Scenic Overlook in Anne Arundel County for World War II veterans
 - South Seton Drive in Emmitsburg on the campus of the National Fire Academy for Fallen Firefighters
 - I-68 at the Sideling Hill Welcome Center in Allegany County for Prisoners of War (POW's)
 - MD 70 (Rowe Boulevard) Maryland Firefighters memorial
 - Korean War Memorial, Canton, Baltimore
 - Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the Hanover Street Bridge, Baltimore

Research

- SHA researched possible programs to safely memorialize victims of traffic crashes in Maryland. Some states have programs, often funded by private parties that standardize roadside memorials to comply with safety regulations (break-away posts, legibility, markers, etc...).
- Funding to develop and properly implement a new program to manage fabrication, contact with families and placement is not currently available. With more than 600 fatalities each year, the resources needed for a program are significant. Additionally, space is limited in some areas.
- Federal law prohibits the placement of roadside memorials or any other property in SHA right-of-way. Specifically, it is: (23 CFR section 710.403(a): The STD (State Transportation Department) must assure that all real property within the boundaries of a federally aided facility is devoted exclusively to the purposes of that facility and is preserved free of all other public or private alternative uses, unless such alternative uses are permitted by Federal regulation or the FHWA. The only exceptions in the federal regulations are at rest areas where there is an informational kiosk, for advertising signage on bus shelters, and for official directional signs.

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Resources

MADD National Victim Services Hotline

24 Hour Hotline: 877-MADD-HELP

Services: crisis counseling, referral service; support groups for victims of impaired driving

Address: <http://www.madd.org> (to find a local chapter)

SADD National

(Students Against Destructive Decisions *formerly Students Against Drunk Driving*)

Toll-free: 1-877-SADD-INC (normal business hours)

Services: informational site to assist teens/young adults make better choices

National Address: 255 Main Street, Marlborough, MA 01752

<http://www.sadd.org> (to find a local chapter)

The Governor's Office of Crime and Prevention Victims of Crime Division

Toll Free: 877-687-2828

Services: referral services, support groups, technical assistance, advocacy for victim rights

Address: 300 E. Joppa Road, Suite 1105, Baltimore, MD 21286-3016

<http://www.goccp.org>

Bureau of Mental Health/Core Service Agency

Hotline Number: 410-887-2731 (Monday–Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm)

Services: crisis mental health services

Address: 6401 York Road, Baltimore, MD 21212

<http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov>

Compassionate Friends

24 Hour Hotline: 410-243-7377

Services: support group for those who have lost children.

Address: P.O. Box 625, Brooklandville, MD 210022

<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

Grassroots Crisis Intervention

24 Hour Hotline: 410-531-6677, 800-422-0009

Services: Crisis counseling and youth crisis intervention.

Address: 6700 Freetown Road, Columbia, MD 21044

<http://grassrootscrisis.org>

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene /MAPS-MD

24 Hour Hotline: 800-888-1965

Services: counseling referral service

<http://www.maps-md.com>

Maryland State's Attorneys' Association

Hotline: 410-203-9881/ toll-free 888-743-0023 (during normal business hours)

Services: The State's Attorney's office for each county in Maryland and Baltimore City has a victim/witness assistance coordinator to answer questions and help citizens through the court process. The coordinator provides information about your case, assistance in applying for criminal injury compensation or referrals to community victim service programs.

Address: varies

www.mdsaa.org

Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Hotline: 877-842-8461

Services: Services include criminal justice education, court accompaniment, therapeutic counseling, support groups, community education, prevention education, legal information and assistance, direct legal representation, policy advocacy, technical assistance for allied professionals and criminal justice agencies, and faith-based referrals.

Main Office Address: 1001 Prince George's Blvd, Suite 750, Upper Marlboro, Md 20774
301-952-0063

Baltimore Office Address: 218 E. Lexington Street, Suite 401, Baltimore, md 21202
410-234-9885

www.mdcrimevictims.org