



Owen Brezitski, 8, was an 'in-the-moment' kid and 'joy to be around'

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SARA GANIM, The Patriot-News

By

When Owen Cole Brezitski wanted to play tabletop football on Thursday, his dad told him to be patient. They'd have more time tomorrow.

The polite, well-mannered 8-year-old didn't sulk.

He packed up his games and his portable Nintendo into a camera bag, swung it over his shoulder and went with his family to watch his two older sisters sing in a concert at Bishop McDevitt High School.

"We didn't get to play it," said Mark Brezitski, his father, staring down at a school picture of the blond-haired second-grader.

As the Lower Paxton Twp. family was leaving the concert just after 8 p.m., crossing Market Street to get to where they parked, police said a 16-year-old who was driving home from a study session ran over Owen with her car.



Sara Ganim, The Patriot-News

The 2200 block of Market Street, Harrisburg, where police say an 8-year-old boy was fatally hit while crossing the street around 8 p.m. Thursday, March 17, 2011.

At the time of the accident the family — Mom, Grandma, sisters and Owen — were in one of the several designated crosswalks on Market Street, police said. They were walking together, among several others leaving the school at the same time.

"I can still hear it," said the Owen's sister, Makenna, 14. "Someone said the car isn't stopping, and I started flagging them down, waving my flute and my arms, but they didn't stop."

Owen — who had just offered to help buy Shamrock Shakes from McDonald's with a dollar his grandpap slipped him for good behavior — was pronounced dead at Harrisburg Hospital.

"I saw it happening," said his mom, Karen Brezitski. "I knew right away. It was just horrific."

This was supposed to be a happy week for the Brezitski family. Owen's aunt and brand new baby cousin were on their way up from North Carolina to baptize the newborn at the family church Sunday.

Next Friday, Makenna will be confirmed in the Roman Catholic faith.

"Now we have to have a funeral," said Mark Brezitski, squeezing his eyes and wiping the tears.

Harrisburg police haven't commented on whether speed played a role in the crash and have not released the name of the driver. They only said that the girl and her family were cooperating with police, and that the teen was headed to her suburban Harrisburg home after a study session downtown.

High speed has long been a concern in front of Bishop McDevitt.

Scott Shepler said he's lived in the 2200 block for 25 years and has had three of his cars totaled by inattentive drivers when they were parked.

But nothing as bad as this. His wife drove the Brezitski family to the hospital after the crash.

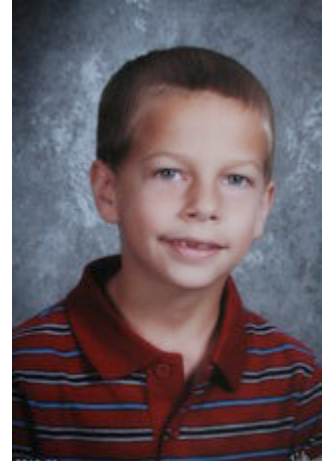
"I hate to say it, but I'm somewhat surprised that it doesn't happen more often, given the speeds and the behavior of drivers," he said. "It's a major thoroughfare, and it's a free-for-all."

Harrisburg police said they routinely monitor that street.

Still, the speeds worry Sister Mary Anne Bednar, principal of Bishop McDevitt, which is set to move to a new building in Lower Paxton Twp. in 2012.

"It's scary. They drive too fast up and down," she said.

The decision to move was made because of the age of the current facilities, a lack of parking and the



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Submitted photo

Owen Brezitski

surrounding neighborhood.

But that move won't happen before Makenna starts there in the fall as a freshman.

Her little brother was full of energy. Right before he died, he'd tried on his baseball cleats and uniform pants.

Owen's team held its first practice Friday without him.

"He wanted to try pitching," his dad said. The second-grader at Holy Name of Jesus also played soccer and loved Legos and art.

He was a miniature man, who surprised his parents with maturity beyond his years. But he was also an "in-the-moment" kid who made the most of his short life.

Owen didn't whine about waiting two months to spend the last of his January birthday money on a Ninjago Lego set, his family said. He barely got to play with it.

"He was just a joy to be around," said his grandmother, Catherine Faiola. "Seldom did we have to reprimand him for anything."

Makenna and 11-year-old sister Kyla want to send some of his silliest moments, captured on tape, to "America's Funniest Home Videos."

"He always wanted to be the bigger person," said his mom, Karen. "Giving his spot up for someone else. He wanted to do the right thing."

Owen had been praying all week that a sick friend with an approaching birthday would get better in time to celebrate with his friends at school.

"It's such a nice day," Karen said Friday. "He would have loved this day. ... That'll be the only thing that gets us through this, knowing he went straight to heaven."

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