

College student killed in collision

Inattentive driver, suspected of DUI, nearly kills four other young men

In March 2016, Samuel Ruiz was a happy 19-year-old boy. He had just started college courses in south Florida, and was working at a grocery store to help support his family. One evening Sam and some of his friends from high school got together to hang out and catch up with each other. When it was time to go home, the friends – traveling in two vehicles – started north on the Sawgrass Expressway. Shortly after starting the trip home, the lead vehicle had a flat tire and both vehicles pulled off to the side of the road. Sam, riding in the second vehicle, knew a lot about cars. He helped change the flat tire to the spare tire, and the young men resumed their trip north. They were driving slowly, one behind the other, in the outside lane because of the use of the spare tire on the lead car. The highway was well lit and there was little traffic.



Sam Ruiz;
below: the defendant's damaged vehicle.

Just as they resumed their drive home, a black Cadillac traveling at an extremely high speed, slammed into the back of the second car. The impact was so forceful that it sent the vehicle spinning into the guardrail where it burst into flames. As a result of the collision, Sam was thrown from the car and died instantly. The other four boys in the car were trapped in the burning vehicle and barely conscious. Fortunately, one of the young men in the first car raced back to the second car and began pulling his friends out of the wreckage. His heroic actions undoubtedly saved their lives. Unfortunately, there was nothing that could have been done to save Sam.

The police officers called to the scene of the accident suspected that the driver of the Cadillac was impaired by alcohol. An investigation of the accident is pending. A friend of Sam's family encouraged them to contact SDSBS attorney **Andrea Robinson** for assistance in understanding the legal consequences involving the potential of driving under the influence and manslaughter charges. Ms. Robinson was formerly the deputy chief of the Palm Beach County Court in charge of overseeing DUI prosecutions. She represented Sam's family in their time of need, and obtained a sizable settlement from multiple insurance policies. Sam's family is determined to use the proceeds for causes about which Sam was passionate. ♦

