SAVED BY THE BELT

As a single mother, I have been blessed. I have a friendly, intelligent, good-looking son who has given me much pleasure over the years. In the months leading up to Alan's 16th birthday, there was a lot of excitement and commotion about his upcoming rite of passage – the driver's license.

About a month before his birthday, there was an assembly about seat-belt safety presented at his high school. One of the presenters in this program, Kathy Hezlep, had lost her son in a horrendous car crash the year before. When Kathy was first asked to speak at this assembly, she was reluctant. Her son's death had been extremely difficult for her. She often felt traumatized, helpless and discouraged, and she wasn't sure how she could make a difference by speaking with this group.

But the school had convinced her to talk to the students. Kathy spoke about how hard it had been since the loss of her son. There were days when it was an effort just to get out of bed. She spoke directly from her heart and my son took her words straight into his heart. I remember Alan coming home that day and the two of us discussing the crash. We thought it was interesting that she was a single mother and that her son, Ryan, was her only child.

Well, the big day finally arrived. The state of Florida, in its infinite wisdom, granted my "child" a license to take a loaded weapon and drive it! At the time, I thought the worst feeling I could possibly experience was watching my only child drive off *alone* in my car. I was wrong.

Alan had his license exactly one week when the call that is every parent's worst nightmare came. The police told me my son had been driving down a curving road, lost control of the car and, because he was an inexperienced driver, didn't know how to come out of the spin. He managed to miss a lake and a traffic sign that were in his path, but went full force into a light pole. Thank God he wasn't going faster, because if he had struck the pole any harder, he and his two passengers could have been electrocuted.

When I was taken to the scene of the accident and saw the wrecked car, I felt physically sick, nauseated. I couldn't believe three individuals had walked away from that car alive. I thought, "*My son must have a guardian angel.*" I was right.

When I got to the hospital, I conversed with Alan about the accident. He told me that none of the young people had been wearing their seat belts when he started the car. But Kathy Hezlep's words, spoken so sincerely and eloquently about her terrible loss, had impressed him so deeply that he insisted that everyone put on their shoulder and lap belts before he would pull off. That is what saved their lives.

My family is one of the fortunate ones. We still have what we consider most precious – each other. I have unending admiration, respect and love for Kathy Hezlep. She is not a celebrity but an everyday person; a mother who, despite her immeasurable loss, had the courage to speak out and make a difference that saved three lives. To me, Kathy is a superstar.

Adapted from an article by Randee Goldsmith
Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul

Read each question carefully. Provide the **BEST** answer.

1. Who is the narrator?

a. Alan
b. Kathy
c. Alan's mother
d. Ryan

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2. How old was Alan when he met Kathy Hezlep?
a. 16
b. 15
c. 14
d. 13

3. What did Alan's mother and Kathy Hezlep have in common?
a. They were both single mothers with one son.
b. Both of them were unemployed.
c. They both worked at Alan's school.
d. Both women lost their sons in a car crash.

4. What was the effect of Alan being an inexperienced driver?
a. He did not follow the traffic laws.
b. He did not know how to come out of a spin.
c. He failed to wear his seatbelt.
d. He drove fast and recklessly.

5. Quote a **COMPLETE** sentence from paragraph **FIVE** that indicates the car accident could have been a fatal one.

_____

_____

6. Using the numbers **1-5,** place the events in the order in which they occur in the passage.
_____ The narrator visits Alan at the hospital.
_____ Kathy speaks to the students about seat belt safety.
_____ The narrator visits the scene of the car crash.
_____ Alan gets his driver's license.
_____ The narrator receives a call about Alan's car accident.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

7. Because Alan is a responsible driver he:
a. drove extremely slow.
b. read all of the road signs.
c. did not drive with passengers.
d. refused to pull off until his passengers were wearing their seat belts.

8. Find a word in the passage that means the same or nearly the same as each of the following.
a._____ dreadful; frightful, horrific (paragraph 2)
b._____ endless, great, immense (paragraph 8)
c._____ unwilling, resistant, hesitant (paragraph 2)

9. Why is the car compared to a loaded weapon?
a. When driven recklessly it can be deadly.
b. People use cars as weapons to attack others.
c. A car is powerful when it is driven cautiously.
d. Many drivers carry unlicensed weapons.

LIVEWORKSHEETS