

**BY Wilbur B. Scott**

## “AMANDA”

I have told this story before about a little girl whose name is Amanda, but I cannot help but feel that it is of such value that it needs to be repeated from time to time. While visiting family and friends in Northern Illinois several years ago I became aware of a boating tragedy on an area lake. Nine year old Amanda M. Backes of Machesney Park, Illinois, was struck and killed by a personal watercraft while she was being towed behind the family boat. I mention this unfortunate accident obviously to point out the need for caution while engaged in this type of water activity as well as to remind all vessel operators of the need to be ever watchful of the boating traffic in their area of operation. Our waterways are becoming more crowded each day as the ownership of boats and other watercraft is on the increase throughout our nation. Many of these vessels are equipped with high performance engines that generate speeds that, in my opinion, are far too great for the type of water on which they are being operated. You or I can be on our area waters on any given day and witness some boaters and operators of personal watercraft disregarding speed zones and “no wake” zones or otherwise operating their vessel in a reckless or careless manner. We all need to be reminded of just how fast tragedy can strike on the water and of the need to be constantly aware of what is going on around us while we are operating our boat or personal watercraft! I encourage both novice and experienced boating families alike to enroll in a U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary safe boating program.

Little Amanda’s death reminds us all of not only the need to be ever vigilant while engaged in boating activities, but she also reminds us about what caring about others is all about. While doctors were not able to save Amanda’s life, they did preserve her caring and giving spirit. Amanda became an organ donor! Her liver went to a 57 year old Wisconsin woman who suffered from liver failure. One kidney went to a 61 year old woman from Tennessee and the other, along with Amanda’s pancreas, went to a 31 year old Wisconsin woman who had been on dialysis. Amanda’s corneas restored the sight for two people and her caring heart went to a fifteen year old boy in Illinois. There are thousands of people throughout our country in need of organs and thousands more in need of blood. Have you considered becoming an organ and/or a blood donor?

Amanda’s parents contacted me several years ago shortly after this article appeared in print. They said they were pleased with the fact that their daughter’s situation might serve as an incentive for boaters to exercise caution and practice safe boating while on the water, as well as encouraging people to become organ donors. Little Amanda through her story continues to give to others!

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