

**EACH DAY, MORE
THAN 40 KIDS IN THE
U.S. ARE HIT BY CARS.**

Source: Safe Kids Worldwide



DEADLY STREETS

CROSS AT YOUR OWN RISK

Every year, a shocking number of people are hit by cars. Two classmates found an unusual way to make drivers slow down.

As You Read, Think About: What would you change to make your community safer?

The car sped straight toward Eric and his little brother. They were crossing the street outside Brooks Elementary in Medford, Massachusetts, in September 2016. Luckily, Eric's dad yanked the boys out of the vehicle's path just in time.

They had come within a split second of joining the alarming number of **pedestrians** who are hit, and sometimes

killed, by cars each year.

That terrifying moment inspired Eric, now 11. He wanted to make the streets outside his school safer for everyone.

A National Crisis

There's no outrunning the truth: The number of people killed by cars is rising at a disturbing rate. A recent study estimates that more than 6,200 pedestrians were killed

by cars last year. That's the largest number in nearly 30 years.

Often, the difference between life and death depends on the speed of the car. Eric knew that getting cars to slow down could save lives. He just needed the right plan.

Safety by Design

About a year after his close call, Eric joined a school program. The program helps students design

projects to improve their community. He partnered with another student named Isa. They researched ways to make drivers slow down.

“We wanted something that would really stand out,” Eric says.

He and Isa considered flashing lights and speed bumps. But those options were expensive. After a few weeks, they found a simple and cheap solution: a 3-D crosswalk. This is an **optical illusion**. It is meant to grab drivers’ attention so they reduce their speed.

Speaking Up

In February 2018, Eric and Isa got the chance to share their idea with Medford’s mayor. They gave a presentation with facts about how 3-D crosswalks have made drivers slow down in other countries. In February 2018, Eric and Isa got the chance to share their idea with Medford’s mayor. They gave a presentation. They included facts about how 3-D crosswalks have made drivers slow down in other countries. The

mayor loved the proposal.

Next, Eric and Isa needed to convince the traffic board. That’s a group of leaders in charge of the city’s roads. The board liked the proposal but said the crosswalk would have to wait until other projects were done. Finally, after 14 months, the 3-D crosswalk was painted outside Brooks Elementary this past April.

“I had almost given up,” says Isa, now 10. “But you can’t give up or things won’t happen.”

The city has since painted a 3-D crosswalk at another school. There are plans to add them at two others.

“I’m so excited that it’s finally done,” adds Eric, “and that we made the roads safer for people.”

—by Jennifer Li Shotz

WORDS TO KNOW

pedestrians *noun, plural.* people walking, especially near traffic

optical illusion *noun.* something that looks different from what it actually is

ERIC AND ISA’S TIPS FOR TAKING ACTION



THINK LIKE A DETECTIVE. Our first ideas for solving the problem didn’t work, but we kept digging until we found the best solution.



SPREAD THE WORD. Once we settled on our idea, we shared it with a lot of different people—and convinced our city’s leaders to support it.



DON’T GIVE UP. Change doesn’t happen overnight. We had to wait more than a year for the crosswalk to be painted! But it was worth it because we made the street near our school safer.

ERIC AND ISA’S BIG IDEA

Most crosswalks have white stripes painted on the ground. In a 3-D crosswalk, the stripes are painted to look like blocks rising from the flat road. The illusion causes drivers to slow down to avoid crashing into them.

GO ONLINE!

See how the illusion works.

