

Student pedestrian hit by car

Third person in three years struck at intersection of Bradley and University

BY ERIN WOOD

Elizabeth Albert spent about four hours in an emergency room last week after being hit by a car.

The senior art history major said one minute she was walking across University Street at its intersection with Bradley Avenue, and the next minute her body was smashed against a windshield, then lying on the street.

"I hurt so bad, all I could do was just lie there," she said. "I didn't want to move because I didn't know how badly I was injured."

The driver, freshman Sarah Gaskins, hit Albert at about 3 p.m. April 2 while making a left turn onto University. She was cited for not yielding to a pedestrian, University Police Chief Dave Baer said.

Albert was transported to OSF St. Francis Medical Center after Gaskins called 911. Albert left the hospital with a minor head injury and some scrapes and bruises.

"It was weird and scary at the same time," she said. "I'm just glad the injuries aren't too bad."

Albert is the third student to be hit at that intersection by a driver turning left in three years. Several students have also been hit at the intersection of Main and University streets and along Bradley Avenue, but the problem "hasn't been overwhelming," Baer said.

However, the incident has spurred some students to take action, beginning on Facebook. Since Albert was hit, 54 students have joined the group "We need clearly marked crosswalks for drivers on Bradley's campus!"

"We're trying to find out how much interest and need there is for better crosswalks in that area," Albert said. "I heard it's a really bad spot, so we're hoping to get a petition to the administration."

Junior music performance major Stephanie Falash also joined the group because she said she has also had problems walking at the intersection of Bradley and University.

"I can confidently say that while walking to and from class, I have at least one close call with a driver every day, if not more," she said. "I didn't know this would be such a problem when I first moved into St. James."

Falash said she called the city of Peoria to get a four-way stop sign at the intersection, but so far she hasn't heard anything.

"I know most of these problems are on city property and out of the university's jurisdiction," Falash said. "But I think that Bradley should do more to lobby for the safety of its students."

But city traffic engineer Nick Stoffer said the city has looked at the intersection of Bradley and University and change likely "is not going to happen."

He said the intersection doesn't meet warrants for heavy traffic or for accidents, but it will be reevaluated as part of the upcoming Main/University traffic study. He also said the city may take another look at it to ensure the area is properly signed for drivers.

"The problem is turning cars are paying attention to other cars, not pedestrians," Stoffer said. "All intersections have conflict points, and both drivers and pedestrians need to be defensive. Motorists sometimes do erratic things, and pedestrians need to be alert and remember they are smaller than cars."