

Mother hopes to start conversations after 16-year-old daughter followed from Godfrey Walmart

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
July 12 2018 12:10 PM



GODFREY – A Brighton mother's nerves are still shaky after receiving a frantic call from her 16-year-old daughter Tuesday afternoon.

Erin Harper's daughter, who has only had her license for one month, called her after her first day of work, and she was frightened. The young girl went to the Godfrey Walmart. Everything went as planned, until she left and was allegedly followed by a black Chevy truck with heavily-tinted windows. According to a public Facebook post, which has been shared nearly 1,100 times, the young girl was followed from the lot to a one-way

in and out subdivision where the girl lives. She was not comfortable parking at that time, as the truck had been following her closely through the duration of her route.

The young girl drove around Brighton and told her mother the truck was following so closely, she could not see the grill of it at times. She then drove down Brown Road and toward Seminary to meet her mother – feeling incredibly nervous on the isolated rural roads.

Harper and her daughter have gone to the Walmart in an attempt to review the security footage. They were told they could not view it themselves, but a manager would be reviewing it sometime Thursday late morning or afternoon. Her daughter could not identify a front license plate, believing the vehicle did not have one.

Ultimately, Harper said she hopes what happened to her daughter can start a dialogue between parents and their children.

“Parents!” She posted on Facebook. “Talk to your kids! They need to know what to do in circumstances like this. Don't be afraid to call 911 and don't ever drive away from populated places.”

Captain Mike Dixon of the Madison County Sheriff's Office echoed Harper's sentiment when asked what people should do if they feel they are being followed by a suspicious – and possibly dangerous – individual.

“I would suggest, while Illinois law does not allow phone usage while driving, that people contact law enforcement if they feel they are being followed by a suspicious person,” he said. “Preferably using a hands-free or BlueTooth device, but any way they can contact authorities and let us know what's going on in an emergency situation will do. I would not go home, and would instead drive to the nearest police station.”

What was a scare for Harper and her daughter should be taken as a learning experience for other parents across the area. Dixon's advice is not just pertinent for young women leaving Walmart, it could be crucial and life-saving for anyone in that situation, which Harper hopes never has to happen to anyone again.

“There's no feeling as terrible and completely helpless and utterly fearful when you get a call from your teenager daughter, because you can hear how petrified she is through her unintelligible sobs,” she said. “I feel infuriated that someone could think behavior like that is acceptable. My heart breaks for the young girls in the community that have to be afraid to do anything as simple as going to the store.”