

The Family of John Wesley Heathco Launches Foundation To Advance Carbon Monoxide Safety For Travelers

Foundation To Honor the Legacy of John Wesley Heathco, Who Was Tragically Killed In 2023 From Carbon Monoxide Exposure At A Hotel In Mexico

Namesake Foundation Is Determined to Eliminate Carbon Monoxide Poisonings In Hotels And Lodging Properties Through Advocacy, Awareness, Education, Legislation, Partnerships, Innovation, And More

MISSION VIEJO, CALIFORNIA — May 19, 2025 — Today, as first reported in a powerful feature that aired on CBS Mornings, Chuck and Jill Heathco and Keri and Tyler Bliss [announced the launch](#) of the **John Wesley Heathco Legacy Foundation (JWHLF)** in honor of John Wesley Heathco, an accomplished entrepreneur, world traveler, and beloved son, friend, and brother who died from carbon monoxide poisoning while staying at a hotel in Cabo San Lucas in 2023. Johnny did more in his forty years on Earth than many people will do in their entire lives, and his extraordinary legacy will endure as part of a comprehensive effort to protect the lives of others through this namesake Foundation, whose mission is rooted in a simple truth that no traveler or hospitality worker should be impacted by a silent, invisible, odorless, and entirely preventable danger.

The **John Wesley Heathco Legacy Foundation** will pursue its mission of eliminating carbon monoxide poisonings among travelers through a multi-pronged strategy that includes advocacy, public awareness, education, legislation, innovation, and more. Johnny and his girlfriend, Abby Lutz, were both [killed by carbon monoxide poisoning](#) while staying at the Hyatt Rancho Pescadero Hotel, a five-star resort. Their deaths were the result of a series of grave decisions made by the hotel's management, specifically putting Johnny and Abby in a room where the prior guests were sick and had demonstrated symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, returning Johnny and Abby to that same room after they went to the hospital with carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms but were never diagnosed, and having their hotel staff disable the property's carbon monoxide monitors to stop the alarms from disturbing guests despite the signs of a possible gas leak. The Foundation's launch comes as carbon monoxide poisonings continue to cause senseless injuries and fatalities among travelers, including [the tragic deaths of three American students at a hotel in Belize this past February](#) and [the death of the son of former Major League Baseball star, Brett Gardner, at a hotel in Costa Rica in March](#).

"Losing Johnny took a piece of my heart that will never be filled. He was everyone's best friend, including mine. Whether he was playing hockey, surfing, traveling, or just relaxing with family, he brought so much curiosity, intelligence, and love to the lives of those who knew him, **said Chuck Heathco, Johnny's father**. "We are launching this Foundation to ensure that what happened to him does not happen to anyone else. No other family should have to endure the pain and grief that we've experienced by losing a loved one to something so preventable, and we know that every life we save because of our efforts will be a testament to Johnny's legacy."

"It's difficult for me to even talk about Johnny because I am not, and will never be, over the fact that this tragedy took him from us. I was told shortly after he passed to try and find beauty amid all the pain," **said Jill Heathco, Johnny's mother**. "Starting this Foundation will be that beauty. Through our work, Johnny will be a guardian angel for travelers because, as more people learn his story, laws will change, hotels will finally equip their properties with CO detectors and train their staff to be aware of the symptoms, guests will take steps to protect themselves from this deadly gas, and lives will be saved thanks to him."

The JWHLF intends to **empower travelers** with the tools and information they need to safeguard themselves against carbon monoxide exposure, including through a [Safe Travel Checklist](#) and an education campaign raising awareness of where carbon monoxide can be found and its symptoms.

The Foundation will also work to **advance federal and state legislation** that mandates all hotels and lodging properties install and maintain working and compliant carbon monoxide detectors – [a requirement](#) in just 14 states (CA, FL, LA, ME, MD, MI, NJ, NY, NC, OR, TN, VT, WV, WI) as of 2023. Residents in states without similar laws can go to the Foundation’s website, enter their address, and [automatically send a letter to their representative](#) urging them to introduce or support relevant legislation. In the absence of these commonsense mandates, the Foundation will work proactively with hotels, lodging properties, and key players in the travel industry to install these detectors and protect both guests and staff.

Finally, the Foundation is already working to **fuel technological innovation** by investing in research and new detection methods - beginning with a promising initiative at Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo, Johnny’s alma mater. These efforts aim to make carbon monoxide detectors more portable, intuitive, and seamlessly integrated into the everyday travel experience.

“I’ll never understand why this happened to my brother or why there were so many across-the-board failures that put him in a hotel room that led to his death,” **said Keri Bliss, Johnny’s sister.** “Hotels protect their physical assets by installing smoke detectors to keep their buildings safe, but they are failing to protect their human assets - their guests and their staff - by not installing and maintaining lifesaving carbon monoxide detectors. Travelers need to know they are safe when they put their head down on their pillow at night. Our Foundation will honor my brother by arming these travelers with the knowledge and resources to protect themselves from carbon monoxide poisoning and push for change so hotels finally do the bare minimum to protect the people under their roof.”

“I’m sure most people have no idea that many hotels are not required to install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors, or that a \$40 piece of plastic - a portable CO detector - can be the difference between waking up in the morning or losing your life to something preventable,” **said Tyler Bliss, Johnny’s brother-in-law.** “Johnny was so full of life and energy. If something like carbon monoxide can take him from us, it can take anyone. We owe it to him and every traveler to do whatever we can to prevent future carbon monoxide tragedies, and that will be our singular mission through this Foundation.”

In addition to the fact that 36 states do not require carbon monoxide detectors in hotels and short-term lodging facilities, [a study from Preventive Medicine Reports](#) used data from the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) to estimate that there were more than 3,400 carbon monoxide incidents - roughly 170 per year – at hotels in the United States between 1999 and 2018, and the Jenkins Foundation has [recorded](#) 167 deaths as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning at United States’ hotels, motels, and resorts since it began charting public reports of incidents.

The JWHLF urges any individual or organization at the intersection of travel, safety, technology, or public awareness to reach out and collaborate on ways to reduce or eliminate these preventable tragedies. To learn more about Johnny’s story and get involved, please visit the Foundation’s website at <https://jwhlf.org/>, or view the Foundation’s pages on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [YouTube](#), [Threads](#), and [Substack](#).

About the John Wesley Heathco Legacy Foundation

The John Wesley Heathco Legacy Foundation (JWHLF) was created to honor the life and legacy of John Wesley Heathco by advancing carbon monoxide safety in hotels and lodging facilities. Following Johnny's tragic death from carbon monoxide poisoning in 2023, the Foundation is committed to raising public awareness, driving policy change, and supporting innovation to prevent future tragedies. Learn more at www.jwhlf.org or the Foundation's pages on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [YouTube](#), [Threads](#), and [Substack](#).

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