



Father of slain Gateway teen remembers daughter and raises awareness

Students to wear Demi Cuccia T-shirts at football game in Monroeville to raise awareness about dating violence

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MONROEVILLE, Pa. -

The father of a slain teen is reaching out to students to share his daughter's story and raise awareness about teen dating violence.

Dr. Gary Cuccia spoke to students Friday at Gateway High School, the same school that his daughter, Demi, attended before she was killed at her Monroeville home by former boyfriend John Mullarkey in August 2007.

"She just celebrated her 16th birthday and the very next day she was stabbed 16 times," Gary Cuccia said.

Police say Mullarkey slashed his throat in a murder-suicide attempt at the time of Demi Cuccia's attack. He was sentenced to life in prison.

Since her death six years ago, Cuccia's father has been speaking to students about Demi. He says he shares her story, hoping to educate teens and prevent another tragedy from happening.

"The pain never really goes away. You just get used to carrying it with you every day," Cuccia says.

More info: [The Demi Brae Cuccia Awareness Organization](#)

Although he's been speaking to students throughout the area, this was his first time speaking at Gateway.

"This school is important to me, and I hope Demi's story resonates with the kids and they take a little piece of her home today," Cuccia said.

Many students say they were moved by his message and that her story hit close to home.

"It was heartbreaking because as a cheerleader it hit close to home and it's just devastating to know that that happened," said student Stephanie Folkmire.

"It was really quiet because it was just so sad seeing what happened to her," said student Natalia Steen.

The Ladies Hospital Aid Society, made up of 750 volunteers, has been handing out 3,000 T-shirts to students with the message "Hug Kiss Shove Does Not Equal True Love." Students from Gateway and Connellsville high schools are being asked to wear them at Friday night's football game.

'Hug, kiss, shove does not equal true love'