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# Father of murdered teen works to end dating violence

*Demi Brae Cuccia Awareness Organization brings program to Plum High School*

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## PLUM, Pa. -

It's been five years since Gateway High School cheerleader Demi Cuccia was killed by her ex-boyfriend.

Today, President Barack Obama signed into law the updated Violence Against Women Act. Dr. Gary Cuccia was visiting Vice President Joe Biden at the White House last week when they received word that Congress had passed the law, which had expired.

Dr. Cuccia and the [Demi Brae Cuccia Awareness Organization](#), which he heads, have partnered with the Ladies Hospital Aid Society to take their teen dating violence and abuse program to high schools like Plum High School, which he visited today, one week after his White House visit.

### Photos: [Monroeville parents use daughter's murder to educate](#)

Part of Cuccia's presentation is a sobering video about how his daughter died. It was Aug. 15, 2007, the day after her 16th birthday.

Cuccia told the Plum student body, "She agreed to let him come over so they could talk, and he took advantage of the situation and killed her."

John Mullarkey, then 18 years old, stabbed Demi Cuccia 16 times. He was convicted of murder in 2009 and was sentenced to life in prison.

Cuccia shared with the students that he had no idea that his daughter was ever in danger when she was dating Mullarkey. He warned the students to be wary of others who try to isolate them from their family and friends and who text them obsessively.

He emphasized that if there is a bad breakup, never do it when alone with a person.

Later, Cuccia talked about the hard part of telling his late daughter's story.

"The hardest point after I do an assembly like this is tonight. The emotions catch up with me later in the day," he said.

But his words had their impact on students like David Cross. "I am really motivated by this because I can't stand guys like this," he said.

Emily Kieffer added, "It really opened my eyes to see how prevalent this is in society today."

Cuccia added that being an advocate is important for him. He said, "Some people may choose medication to numb the pain. I choose to talk about my daughter because Demi is still in my life every day. I have a hard time living with her not being in my life."

Monroeville parents use daughter's murder to educate



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Demi Cuccia

Demi Brae Cuccia's parents became advocates to teach teens about dating violence after the murder of their daughter, a 16-year-old Gateway High School Student.

