

A mother restarts an anti-gun violence group in memory of her daughter

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Sometimes a lone voice can make others stop and listen, particularly if the voice is mournful and stirs the conscience, like the call of a mother who has lost her only child.

Gisela Marin, whose daughter was killed in a drive-by shooting in Yonkers this summer, has decided to add her voice to the campaign against gun violence. Last week she restarted a slumbering Westchester Chapter of New Yorkers Against Gun Violence. It's a first step in an education campaign in which she hopes to persuade kids - like the teenager who police say murdered her daughter - that guns are never the answer.

"I want to bring awareness of the problem to children, from the youngest up to the high school level," Marin told the Editorial Board. "They may not want to hear it, but if you speak about it they might listen."

And Marin has an awful, and persuasive, tale to tell.

Her daughter, Jessica Santos, a 19-year-old college student about to return for her sophomore year at University of New Haven was chatting with friends on a Yonkers street corner in late August. She was saying one last goodbye before heading back to college, when a teenager drove by and unleashed a barrage of bullets. Six in all. One caught Jessica, an innocent bystander, an unintended victim.

Anthony Burton, 17, now faces second-degree murder charges in the killing. Burton had been the victim of a shooting earlier in the year. That's a cycle of violence that Marin hopes to stop. Nearly 60 people attended the first meeting of Marin's group, which was held at the Warner Library in Tarrytown. Influential leaders like state Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, D-Yonkers, and Yonkers Mayor Phil Amicone came. They all said they wanted to help. Marin plans to hold them to that promise.

"I'm counting on them," she said.

So are the children who are most at risk of violence.