

Memorial honors student killed in drive-by

By Ben Rubin • bfrubin@lohud.com • July 19, 2010

SLEEPY HOLLOW — Janelle Monzon has been around for just about all of Jessica Santos' milestones. They attended Sleepy Hollow High School together, dreamed about moving to Miami to start new careers there, and shared countless hours since they were toddlers.

It seemed fitting, then, that Monzon came to a memorial event today to honor Santos, as she has every year since her friend was killed in a 2006 random drive-by shooting. "It's an honor, that's why I'm here every year," said Monzon, 23, of Tarrytown. "The first year it was very hard, but now it's more of an



Yonkers August 27, 2006. The foundation provides educational scholarships for young people. Pointing the way at left is Jessica's mother, Gisela Marin. (Seth Harrison/The Journal News)

embracing... It's a happy day, not a sad day anymore."

Close to 100 people attended the memorial event at Kingsland Point Park, a short drive from Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, where Santos is buried. Most of the group marched the short distance from the park gazebo to a lighthouse, wearing T-shirts and holding a banner emblazoned with Santos' name. Many wore jewelry or clothing displaying butterflies, which Santos loved.

Dozens of friends and family of Jessica Santos walk along the Hudson River on Sunday in Kingsland Point Park in Sleepy Hollow during the Jessica Santos Memorial Walk and Family Fun Day to benefit the Jessica Santos Foundation. Santos, a college sophomore, was shot and killed in

After the walk, the group celebrated with hot dogs, hamburgers, Cuban tamales, music, two large inflatable s and raffles. The event helped raise money for the Jessica N. Santos Foundation, which provides scholarships to students at Sleepy Hollow High and the University of New Haven, where Santos was studying criminal justice.

Her mother, Gisela Marin, said Santos, her only child, would have graduated last year and wanted to become an FBI investigator. Following her death, Marin has worked to re-establish the Westchester County chapter of New Yorkers Against Gun Violence and has advocated for greater awareness and prevention of violent crime and illegal gun possession.

"It's just something Jessica would have liked to have done, to give back to the community where she was raised," said Marin, who wore a gold, heart-shaped pendant showing a picture of her and Santos at her 2005 high school graduation.



On Aug. 27, 2006, the night before she was to return to college, Santos was saying goodbye to some friends in Yonkers. That's when Anthony Burton of Yonkers, who was 17, fired six shots from a moving car as it passed a Beech Street grocery. Santos was the only one hit.

Burton, who had several brushes with the law before, was convicted of second-degree manslaughter in 2007. He'll become eligible for parole in 2016.

Along with the local memorial to keep Santos' memory alive, events also have been held at the University of New Haven, where a classroom was named after her.

As with other years, a small group of Santos' college friends were at today's event.

"I think it's great that everybody comes out," said Celeste Handey, 23, of Shelton, Conn. "I come down and visit her grave along with all the other girls, so it's nice to just keep in touch and never forget her."
