

## Put 'Tina's Law' to work in schools

Thursday, March 05, 2009

"Tina's Law" would be a fitting tribute to the work that's been done over the last dozen years or so by Jim and Elsa Croucher, a Middletown-area couple whose daughter was murdered by her abusive ex-boyfriend in December 1992.

It's a law that is needed to stem the epidemic of teen dating violence.

Tina Croucher was 18 when her ex-boyfriend broke into her home and fatally shot her — before turning the gun on himself. In the years since her death, her parents began an organization called Citizens Against Domestic Violence and have spoken before more than 70,000 area students about abusive teen relationships and how to avoid them.

It's estimated that some form of violence affects one out of every three teen relationships — with parents often kept in the dark.

In Ohio, State Rep. Sandra Stablile Harwood, D-Niles, has introduced House Bill 19 — otherwise known as "Tina's Law" — which would require that school districts adopt dating violence policies and include dating violence education within the health education curriculum. Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray recently announced his support of the bill, as well as of another measure that would allow juvenile courts to issue protection orders for minors involved in an abusive dating relationship.

The latter bill was prompted by the experience of a Cleveland teenager, Johanna Orozco, who was shot in the face by her ex-boyfriend in 2007. Orozco, who has endured 12 surgeries after the attack, had wanted a protection order against the ex-boyfriend but juvenile courts currently can't issue such orders against minors, according to the Associated Press.

We believe these measures are necessary to educate emotionally immature young people about the potential and hidden dangers of unhealthy relationships and to protect our daughters who — statistics say — are the victims in more than 80 percent of domestic violence cases. This phenomenon knows no social or economic boundaries. The assault of pop singer Rihanna, 21, last month — allegedly by her boyfriend, singer/actor Chris Brown, 19 — has drawn much-needed national attention to this problem.

We owe it to our children to educate them thoroughly about potential risks, their legal rights and how to protect themselves in abusive relationships, and to remove the stigma associated with being a victim.

We urge state lawmakers to expedite passage of "Tina's Law."

