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May 4, 2006 4:07 pm US/Central

Prosecutor Honors Road Rage Murder Victim

by Deborah Takahara

DALLAS (CBS 11 News) — A Dallas county prosecutor helped send a road rage killer to prison. Now he's helping to honor the victim, who was a bright young student at Woodrow Wilson High School.

Gustavo Ipina was just 17 years old when he was killed on August 9th, 2004. He was on his way home from work when the van he was riding in almost crashed into another van. The driver of the other van pulled out a gun and fired one shot. Prosecutor Taly Haffar said, "the shot went thru the wall and where Gustavo was sitting. It went thru his skull and killed him almost immediately."

Haffar has been with the Dallas County District Attorney's office for nearly 3 years and has prosecuted dozens of felony cases, including murders, sexual assaults and aggravated assaults. But he says this case hit him hard. "It impacted me tremendously, I couldn't sleep after it. He was a young man, a good man. He had everything going for him. He had a plan to go to college. He had a plan in place. And that was taken from him for no reason."

Gustavo was a National Honors Student, a soccer player, and a good son. He had dreams of becoming an architect and building his mother a house. His mother, Maria Rosa Ipina says, "He never gave me any problems or any worries. He always told me, 'You can have faith in me. I will never do anything to make you worry or suffer.' He was always going forward and in the right direction."

She says she thinks about Gustavo every day. So does Taly Haffar. He decided to start a scholarship fund in his honor. The scholarship will be given to an E.S.L. student at Woodrow Wilson High School. Haffar says, "a lot of those kids are coming from immigrants and they tend to struggle with the financial part of going to college. I want them to be able to succeed." He also says it gives him peace of mind. "It helps to do something good for someone else. I think it means a lot to his family that we keep his name alive."

Rosa Marie Ipina says "the first thing I think to myself is I wish it could be Gustavo receiving the scholarship. I know that's what he wanted. It's not easy to get a scholarship. At times, I'm very sad, but what Taly's doing is comforting to know. And it helps us to go forward."

If you'd like to contribute to the scholarship fund, contact Taly Haffar at 214-653-3600. (© MMVI, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.)

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