

Pace Students Vow Change During Tribute to School Shooting Victims

By Anna Young

More than 100 Pace University students rallied at the school's campus last Wednesday denouncing gun violence and honoring the 17 people that were gunned down in the Florida high school massacre last month.

Sophomore Lindita Kulla, who grew up about 20 minutes from Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, organized the Feb. 28 #NeverAgain rally. She explained that since the Sandy Hook tragedy more than five years ago she's had a residual fear of school settings, calling the lockdown that day as a high school freshman a terrifying experience.

"Personally, when I heard about the Parkland shooting I was sad but not surprised because I saw what happened in Newtown and saw that no action happened," Kulla said. "I was very young and very afraid, but I never expected change to happen because it's perpetual and it's just happening so much that it became normal."

Kulla said she was inspired by many of the students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School who have been actively advocating for legislation to help stop gun violence after the Feb. 14 school shooting. She said she organized the last Wednesday's demonstration to pay tribute to the lives lost but also provide students with impetus to get involved to enact



ANNA YOUNG PHOTO

Lindita Kulla, the Pace sophomore who organized last Wednesday's #NeverAgain rally at the Pleasantville campus, has sought to inspire fellow students to help create change by supporting gun control legislation.

change.

"These students are using their pain as a gateway to create change, and while these types of occurrences have been happening throughout our country over and over, it took students in high school to make this change and that's something important to recognize, is that kids are done with these violent acts and we're angry and willing to

be vocal about it," Kulla said. "There's so much energy in the world and we just have to get up and use it to make change in our society."

During the rally that started at noon and included a small number of faculty members, Kulla read aloud the names of the 17 victims. For 17 seconds, the Pace community stood for a moment of silence.

Natalie Holguin, a member of the university's Senate for Community Action and Research, stressed the importance of voting. She said many government officials refuse to discuss the issue of gun control and voting is the only way to influence lawmakers to make change.

Sophomore Breana Battles agreed, encouraging her fellow students to change the conversation at the polls.

"This is a topic we all need to come together and take a stand and fight for if we really want to see a change," Battles said. "We do this by protesting, but we also need to vote."

Junior Jamie Delforo, who grew up in Waterbury, Conn., recalled being scared following the Sandy Hook shooting. She said she sympathized with the students in Florida who had to return last week to an environment they felt was unsafe. Hoping to become a teacher, she said she shouldn't be concerned with what she might have to say to her future students the morning after a similar tragedy occurs.

"I cannot imagine what I would say to my students the next day," Delforo said. "I am here to make sure that I will never have to step into a classroom and think of how to console my students after something like this. The question of what do you say the next morning should not be a question I have to answer. It is a question we have to change."