

Prime Stage Theatre



Bringing Literature to Life

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Prime Stage Theatre Brings the Issue of Teen Dating Violence Center Stage

Event: *Everything is Fine*

Dates/Times: March 1, 2012 -- 7:30 pm

Location: New Hazlett Theater – 6 Allegheny Square E – Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Tickets: Admission is free
Donations will be accepted for the Demi Brae Cuccia Memorial Foundation

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Pittsburgh, PA – Demi Brae Cuccia, a Pittsburgh area high school student, was murdered in August 2007 by her ex-boyfriend just one day after celebrating her 16th birthday. She was a victim of teen dating violence. There were warning signs, but neither Demi, her friends, nor her family were aware of them. Unfortunately, this is not uncommon. Prime Stage Theatre wants to help change that with their production of *Everything is Fine*, which addresses this urgent, but silent, epidemic.

The 45-minute play is a creation of Prime Stage Theatre's Teen Board. Demi's death seriously affected youth from all neighboring communities, and was the motivation behind the creation of the play. One of the goals of the Teen Board is to give back to the community by engaging in projects that benefit area youth. This play shares important information through an engaging story, and ultimately gives young people, teachers and parents some tools to reduce the likelihood of events that ended Demi's life.

Meagan Reagle, Teen Board Advisor and director of this production, has seen a dramatic response from the teens who see the performance. "The teens said that because of the insight gained by seeing the play, they would pay closer attention to their own romantic relationships as well as those of friends," Reagle said.

Dating violence is more prevalent among teens than is commonly thought. According to the Department of Justice, women are most vulnerable to violence from a romantic partner between the ages of 16 and 24, but children as young as 11 have reported dating abuse. Boys and young

men also can be victims.

Surveys by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found that about 10 percent of high school students report being physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend. The number rises to one in four if verbal and sexual abuse are included.

One of the most troubling problems is the lack of awareness and information surrounding this issue. In an effort to bring information about the warning signs to those who can best use it, Prime Stage Theatre is making *Everything is Fine* available for bookings at schools and other educational settings.

A bill that is slowly working its way through the state Legislature would require schools to devote time to educating students about dating violence. The bill is named for Demi Brae Cuccia, whose parents have tirelessly campaigned to teach teens and parents the warning signs of dating violence.

Prime Stage Theatre Board member, Dotty Weisberg, has been involved with the teen program for several years. Her daughter, Hannah Jo Weisberg, is past president of the Teen Board and helped choose the theme, "the dangers of teen dating violence," as the group's focus. Hannah Jo was honored at the annual VITA (Volunteers in the Arts) Awards program for her work on the project in 2010. Her mother said, "If only the parents knew the signs, it might make a difference."

Everything is Fine has been endorsed by Futures Without Violence, a national organization whose mission it is to prevent and end violence against women and children around the world.

Proceeds from the production will help to support the work of the Demi Brae Cuccia Memorial Foundation. Jodi Cuccia, Demi's Mom, will be at the production and participate in the talk-back session following the play.

MORE ABOUT PRIME STAGE THEATRE:

Prime Stage Theatre is a non-profit organization committed to producing high-quality, artistic experiences for adults, families, students, and educators as they discover the fusion of live theatre and literature. With education as the cornerstone of its mission and vision, the Company offers unique programs designed to support educators and families in the sharing and appreciation of great literature, and that encourages both literacy and a love of theatre.

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