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Why we all need to slow down for Julia



Jody Cukier Siegler and Scott Siegler with their daughter Julia at her Bat Mitzvah

Jody Siegler lost her 13-year-old daughter—and found, “in the midst of all this pain and despair,” a path to action.

On Thursday morning, that path will lead her back to the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Cliffwood Drive in Brentwood—back to where her daughter Julia, an 8th-grader at Harvard-Westlake, was run over as she crossed the street to board her school bus.

There, Jody Cukier Seigler will step into her own as an activist, determined to make the world a safer place, one intersection at a time.

Siegler, who had just dropped Julia off and was there when she was struck by two cars, will join police and elected officials for the kickoff of a safety campaign called “[Slow Down for Julia](#).” She’ll honor and thank the young people who jumped into action within hours of Julia’s death and set in motion the safety campaign.

“I feel very, very transformed. I’ve been given a responsibility,” Siegler said in an interview, reflecting on all that has happened in the difficult months since her daughter’s death on Feb. 26.

She knows that she wants to set up a memorial in Julia’s name. She knows that she wants to crusade for strict enforcement of speed limits and for better visibility on streets where overgrown vegetation can obscure sightlines and block signage. And she knows that drawing public attention to her family’s personal tragedy is a necessary part of fostering the civic engagement required to get such changes

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The **horrific accident** that claimed Julia’s life occurred after she stepped out into traffic against a red light and was struck by two cars, one after the other. No charges were filed against either driver.

Despite all Jody Siegler has had to endure, she is deeply focused on what others have done to honor her daughter. She rattles off name after name of those who have stepped up, from the students who created a **Facebook memorial** and painted a purple “Slow Down for Julia” **bus bench** to the rabbi at University Synagogue to the people at her local print shop.

“People behaving impressively is really worthy of our attention,” she said.



Her ongoing relationship with her daughter’s classmates and friends has been a revelation—and cause for hope about perhaps helping to spawn a new generation of activism around the tragedy of Julia’s death.

“The emotional DNA of her peer group has been changed forever” by the accident, she said.

“Kids still come to my house. I’m amazed that they come through my front door.

They’re brave. I applaud them.”

Along with her husband, Scott Siegler, a media investor, she’s continually struck by the connections their daughter forged during her short life. “We knew that she was extraordinary. We didn’t know quite how far and wide it went.”

For herself, there are “the good days and the bad days.” She has a hard time sleeping; early wakeups are a challenge. And she is steadfastly working her way through all the boxes of letters she received after the accident.

“I have been diligently replying to every single person,” she said. She created a **card**, adorned with photos of Julia in different stages of her life and incorporated into it a single shoelace (purple, Julia’s favorite color) and the words: “One purple shoelace to remember her spirit, one missing to remember why.”

She’s still working out exactly where to focus her energies. “Where will it be most effective? What’s biting off more than I can chew?” But she likes the idea of small actions adding up to big results. “It has to be individual acts for getting things done,” she said.

Donations, including those raised by Julia’s classmates’ sale of \$3 purple bracelets reading “Slow Down for Julia,” could ripple out in an ever-widening circle—resulting in improvements not just at Sunset and Cliffwood but beyond.

“I told the boys that with the money we raise—what if we go help another corner?” Siegler said. “What if Julia and what happened here helped a corner somewhere else?”

Capt. Nancy Lauer, commanding officer of LAPD’s West Traffic Division, said she admires Siegler’s willingness to step into the public arena in the interests in improving public safety, especially for schoolchildren.

“She’s suffered a tremendous loss. I have a great deal of respect for her courage and fortitude,” Lauer said.

A one-time movie marketing executive, Siegler, now an interior design and remodeling consultant, knows what it is to find that “relatable crumb” that hooks the public’s interest in a project. And she knows that her own loss has forever altered the trajectory of her life.

“My purpose has changed,” she said.

And like the Little Red Hen in the nursery tale, who industriously makes bread while trying to recruit helpers, she’s going out into the world looking for those willing to do the work that will make a difference.

“The world is either people baking the bread or eating the bread,” she said. “I’m looking for a few good bakers.”

Try watching this video on www.youtube.com, or enable JavaScript if it is disabled in your browser.

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Around the District





Jody Cukier Siegler speaks at "Slow Down for Julia" news conference in Brentwood. With her are, from left, Jake Feiler, Councilman Bill Rosendahl, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, and Maxwell Ford Felix Thoeny. Feiler and Thoeny, along with Eli Kogan, not pictured, are Harvard-Westlake students instrumental in the safety campaign launched after the death of their classmate, Siegler's daughter, Julia.



Officers handed out flyers to passing motorists urging greater safety behind the wheel as students return to school.

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