



## From Art Gallerist to Advocate

How Anna Nasset went from stalking victim to leading voice for survivors.

Today, Anna Nasset has worked closely with VINE as an advisory council member and consultant.

But in 2009, she didn't know the first thing about VINE, the nation's leading victim notification network. She had no reason to.

Full of excitement and fresh from the Midwest, Anna had just opened an art gallery in the idyllic seacoast town of Port Townsend, Washington. If that sounds ideal to you, it was to Anna, too. *"I followed my own little bliss into this wild world. I was passionate about art. I wrote a business plan and was able to get a private investor and buy this gallery. So I was living my dream."*

### Dream Interrupted

Two years later, a stalker invaded Anna's ideal. *"I'm just living my dream, having so much fun with this world I'm creating. Just gone through a divorce. So I was really kind of in this place of back on my feet and, like, 'Look at me shine. Look at me go,'" explained Anna. "Unfortunately, unbeknownst to me, there was a man who had already been stalking me."*

While a stranger to her, the man was a known serial stalker—with a mental health diagnosis—in the small community. He had targeted Anna earlier, but first made himself known to her in 2011. *"He approached me saying he wanted to showcase artwork at my gallery," said Anna. "Nothing that out of the ordinary about that, but he began to quickly escalate in messaging."* His continued communication set off alarm bells. *"It wasn't anything I'd ever seen before by somebody who wanted to work with me. He would say things like, 'It was nice to see you today,' and I never saw this individual anywhere. So very quickly my spidey sense went up."*



*"They were really able to help me start to form out basically my own investigation because that's really what a stalking victim has to do: collect their own evidence. Chronicle everything. Keep logs of everything so that the police can actually build a case."*

## Working the Legal System

The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that only around 40% of stalking victims go to law enforcement. The reasons for that are as varied as the individual: fear, uncertainty, being told you're "overreacting," society making light of stalking, and more. Encouraged by someone close to her, Anna did go to law enforcement.

While it demanded hard work and courage, Anna's documentation paid off. ***"Within a couple months, he was arrested for harassment against me,"*** said Anna. A trial followed, and in 2012 the man was sentenced to one year in county jail.

## Time for VINE

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2024, VINE began in Kentucky in 1994 in response to the murder of Mary Byron. Byron was murdered because she was unaware that her offender had been released from prison. Since then, VINE has empowered thousands of crime victims with a host of services to help prevent a tragedy like Mary's. Want an alert when an offender is being transferred or released from prison? Or when a protective order is being served? From alerts to victim-centered resources, VINE has you covered through its app, website, or phone number.

Anna's experience with VINE began in 2012 soon after her offender received that one year jail sentence. ***"I was initially told about it by the Port Townsend Police Department by my officer, Officer Corrigan,"*** recalled Anna. ***"I actually called the phone number and signed up, you know, talking to somebody, which I think was very important to me back then because it just felt so isolating and alone."***

During that call, VINE customer service signed Anna up to be alerted when her offender was released from jail. Reflecting back on her feelings at the time, Anna said, ***"This is a really scary moment, and I don't know how to accept what's going on. And so I found when I could lean into any sort of victim service, that kind of just helped me feel a little bit more supported and accepting of what was happening."*** And while no service can undo the harm, Anna said it ***"felt like an extra level of support. Signing up for VINE was one of those pieces of being okay."***

## Getting Some Distance

One year later, Anna was indeed alerted when her offender was released from jail. Unfortunately, that wasn't the end of her offender's stalking. ***"Within a couple of months of being released, he would start to kind of take other tactics,"*** said Anna. ***"By the end of 2013, it was really too much for me to deal with, and so I would end up closing my business."***



*"I think it was late 2017, and I was like, 'I'm gonna become a victim advocate, which is a very typical thing for people in my situation to do,'" she reflected.*

In 2016, a cross-country move to a quaint Vermont town gave Anna distance and a fresh start, but the stalking continued. Equipped with all she had learned the first time, Anna armed herself with evidence and worked with law enforcement. Once again, the effort was successful. ***"In 2019 we went to trial out in Washington state, and he was found guilty of felony aggravated stalking and felony cyberstalking and was sentenced to a maximum of 10 years, which at the time was one of the longest sentences—if not the longest sentence in our country's history."***

While the lengthy sentence gave Anna some peace of mind, she once again signed up for VINE alerts, this time via the app. For that extra bit of reassurance, she took an additional step: ***"I still call up the Department of Corrections to see when is his release date. I do that every six months because in Washington state that changes,"*** she said.

Thrust into a situation she never asked for, Anna had once again equipped herself by taking steps and using services like VINE. But "Enrollee" wouldn't be Anna's only role with VINE.

## **An Unexpected Direction**

We plan some chapters of our lives. But many surprise us, unfolding bit by bit, laying a path we didn't consider but that makes perfect sense. Anna's next chapter came that way.

***"I think it was late 2017, and I was like, 'I'm gonna become a victim advocate,' which is a very typical thing for people in my situation to do,"*** she reflected. ***"And so I found out about a course here in the state of Vermont, put on through our state, called the Vermont Victims Assistance Academy."*** Attended by law enforcement agencies and community advocates alike, Anna quickly doubted her fit there. ***"After the first class, I met with the coordinator of it, and I was like, 'I'm trying to figure out where I fit in this work.'"***

In chatting with Anna, the coordinator quickly saw that her skill in art and design could help victim service agencies communicate their mission. But the coordinator's eyes really grew wide when Anna began to unspool her personal story of survivorship—and her success navigating the criminal justice system.

***"She was really surprised by all of the positive interactions I'd had with law enforcement, advocates, prosecution...which so rarely happens in stalking,"*** remembered Anna. ***"And so she asked me if I would speak on a panel down the road, and I was, like, 'Why would anybody want to hear me speak?'"***

While Anna didn't see it, many others did, and she was soon in demand. ***"I went to this conference and spoke at it, and then people started being like, 'Will you come to my military base or speak at my college?'"***

The growing number of speaking engagements helped Anna realize the rare package only she could offer.



*"It was not my calling or thought to be like, 'I'm gonna go be a public speaker.' It really became this thing of, if I have all these examples of best practices, I have to share these. And especially once we got that sentence (her offender's conviction), I was like, I cannot be the exception. This needs to start to be the standard."*

## Working Herself Out of a Job

Since those early engagements, Anna has delivered victim-centered, expert-level training all over the world, served as a board and advisory council member for several organizations, and won numerous awards for advocacy. In 2023 she released ***Now I Speak: From Stalked to Standing Up***, a powerful book that shared her story and learnings. She also hosts ***The Mend***, a podcast she created to provide tools, understanding and hope to victims of crime.

In one of many full-circle moments, Anna was asked to join VINE's Advisory Council in 2024, moving from enrollee to leading voice in shaping VINE's next 30 years of work. *"I think that we all want to be out of a job,"* said Anna, regarding VINE's Advisory Council. *"I want to go be the cash register at a little general store in town because I think that'd be really fun. And just... sell ice cream cones, and chat with tourists all day. But until then, I'm gonna keep doing this work. I think we keep pushing for that. And we keep pushing for protections, and we keep pushing to make victims and survivors feel not as alone."*

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Find out more about Anna and her work at  
**[www.standupresources.com](http://www.standupresources.com)**

If you or someone you know has been the victim of a crime,  
you can find resources in your state or sign up for VINE's services  
at [VINELink.com](http://VINELink.com), via the VINELink app, or by calling 1-866-277-7477 anytime.