Knowledge. Power. Choice.

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After reporting him to the authorities, the offender's behavior only worsened. I wrote to him, as directed by law enforcement, telling him that he was to no longer communicate with me in any way. But he continued. He followed me, wrote me, called me. He was seen outside of my business. It was debilitating. I was constantly on edge, paranoid, distracted, and scared.

The offender was arrested and prosecuted in 2012—sentenced to 364 days in jail. It was at this time that my advocate told me about VINE. A service that notifies victims regarding any changes in their offender's custody status (e.g., transfer to another facility, release, death) in real-time?! I had never heard of such a service. I was angry and scared that I needed such a service. I vividly remember calling to sign up for VINE, my voice stammering and breaking as I stumbled over my words. The voice on the other end was compassionate and warm…reassuring in a very vulnerable moment. In the end, that person helped me sign up for a service that was designed to give me the information I needed to stay safe. And every time I receive a life-saving alert from that Kentucky number, I think about the amazing people who work at Appriss—the developers of VINE. VINE Representatives know that victims are receiving terrifying news, and yet they are also the most incredible comfort. They are giving us the gift of knowledge, and knowledge, in turn, becomes power and choice.

In 2013 I lost my business, largely due to the ongoing terror and fear of the offender. After he was released, he physically stayed away from me, albeit briefly. With his high intelligence and intricate knowledge of the legal system, he turned to stalking me in other ways. He would reach me however he could: threatening letters, images of my home posted on social media…I have hundreds of examples. The psychological turmoil was too much; my life became a shell of what it once was. I became withdrawn and hidden, doing whatever I could to disappear. But I didn't want to leave my town, my community, my friendships – my life was there … I couldn't let him "win."

I did spend some time away from Washington in 2015 to be with my father as he was dying. During the time away I found myself doing the "normal" actives I had stopped doing in Washington. I ran errands without fear, I took walks in the evening alone, I met friends for a drink in town. These small normalcies had been completely removed from my life, and I returned to Washington knowing I had to leave. I arrived in the Green Mountains of Vermont one year later, determined to disappear and start a quiet new life. No one would know my past. No one would know about my "situation." It was over and I was free.

I quickly realized that victims of stalking are never really free. Yes, he found me.

As his threats and proclamations of love followed me to Vermont, law enforcement worked tirelessly to build a case. He was ultimately arrested and incarcerated on two felony counts of stalking. Once again, I turned to VINE. And over the last two years when he has made bail or was transferred, I get that jarring call from Kentucky.

I am just so grateful to know. After every alert, even though I'm thousands of miles away, I change my routine. I go over my safety plans and exit strategies. I become more aware. VINE gives me the ability to let my guard down when I know he is in custody—I breathe a little easier, I walk more confidently, enjoy more freedom. I to go to the movies or grocery store—normal places—without fear. VINE allows me to just…be.

Two years ago I came to the realization that despite periods of imprisonment, this "situation" will never really end. My life had become so small; I missed the brave woman I used to be. This led me to ask myself, If this is my one beautiful and brilliant life, what am I going to do with it? Last year I traveled to the National Organization for Victim Assistance annual conference where I spoke publicly for the first time—and I haven't stopped since!

It is an honor and privilege to travel and tell my story, highlighting the incredible work my service providers have done and CONTINUE to do from across this country. I speak about the crime of stalking, tools for working with victims of crime, as well as empathy and believability. I have just launched a podcast focused on victim services. I am even attempting to write a book about it all.

Because of VINE and the tireless efforts of my countless service providers, I have knowledge and power. That knowledge and power have given me the agency of choice.

There is no conclusion or happy ending to my story. I still have bad days. I struggle with anxiety, depression, PTSD, and physical issues. I still have days where all I can do is watch Gilmore Girls and snuggle my dog. I see a therapist regularly to navigate life as an on-going victim. It's not easy. But I find being able to speak and share my story—hoping that just one person walks away with a new tool or a deeper understanding of stalking—well that makes it all worth it. And as I've started to speak publicly, I have seen myself come back. I'm not the same woman I was eight years ago, but I am strong and getting stronger. Because of VINE and through the guidance of my service providers, I am here today. I am so grateful.

Anna's stalker just went to trial again a few months ago and was convicted of felony and aggravated stalking. This came with a 10 year prison sentence--one of the longest known sentences for this crime.

Anna will be speaking at the New York State Sheriffs' Institute 14th Annual VINE Conference in April 2020.

To hear more from Anna, follow her podcast at https://www.standupresources.com/podcast.

Supporting Crime Victims

The New York State Sheriffs' Institute supports crime victims through www.Sheriff-Assist.org.

NEW YORK STATE SHERIFFS' INSTITUTE, INC.
27 Elk Street
Albany, New York 12207-1002

Save the Date

April 22, 2020

14th Annual VINE Conference

Red Lion Hotel

205 Wolf Road, Albany

Every April during national Crime Victims' Rights Week, advocates and law enforcement from across the state meet at the New York State Sheriffs' Institute Annual VINE Conference.

They attend training sessions and hear from speakers in the field. This continued collaboration is critical to ensuring that victims are supported and victims' rights are met.

NYS SHERIFFS' INSTITUTE

SHERIFF ASSIST NEWS

Notification Systems for Crime Victims

Knowledge. Power. Choice.

My phone rings on a busy winter night as I wait tables at a cozy Vermont Inn. I don't recognize the number. After ignoring the first call, it rings again…and then again. Annoyed, I pull my phone out of my apron and glance at it as I toss it onto the server station. Every call is from Kentucky. I don't know anyone in Kentucky. But, I do know that VINE notifications come from Kentucky. VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday) was trying to get a hold of me. They are calling to notify me that my offender's custody status has changed. And in that moment I am forced back into the reality of my life. Everything in that busy dining room goes quiet and just kind of swirls. The clanging and voices feel distant, and I am frozen. I listen to the message—the offender has been transferred to a different facility. I punch in my PIN, signaling to VINE that I've received this information, throw my phone down, take a deep breath, and jump back into the chaos of the evening.

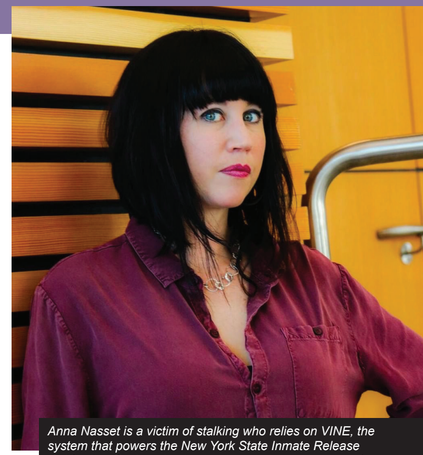
My name is Anna Nasset. I am a public speaker, graphic designer, three-legged dog owner, a victim, and survivor. When I'm not tucked away in my small studio apartment in Vermont, you can find me speaking at universities, military bases, victim service conferences, and community venues. I own a small business, Stand Up Resources, through which I provide support and train victim services providers across the world. I am passionate about the work that I do. I am humbled that I have the opportunity to be a voice for stalking victims, victims of crime, and their rights.

It will be eight years this November that a man approached me as I worked on the window of the gallery I owned in Washington State. At the time I was living my dream. My best life. I had purchased my gallery four years earlier with $200 in my bank account and a very strong business plan. I worked tirelessly and passionately to promote arts in the region, and I loved it. That's why I was creating a window design that Friday night in November.

Around 8 o'clock that evening, a man I vaguely recognized—but did not know—knocked on the gallery window as I worked. I hopped down, opened the door just enough to have a brief conversation. As he left, he gave me a small painting as a gift. That five-minute, seemingly harmless conversation would change my life forever.

What transpired from that night is a blur of letters, phone calls, and messages. His first message was to submit artwork to show at my gallery, but his language quickly shifted after I denied his submission. This man began to contact me, proclaiming love, anger, desire, hatred.

I was stunned and…quite frankly, confused.



Anna Nasset is a victim of stalking who relies on VINE, the system that powers the New York State Inmate Release Notification System, to give her knowledge and peace of mind. This is her story in her own words.

The situation escalated quickly. I responded to only one of his communications—to tell him that I would not show his artwork at my gallery. The messages kept coming. And after a short amount of time, I went to local law enforcement. They knew this man from other small crimes committed in the community. They also knew him to stalk people for short spurts of time, and it appeared that I was his next victim. While they believed he was likely to move on, law enforcement conveyed to me the seriousness of the situation. Stalking is a very dangerous crime, both psychologically and physically. After they taught me how to keep a log, create an exit strategy, and gave me tips on how to keep myself safe, I walked back into the world.

Of the 7.5 million people stalked each year about 10% are stalked by individuals they do not know. The vast majority of victims know the person stalking them and often had an intimate relationships with them prior. In nearly every partner homicide, the victim was stalked prior to their murder. In my case, the offender was a diagnosed schizophrenic, but he is believed to have a rare mental health condition called erotomania. Erotomania is a delusion in which a person believes another person is in love with them, and acts out in love and anger towards that person.

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JUSTICE FOR CRIME VICTIMS

With the risk of dating myself, I cannot help but think back to a time when victim assistance programs were nonexistent. In my early years in law enforcement in the 70s and 80s no one thought about funding programs or grants that could enhance victim rights, restitution, and services, let alone have an advocate or specialist work with victims for court testimony preparation and genuine support. Thankfully, those days have changed.

Victim's rights are really about justice and making sure crime victims are fully supported throughout a traumatic time in their lives. Supporting crime victims and their families is part of our core mission at the New York Sheriffs' Institute (NYSSI).

A critical partner in helping NYS sheriffs support crime victims is the New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS). NYSSI has provided victim notification services since 1998 when we received our first Victims of Crime Act grant through OVS. The grant allowed us to establish and administer our **Inmate Release Notification System** (powered by VINE) in all the county correctional facilities in New York State, and we are grateful this support continues today.

The VINE system was created in 1994 in Kentucky after the tragic murder of Mary Byron on her 21st birthday by her former boyfriend and attacker. Because Mary's family pushed to establish this system, millions of crime victims have been protected and saved.

I'd also like to acknowledge the work of Ed Wutzer who is the NYSSI Director of Victim Notification Services. A former Chairman of New York States' Commission of Corrections, Ed worked with the sheriffs and jail administrators across the state to help them establish the system at their facilities. Today, every county in New York is linked to the system, along with New York City and the New York State Department of Correctional Services.

Through our **Order of Protection Notification System**, victims who have been granted an Order of Protection from a Family Court in New York State can register to be notified when the order of protection is served by law enforcement. This system is currently being expanded to all of the criminal courts in New York State. NYSSI Victim Notification Program Manager Ron Bill is on the road every week training law enforcement, judges, emergency personnel, and advocates across the state in how to best use the system.

For many crimes including misdemeanors and class E felonies now going forward after January 2020, the accused must be released. The law gives no discretion to the courts anymore. The notification to the crime victim on the status of the offender will be even more important for victim specialists and advocates.

Thank you to everyone for your collaboration.

Sincerely,

Yates County Sheriff Ron Spike

NYSSI Board Chairman

Register for Crime Victim Notifications at Sheriff-Assist.org

The NYS Sheriffs' Institute is committed to helping crime victims by providing notification systems and resources.

Inmate Release Notification System

powered by VINE

Crime victims often are haunted by thoughts of their offender. Knowing their custody status can provide peace of mind. Our Inmate Release Notification System monitors offenders in New York's jails so victims can anonymously look up offenders and register to receive notification of change in custody status by phone, email, or text. This free service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With this system, victims and their families can:

Look Up Offenders

Go to vinelink.com or make a toll-free call to 1-888-VINE-4-NY to immediately learn the custody status of any offender housed in any of New York's County Jails or Correctional Facilities.

Register to be Notified

Register online to be notified via text, email, or phone when the offender's status changes. The offender will never know you are registered.

Order of Protection Notification System

The 45-minute period after an Order of Protection is served is crucial for a victim. Our Order of Protection Notification System allows domestic violence victims to be notified by phone, text message, or e-mail when an Order is served, providing the information they need to take appropriate precautions for themselves and their loved ones. This free service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

How it Works

Step 1. Court issues Order of Protection (OP).

Step 2. Register online to be notified when the OP is served by law enforcement.

Step 3. Law Enforcement serves the OP.

Step 4. OP Notification is triggered and notifies the victim by text, email, or phone.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

The occurrence of domestic violence across the country and in New York State is terrifying.

Domestic violence is a repetitive pattern of behaviors to maintain power and control over another person. Domestic violence can include physical abuse, psychological, emotional, verbal and financial abuse, sexual violence, and isolation. It's not always easy to tell at the beginning of a relationship if it will become abusive. Many abusive partners may seem absolutely perfect in the early stages of a relationship. Controlling behaviors tend to emerge and intensify as the relationship grows and the abuser tries to maintain control over his or her partner.

If you or someone you know is the victim of domestic violence, please know there are advocates and law enforcement ready to help and support you.

You are not alone.

- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking with impacts such as injury, fearfulness, post-traumatic stress disorder, use of victim services, and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases.
- On a typical day, there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide.
- Women between the ages of 18-24 are most commonly abused by an intimate partner.

Source: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Get Help Now.
To connect with resources that help victims of domestic violence in New York State, **visit www.Sheriff-Assist.org**.

Working Together to Saves Lives with Order of Protection Services

We sat down with Ron Bill who is the Crime Victim Notification Services Project Manager at the New York State Sheriffs' Institute (NYSSI). Ron joined the NYSSI staff in 2016, after retiring from a 38-year career with the Broome County Sheriff's Office. In his role, Ron meets with sheriffs, undersheriffs, domestic violence advocates, family court judges, clerks and emergency services personnel to support the Crime Victim Notification Services Program and provide professional training statewide.

Q: Why is the need for Order Protection Notification so great?

A: It's all about safety. I travel across the state to help people understand how the Order of Protection Notification System works and what they can do to ensure the safety of crime victims. In some ways, it seems like there are more crime victims than ever, but what I think is happening is that there is more education and awareness taking place. More crime victims are coming forward and working with advocates to feel more in control and regain their power. Victims are saying I am not alone and I won't stand for this anymore.

Q: Why is the first 45 minutes after an Order of Protection is served so dangerous?

A: We know that retaliation and revenge are more likely to happen in the first 45 minutes after an Order of Protection has been served. That's because emotions are heightened and the person being served can be very angry and dangerous. They may want revenge, which can result in verbal or physical abuse. In extreme cases, the abuser could have a weapon and end up in violence or death.

As I travel throughout the state, I stress the importance of everyone's cooperation in the system. We need court systems and advocates to introduce the notification system to crime victims. We need crime victims to register and we need law enforcement to serve the order of protection and enter it into the system portal to generate the alert.

Q: What is the biggest hurdle in getting people to use this crime victim notification system?

A: Because of their experiences, I think some people are afraid that others would have access to their personal information. This is false. This system is totally secure. They only information a crime victim needs to register is their court originator number, order number and docket number found on the Order of Protection issued by Family Court. For those whose case generated in criminal court, they will need to add their last name, first initial, date of birth and last name of the person to be served. Registration can take place on a smartphone or computer so they can be notified via text, phone, or email.

Q: How are you working with advocates to ensure the safety of crime victims?

A: When crime victims have experienced trauma, they often rely on advocates for support and access to services. In many cases, advocates have been victims of crime themselves and can provide a safe space without judgement, and victims trust them. Law enforcement cannot always connect with victims in the same way. We're all grateful for advocates across the state and the outstanding work they do. Having a good working relationship is critical. We've been trying to spend more time collaborating and listening so that we understand their process and they understand ours. Many Sheriffs' Offices across the state have started to have advocates on staff to ensure this highly collaborative effort works for crime victims. We are all a part of this puzzle.

To register for Order of Protection Notification, visit www.Sheriff-Assist.org.

New York State Office of Victim Services

A Message from New York State Office of Victim Services Director Elizabeth Cronin

OVS Director Elizabeth Cornin speaks at the 2019 annual VINE conference in Albany.

The New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS or Office) is an Executive agency that provides a safety net for crime victims and/or their family members, helping eligible individuals with medical and counseling expenses, funeral and burial expenses, lost wages and support, in addition to other assistance, all at no cost to taxpayers. OVS also funds more than 200 victim assistance programs (VAPs) that provide direct services, including counseling, advocacy and legal services, among other help, across the state.

Many of these VAPs have been created in partnership with county Sheriffs, police departments, New York State Police, and District Attorneys' offices. OVS also provides funding to the New York State Sheriffs' Institute in support of its Crime Victim Alerts, including Order of Protection Notification System and Inmate Release Notification System. The Order of Protection service notifies crime victims by text, email, or phone once an Order of Protection has been served so they can activate their safety plan and stay protected. The Inmate Release system is powered by VINE—a service which allows crime victims and their families to learn the custody status of an offender, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by telephone or online. This provide peace of mind and gets the power back in the hands of the crime victim so they stay safe.

While our mission gives many the impression that we are solely a human-services agency, OVS is actually a hybrid, public-safety and human-services agency. With federal funding provided by the Department of Justice, and State funding from the Criminal Justice Improvement Account (CJIA), it is important for the Office to cultivate and maintain strong partnerships with all levels of law enforcement, from local police departments, to county Sheriffs and District Attorneys, to State Police, to the FBI.

In addition to the federal mandate that programs such as OVS encourage victims' cooperation with law enforcement, coordinating with law enforcement is also important because the state funding from the CJIA is derived from the fines, fees, and surcharges collected by the state as the result of criminal and vehicle and traffic convictions. This is how OVS can provide its victim compensation and fund its local VAPs with no taxpayer money.

OVS' definition of "criminal justice agency" includes what is normally associated with law enforcement such as police departments, sheriffs' offices, and district attorneys. For the Office's purposes, also included are any other governmental agency having responsibility for the enforcement of the criminal laws of the state. This includes family courts, adult and child protective services, and any NYS licensed medical facilities that provide forensic examinations for victims of rape and sexual assault. When OVS investigates a claim for victim compensation, it relies on items such as police reports, Domestic Incident Reports (DIRs), and family court orders of protection to establish that a crime did happen.

It is through the good work and partnerships with law enforcement, particularly our county Sheriffs' offices, that we are able to assist thousands of claimants to the tune of tens-of-millions of dollars every year.