


(One Year Later)

Kian Movasagi was one of the lucky ones: He survived last year's notorious Capitol Hill shooting where six teens were killed.

It's been a year of physical and mental challenges for him, but also one of surprising discoveries, as outreach and support has poured in from around the country

Stories By Todd Matthews

PHOTOGRAPHS BY OLUGBENRO OGUNSEMORE



ONE YEAR AFTER
THE CAPITOL HILL
SHOOTINGS SURVIVOR
KIAN MOVASAGI IS
STILL HEALING—AND
TRYING TO FIND
WAYS TO HELP
OTHERS RECOVER



AN INTERNSHIP AT SEAREAL RECORDS HAS HELPED KIAN MOVASAGI MOVE BEYOND THE TRAGEDY OF THE CAPITOL HILL SHOOTINGS

On a recent Tuesday afternoon, 19-year-old Kian Movasagi bounds through the hallway

and recording spaces at SeaReal Records—a windowless Belltown hip-hop recording studio with plush furnishings, a framed music award along a narrow hallway and an engineer leaning over a soundboard. Dressed in a brown T-shirt, baggy cargo pants and sneakers, Movasagi, tall and lean with bushy brown hair, is a snapshot of youth: endless energy and breathless enthusiasm for music and video games.

On this day, the only thing that seems to set him apart from his peers is a svelte black cast that keeps his right arm at a 90-degree angle. Moments later, as he settles into a sofa next to his mother, Dagmar Glier, he lifts his T-shirt to reveal another difference: marks from a shotgun blast that left ashy, quarter-sized scars on his stomach and on his right leg.

That Movasagi is alive is a miracle.

A year ago, on the morning of March 25, 28-year-old Kyle Huff opened fire on a houseful of young people settling in after a rave and after-hours party on Capitol Hill. Huff, a burly, 6-foot-5-inch, rural Montana transplant, was armed with a handgun, pistol-grip shotgun and bandoliers of ammunition. Six victims died: Melissa Moore, 14; Suzanne Thorne, 15; Christopher Williamson, 21; Justin Schwartz, 22; Jeremy Martin, 26; and Jason Travers, 32. Huff also died after turning the gun on himself as a police officer approached him outside the house. Two people, including Movasagi, were wounded and survived (the other survivor has not been publicly identified).

Images of that morning are now iconic and familiar to most Seattleites: a sky-blue Craftsman-style home at the corner of 21st and Republican, roped off by yellow police tape; medical examiners in puffy white Tyvek suits snapping photographs of bodies shielded by shrubs; a front door splintered by shotgun fire; Huff's (in hindsight, at least) villainous coal-colored and window-tinted Dodge truck parked a block away; the word "NOW" spray-painted moments before the murder by Huff along sidewalks and steps leading up to the home; Huff, stalking terrified victims throughout the house, allegedly shouting, "I've got enough ammunition for everyone!"; a swimming pool with water the same blue as that Capitol Hill house just outside a three-story, tan-and-beige Northgate apartment complex where Huff and his twin brother, Kane, shared a residence; and a single sheet of paper with a crooked, block-lettered message believed to be written by Kyle to his brother, describing the gunman's motives for murder.

The murders shattered families whose loved ones died inside the house, shook an entire city and traumatized the peace-loving rave community, which prides itself on openness and acceptance of others.

For Movasagi, on a personal level, the aftermath of March 25 has meant a lengthy rehabilitation that continues today and a permanent disability—but also the unexpected discovery of outreach and support that has spanned across the United States.

WHEN MOVASAGI THINKS back on March 25, a chipped, eggshell-colored pillar on the front porch is what he remembers. "The last thought in my mind was that I was going to get shot," says Movasagi, as he recalls the seconds leading up to the explosion of violence. He relays events with a calm detachment, as if he's recapping a movie. "My first thought was he's got some crazy costume and some crazy guns to go along with it. I did not think he was going to shoot us."

Movasagi was wrong. Two people were shot dead on the porch in front of Movasagi. Seconds later, Movasagi was shot by Huff from just 5 feet away. "There was a pillar in the way from where he was on the stairs," he explains. "Kyle had to walk up on the porch to aim at me and shoot. I heard the gun and felt a tremendous amount of air."

Movasagi, still in shock and what he described as a "fight or flight mode," staggered into the kitchen. His right side bloodied by the shotgun blast, he started to explain to others that a shooter was inside the house. Before he could finish, more shots were fired, and people scrambled out a back door. Movasagi followed them into the backyard and watched as they raced to

climb over a fence. "They wanted to get as far away from the house now, obviously," he explains. "I didn't know how bad my injuries were, but I knew I couldn't follow them. I'm not going to try to hop over the fence with one good arm." Instead, he sneaked around the side of the house where he found two people dialing cell phones. A third person sat nearby holding his stomach, blasted by Huff's shotgun.

"I've got to get out of here," Movasagi told the other teenager. "Do you want to come?"

"I can't," he replied.

Today, Movasagi is uncertain if the young man, a stranger, survived. "There were three survivors, and one person died on the

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way to the hospital," Movasagi explains. The other survivor wasn't publicly identified by the police or media. "He was holding his stomach, and the person who was in the hospital with me also had major stomach wounds."

Seconds later, he stumbled down the street, where he saw a neighbor waving for him to come over. "That's when I sat down," he continues. "The adrenaline had come down a little bit. I sat down and thought, 'Oh, my God. I've just been shot. I can't think straight.' And right when I sat down, apparently, that's when the shooter shot himself, but I didn't hear the gunshot or see it."

Doctors at Harborview Medical Center first struggled to keep Movasagi alive; when he was stabilized, the goal shifted to saving his arm. In the end, his injuries deemed him a partial amputee; though he still has his arm, his elbow, surrounding tendons and muscles, and portions of his upper arm are gone, completely destroyed by the gunshot blast. The bones in his upper and lower arm end in jagged crags. He has 12-gauge bullet pellets lodged in his liver and abdomen. He can write, type and drive a car. But weightlifting, skateboarding and snowboarding—things he previously enjoyed—are out of the picture. He recently had a fifth surgery on his arm and an appointment with a prosthetic specialist who fit Movasagi with a prosthetic elbow.

He spent a month in the hospital before he was released Easter Sunday to his home in Kirkland, where he lives with his mother and sister, Arianne. Without the commotion of the hospital to distract him, the reality of what happened took hold, and he sank into a deep depression and post-traumatic stress. Antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications made him ill. In the hospital, he told his mother, "I fall asleep and I have nightmares. And then I wake up, and the nightmare continues."

Physically, he was exhausted. A walk from his bed to the door of his room was the day's big workout. The feeling in his hand was gone; he couldn't touch his fingers together, write or pick up anything. Physical therapy, which started at Harborview, continued at an Eastside clinic through November, consisting of

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Changed Lives

Mourning their children,
two mothers search for peace
amid profound loss

THE LIVES OF SANDRA WILLIAMSON AND NANCIE THORNE were among those that changed forever on the early morning of March 25, when eight young people were shot and six killed by Kyle Huff, including Williamson's 21-year-old son, Christopher, and Thorne's 15-year-old daughter, Suzanne.

These two mothers spoke with *Seattle* magazine (most family members of the victims have shied away from the media) about trying to navigate a new life without their children. Both have learned new things about themselves and their children, while mourning a loss difficult for most to fathom.

Williamson now calls a part of her backyard "Christopher's area." A path of slate stones leads from the deck of the North Seattle home to a large pond from which three giant rocks emerge and water spills over. A nearby cherry tree stands over a bronze picture of Christopher. Just beyond this setting, Thornton Creek ripples and whirs. Christopher's friends still come here to sit on a bench, eat lunch, listen to music from nearby speakers, recall stories of Christopher and sign individual rocks that line the ponds with messages to their late friend.

"He always liked to lay back there and read," says Williamson, who described the setting in a phone interview. "When he was murdered, I knew that area was going to bother me, so I had to change the look of the backyard."

A daycare operator for 41 years, after her son's death Williamson suffered a depression so complete that she couldn't work for six months. She moved her daycare business to her home to be closer to Christopher's spirit.

Since his death, she's learned new things about her son. "He touched so many people's lives," she says. "I had no idea." She used to nag him to log off his computer, go outside and meet friends. "He was a computer nerd," she says, laughing. "I kind of thought he was a wallflower."

But her son was more outgoing than she knew. At his memorial, 500 people packed a North Seattle church. "They came with their pink hair, nose rings, and they were holding

SANDRA WILLIAMSON (FOURTH FROM LEFT) HAS DISCOVERED NEW THINGS ABOUT HER SON SINCE HIS DEATH; HERE, SHE'S SURROUNDED BY HIS FRIENDS WHO STILL REGULARLY VISIT HER. OPPOSITE, A LIFE LOST, SUZANNE THORNE





EMBRACING SPIRITUALITY HAS HELPED NANCIE THORNE COPE WITH HER LOSS; SHE MAKES AND GIVES AWAY BEAD BRACELETS WITH POSITIVE MESSAGES

hands with 80-year-old ladies and crying with them. I never saw anything but total love among those kids," she says. And at the Evergreen-Washelli Cemetery, the caretaker has told her of a swell of young people who visit Christopher's grave. "The woman who works there told me he has more visitors than anybody," Williamson says.

She found her son's MySpace page, where ravers posted messages, and learned he was a father figure of sorts with "Deacon" as his nickname; it fit his role in the rave community and in their church, where he was a deacon.

One posting tells of a girl whose stepfather molested her; she turned to Christopher for help. A homeless young person who was a friend of Christopher's, who would have called her son, phoned Sandra instead: Someone had put a knife to his neck, and police called to ask if she would help. "I had never met this kid, but he knew Christopher," Williamson recalls. "I gave him some money and took him some of Christopher's clothes." Messages from other young people told of how Christopher offered food, clothing and the little money he earned working part-time at a Fred Meyer store in Lake City.

Williamson now has a MySpace page where she communicates with dozens of local ravers and friends of her late son. She has also chaperoned at local raves and provided water and refreshments. And she wears "candy," the brightly colored bracelets popular with

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THORNE HAS ALSO struggled with depression in the last year. Over coffee at the café inside Elliott Bay Book Company in Pioneer Square on a Sunday afternoon last fall, she spoke while still trying to accept the loss of her daughter. A slender woman with short red hair, she said the media attention immediately after the shootings was intrusive; TV news vans were parked outside the Bellevue home she shares with her two other daughters.

Her buoy has been spirituality—specifically Buddhism, reincarnation and kindness toward others, interests she shared with Suzanne but only fully embraced recently. She and Suzanne began sharing this spiritual connection when Suzanne was 8, after viewing a video of the film *Gandhi* together. "She understood the entire

ravers, given to her by members of the rave community. She's quick to defend the safety of these all-night parties, even before Huff came on the scene. Adults regularly chaperoned the raves, she says, and visitors were checked for weapons with security wands.

She offers this assessment of the rave community a year after the murders: "They are concerned," she says. Huff brought doubt and suspicions into their world. "In the rave community, there's no fighting or arguing. There is nothing but love and friendship. There aren't any problems or confrontations. They never had to be on guard [before] or worry about anything."

movie and the concepts of how we create violence through violent actions, and how we can really change things in a certain way."

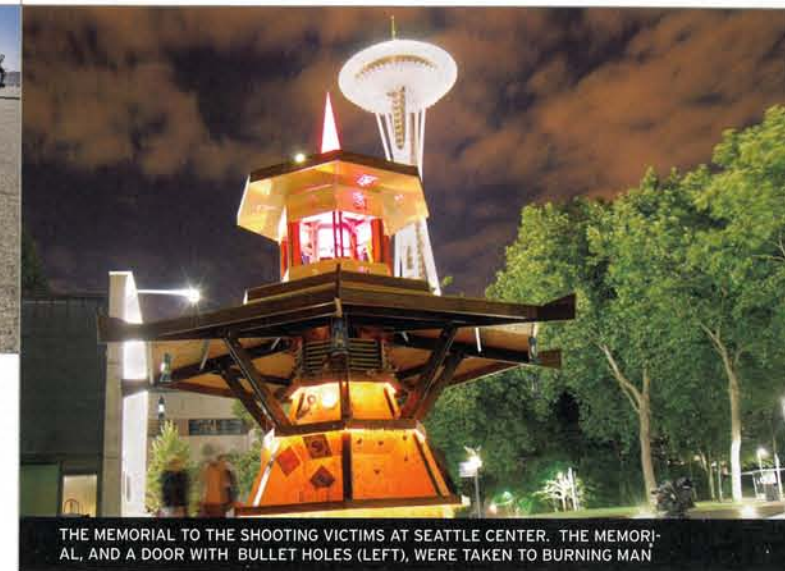
Suzanne became a Gandhi enthusiast. "And although she was still a normal kid and we had our disagreements and she had stuff going on that kids have, she always remembered the thing about Gandhi," says Thorne. "She said sometimes when things got really confusing for her, she would try to imagine what Gandhi would do and how he would respond to it."

Suzanne occupies the 17 seconds that Thorne takes every day to pause and change her energy in a positive way; it's a strategy she adopted months after the murders, on the recommendation of a psychiatrist, initially with some skepticism. "He told me that if I would do that for 17 seconds every day, a lot of this grief and the deep shock that really pulls you down after a trauma like that would probably start to blow off and things would change for me," she

explains. "I started creating a world full of joy because I had lost touch with my joy and creativity, and it started to work. And what I found was happening was that it wasn't just 17 seconds a day that I could be in that space." She adds, "It didn't completely take everything away, but that center in myself kind of redeveloped."

Suzanne's spirit and energy also exist in the bracelets Thorne has started to create in her honor. The colorful braids of beads, popular among Suzanne's peers in the rave community, carry single-word positive messages: Magic, Honor, Freedom, Sacred, Release. She gives them to her colleagues at Boeing, her daughter's friends and complete strangers, and encourages them to also pause 17 seconds each day to think positively.

"The loss is always going to be there," she adds. "I don't know how I would disconnect from it. It is a defining thing. It's a real life-changing thing. It wasn't in my plans. I've had to redefine myself." **S**



THE MEMORIAL TO THE SHOOTING VICTIMS AT SEATTLE CENTER. THE MEMORIAL, AND A DOOR WITH BULLET HOLES (LEFT), WERE TAKEN TO BURNING MAN

THE LONG GOODBYE

A temporary memorial goes up in smoke

LAST SPRING, A GROUP OF around 200 Seattle artists and others gathered at Miller Community Center, a few blocks away from the Capitol Hill murders, for a trek to Seattle Center. They carried pieces of an art installation that would be erected to honor the people killed in the Capitol Hill massacre.

The idea was born just days after the murders, says Amani Ellen Loutfy, when a handful of artists gathered for a barbecue. According to Loutfy, an artist and board member of Ignition NW—part of the Burning Man regional network—the murders weighed heavily on everyone's minds. Designing and building a temporary memorial was a chance to focus a community's grief on the event that shattered a city, says Loutfy, who has a hardbound book filled with photographs that document the creation, construction and eventual destruction of an art project.

A town hall meeting to discuss the idea drew 150; an informal collective of artists was created and named—Seattle Memorial Temple Crew—and members began to brainstorm a design that would be called the Temple of Light. A variety of communities and individuals contributed to fund-raising.

The finished installation, a wooden temple, stood 25 feet high at the foot of the Space Needle from July 30 to August 17. The temple was ringed by six benches representing the victims shot inside the house, and seven glass sculptures in the center depicted either a serpent or a heart, depending on viewing angle.

DOOR: RON LEWIS; MEMORIAL: MICHAEL HOLDEN

Intricate lotus signs adorned the temple, and an adjacent gate-like structure was covered in messages, photos and notes tacked on by visitors (so many were left, in fact, that it collapsed).

One design aspect drew much debate among artists: Kyle Huff's inclusion.

"At first, there were reservations about us representing the killer," says Loutfy. "But what would we look back on? Would we rather look back on being more openhearted or less? In a weird way, without [Kyle Huff], this wouldn't be possible. And I really felt for his family. His parents are also grieving."

In the end, the memorial—along with a bullet-riddled door taken from inside the house—was transported to Burning Man in August, where it was set on fire in the hopes of releasing all the grief it carried.

Nancie Thorne carried one of the temple's benches representing her 15-year-old daughter, Suzanne, from Capitol Hill to Seattle Center. "It was just such a beautiful thing for those people to do," she says. "I think it was a statement to who these children were. If we look at them as children who sacrificed their lives so we could grow, that temple was just a perfect way to acknowledge that...And I really liked the concept of burning that because it was sort of taking away the grief. It was beyond words." **T.M.**