



CHIROPRACTIC (GENERAL)

Planting Seeds of Hope After Tragedy

AVIELLE RICHMAN'S PARENTS ARE DEDICATED TO PREVENTING THE VIOLENCE THAT TOOK THEIR DAUGHTER'S LIFE. HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP.

John Popowich, DC

Doctors of chiropractic are accustomed to changing lives; after all, every DC has at least one story of a patient with long-standing pain who came to their office, hoping against hope that you could make a difference where others could not, and you came through. But what if your life changed in a single moment because of one of your patients? And what if that single moment created unimaginable pain for you and everyone around you? John Popowich, DC, QME, DABCN, lives in Sandy Hook, Conn., and practices in Newtown, less than three miles from Sandy Hook Elementary School. Dr. Popowich's 6-year-old patient, Avielle Richman, was senselessly struck down on Dec. 14, 2012, along with 19 of her classmates and six teachers / administrators at Sandy Hook Elementary.

Nearly a year later, Avielle's family, Dr. Popowich and so many others live with the anguish of that horrific day. But they're also working to remember the innocent victims and prevent the tragedy that befell their once-peaceful community from ever repeating itself. Here's what you can do to help.



Jeremy Richman, his wife, Jennifer, and their daughter, [Avielle](#), relocated from San Diego, Calif., to Newtown, Conn., in early 2011. Jennifer and Avielle first visited my office in March of that year. Jen and Avi were a delight to work with from day one. At their first visit, Jen told me they had seen a chiropractor in San Diego and enjoyed the benefits of chiropractic care. Jen and Jeremy are both scientists who appreciate a combination of alternative and traditional health care.

Jeremy came into my office later after experiencing neck pain. Avi had told him, "You need to see Popowich." According to her dad, Avielle had persisted in urging him to come to my office on more than one occasion.

Dec. 14, 2012 was like any other Friday before the holidays in our quiet New England town: kids excited about the upcoming long vacation; parents working on their holiday plans. I was in my office seeing patients when around mid-morning, a police car flew by, siren screaming. In a small town, that's always a big deal, but when another police car went by, and then another and another, we all started to wonder what was happening.

Then the phone calls came - first the reverse 911 call, "Newtown schools are in lockdown," followed by friends calling from all around the country asking if my family was OK. I still didn't know how bad the situation was, but I knew it was a major event because it was getting national TV coverage.

The first reports that came in were confusing and provided a great deal of misinformation, but by noon we were faced with the hard truth: 20 children, along with six teachers / administrators, had been killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School. When I heard that my little patient Avielle was one of those killed, my heart broke. She and the other children taken from our community were the sweetest,

kindest, most innocent children you could meet.



In the days and weeks following that tragic event, many tears were shed as the town struggled to come to grips with the horror of it all. Everyone was suffering from extreme stress and needed some way to help deal with it. Many local alternative health providers offered free services for those in need during this trying time. The community came together and we supported one another. It was amazing to see the support, love and kindness demonstrated both locally and around the world.

Following the tragedy, many groups, both existing and newly created, discussed the shooting; the majority spoke about gun control, increased security at schools, and the need for justice. Avielle's parents chose a different path to help honor their daughter and find a way to decrease violent crime. Jeremy and Jennifer chose to research the cause of violent behavior from the standpoint of brain health and look for therapeutic options (drug and non-drug). They founded the [Avielle Foundation](#), whose mission is to "prevent violence by fostering brain health research, education, and policy; and community development, engagement, and responsibility."

I met with Jeremy and Jen recently and asked if, as a doctor of chiropractic, I could reach out to the chiropractic community to help raise donations for this worthy cause; while at the same time honoring Avielle, my young chiropractic patient and chiropractic advocate, who was taken from our lives far too soon. They graciously said yes.

To that end, I am reaching out to my fellow chiropractors and asking you to support the Avielle Foundation with two forms of fund-raising. First, on Oct. 17, Avielle's birthday, please donate one or more patient visit fees, or whatever amount you are comfortable giving, to the foundation. Second, I encourage you to hold an in-office promotional event on Dec. 14, the anniversary of the shooting, and donated any funds raised.

As a chiropractor, I am very grateful to have served Avielle during her short visit with us and would be honored to have my profession support this cause. It is heartbreaking to know that I will never see her hop on my adjusting table again, but through our collective support, we can help in some way to put an end to these all-too-common violent events. Thank you.

To learn more about Avielle Rose Richman and the foundation established in her name, visit <http://www.aviellefoundation.org>

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