

My name is Katie Thompson.

Last year I drove around Iowa for 3 months and interviewed and photographed about 3 dozen survivors of domestic violence. Including myself. One survivor for each day of October--Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

This year, I drove around Iowa for one month--October--and took these 31 stories and portraits to 8 community college campuses around the state. And one shopping mall.

I set up the photos, and the stories, like you see them here, and I talked to the people who came to look. I'd say to them, "So... do you think this interesting?" And they talked to me. And do you know who they were? Do you know who I met?

I got to meet some of the walking dead in our state. Women, and men, who are dead inside. They live in pain, they grew up with pain, and they are dead inside.

I used to be one of the walking dead. I was on a spiral down, down, down.

And do you know how it stopped? How my spiral stopped? It stopped the night I was sitting in the police station in Spencer, Iowa, and a counselor from the women's shelter came in to talk to me. The police had paged her--it was after midnight--and she came in to reach out to me.

Now, I'm out of that dark valley. And it's my turn. So I drive around the state, and I show these stories, and these photos, of other women who are alive again, and I reach out to the walking dead. So maybe they know they're not alone.

But I'm just one person. I'm not going to be the one who can answer that call and go to the police station, or do the hundreds of hours of counseling it can take to bring that woman back to life, like it did for me, back to a real life, a healthy, productive, tax-paying, voting life.

And I'm not going to be the one who can sit down with the little girls and little boys who lived in that home, and help those children re-learn the bad things they've seen and been taught.

Do you know what one of the young men said to me, at one of the college campuses, a student? He said, "When you're little, you can't leave."

So, I can't be the one to do all those things. But someone has to do it. How many walking dead do we want to have in Iowa?

We have people ready to do this work. We have outreach offices, and pagers, and counselors, and shelters.

But we might not have money. I think it would be a good investment in the people of Iowa, in the children of Iowa, to find the money.