Catherine Shellman, founder of “Unsilence the Violence: A firsthand experience with dating/domestic violence through the eyes of a mother,” has spoken to large groups such as Texas State University, police departments, and numerous high schools in an effort to bring greater awareness to dating/domestic violence.

She volunteers with numerous organizations, including Crime Victim Services at the San Marcos Police Department, Hope Hospice in New Braunfels, and First Christian Church in San Marcos. She was recognized as Volunteer of the Year by the Hays Caldwell Women’s Center and Hope Hospice.

Shellman, who was born in Chicago and raised in Southern California, has two daughters, Tiffanie and Becky Perry. Tiffanie, her oldest, was born in Beverly Hills — something Tiffanie was always very proud of, her mother said. The family was not wealthy, though. Tiffanie was born at Cedars Sinai Hospital because it was one of two hospitals in the area that accepted her father’s military insurance.

When Tiffanie was eight years old, the family moved to Austin. In California, Shellman ran a childcare facility out of her home so that she could be home with her children. After moving to Austin, Shellman began a housekeeping business, so that she could set her own hours and be home when the girls arrived from school.

As the girls got older, Shellman started her own mortgage processing business, again so that she could have the freedom to be with the girls. Both girls were active in school and sports, and Shellman wanted to be there to cheer and encourage them.

As Tiffanie grew older, she enjoyed modeling and body building. After graduating from high school, Tiffanie attended Texas State University in San Marcos, where she was on the Dean’s List and graduated with her bachelor’s degree in business management.

While in college, Tiffanie met Kenny Trevino, a mixed martial arts fighter, and began a relationship with him. In September 2010, two weeks after 23-year-old Tiffanie broke up with Kenny, he shot and killed her. He then turned the gun on himself and took his own life.

During Tiffanie’s relationship with Kenny, Shellman had no idea of the level of abuse that her daughter was experiencing. Neither did the rest of her family or friends.

Before her death, Tiffanie gave each person who was important to her a small piece of the puzzle regarding her abuse, Shellman said. It wasn’t until her death that they all shared with each other what they knew — giving them a better understanding of what she went through, why she found it so difficult to leave and why she was murdered.

Shellman now speaks regularly with young adults to share her message: “Abuse of any kind is unacceptable. Love does not hurt. Dating and domestic violence is a disease in our society of epidemic proportions. The good news is that we can eradicate it, and the first step in doing so is bringing awareness to it. Talking about it, ‘Unsilencing the Violence.’”