

COLD

Voice to the Vanished: Lessons from the Cold podcast

By Dave Cawley, investigative journalist and host of *Cold*

#findsusan

Disappearance of Susan Powell

Susan Powell vanished on Dec. 7, 2009. Law enforcement suspected her husband, Josh Powell, had killed her but never arrested or charged him with a crime.

Killing Susan's sons

Josh Powell lost custody of their two sons, Charlie and Braden, when his father was arrested for voyeurism and child porn possession. Josh then killed himself and the boys during a supervised, court-authorized visit on Feb. 5, 2012.

Case goes cold

Investigators exhausted their leads and declared the case cold in May of 2013. At that time, they released a redacted version of the entire case file.

Voice to the vanished

Susan speaks

The redacted case file included thousands of pages of Susan's emails, Facebook messages and personal journal entries.

Serial for Susan Powell

KSL saw value in bringing Susan's story forward as a podcast. Longform would provide for context and nuance that's often absent in broadcast news.

Victim-focused storytelling

Consultation with the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition helped shape our approach. We chose to include a call to action with every episode.

Searching for answers and finding empathy

Three themes

1. Not all abuse is physical 2. Intergenerational grooming 3. Near misses of police

New venues

Cold prompted discussion, including a live event where we discussed intimate partner violence prevention resources live before an audience of thousands.

Personal stories

Listeners saw themselves in Susan's story. Some reached out to ask for help. Others shared their own accounts of escaping abuse.