Kathy Shaw, relentless tracker of clergy abuse, got the story out

Jun 26, 2018

by Bill Mitchell  |  Accountability  |  People

Before the credits roll at the conclusion of "Spotlight," a list appears showing 105 cities and towns in 41 states and another 101 places in 29 countries "where major abuse scandals have been uncovered."

It was a fitting close to the Academy Award-winning film that told the story behind the story of the Boston Globe's Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage of the clergy abuse scandal.

Kathy Shaw, the journalist who helped put those places on the map of this searing landscape in church history, died Sunday after a long illness. For more than 15 years, Kathy played a remarkable behind-the-scenes role as the driving force of the Abuse Tracker blog.

GET NCR DELIVERED TO YOUR INBOX. SIGN UP FOR FREE NEWSLETTERS

Kathy Shaw, relentless tracker of clergy abuse, got the story out

The Tracker started at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in 2002, moved to NCR at the end of 2003 and was adopted in 2006 by Bishop Accountability.org, where it operates today.

If journalism is the first draft of history, Kathy Shaw compiled the essential index of one of the church's most important and painful chapters.

I started the Tracker a couple of months after the Globe's first story in January 2002 and recruited Kathy as a volunteer collaborator a few months later. At the time, I was running Poynter.org, a resource for journalists wrestling with the transition from print and broadcast to digital.