Nana grew up in the Karen state of Burma where she was an ethnic and religious minority. The only life she knew was one where she and her family, her entire community, endured oppression and persecution by the Burmese. She grew up witnessing those she loved brutalized and tortured by the government, just because of who they are.

One night when Nana was 10 years old, she was startled awake by the sound of shouting and chaos. She ran outside to see that her village was being raided by military soldiers. They held her and forced her to watch as they burned down her home, beat her mother, and murder her father. Although badly injured, her Nana’s mother knew that they couldn’t stay in their village another minute. She grabbed Nana’s hand, and together they ran into the forest. They kept running until they made it to a refugee camp in the neighboring country of Thailand.

She began to make a new life in the refugee camp. She met her husband there, and gave birth to her first child. And finally, after 10 years, was able to resettle in the United States, in the city of St. Paul, as a refugee. While she was now thousands of miles away from Burma, the trauma she endured as a child followed her to St. Paul. Nana’s heart felt heavy. She was tired all the time and struggled to muster the energy to take care of her children. She would have nightmares and never wanted to sleep. She saw a doctor who prescribed medicine to help with her health problems, but her trauma symptoms made it difficult for her to manage those medications. Eventually her symptoms would get so bad that she’d end up in the emergency room.

Seeing that the usual care her doctor was offering wasn’t actually helping Nana, her doctor referred her to CVT’s Healing Hearts program. Her doctor worked closely with the therapist and social worker from CVT. Together, they helped Nana understand that what she was experiencing was Major Depression and PTSD. Although shy at first, Nana and her therapist built trust together, and she began to speak freely about her experiences. Her therapist was then able to help Nana’s doctor better understand what Nana was saying she was feeling. Once there was a shared understanding of what was going on, the team was able to help Nana manager her medications, and she stopped going to the ER. Recently, Nana shared with her social worker that her heart feels lighter.

This year, CVT will help nearly 30,000 survivors and family members, like Nana, know that they are not alone in their pain. To offer healing, capacity development, and advocacy on such a large scale this year, it will take $26 million dollars.