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Hello. My name is Dawn Watkins and I'm talking to you today in my role as the chairperson for The Humboldt County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. The DVCC, as we refer to it, is a partnership of public and private agencies and individuals who are committed to a constant and coordinated county-wide response to domestic violence. We are an incorporated non-profit comprised of a board of directors and several sub-committees, including the services and treatment committee, prevention committee, Native concerns committee and Latina Services committee as well as the all species protections committee. Our board is comprised of representatives from many different service agencies and community sectors including Humboldt State University, North Coast Rape Crisis team, Probation, Humboldt County Public Health, Latino Net; we have legal students, private therapists, batter intervention service providers, members of the DA's office, and domestic violence service providing agencies and community members with long histories of advocacy privately, locally and state-wide. And what I'm actually talking to you today is we're in the New Year; by now all the presents are down, the tree's down (at least for some of us) and it's a time to stop and reflect about how we're going to move into the New Year. I don't really want to share with you statistics about domestic violence because often once we start talking about that, we get very serious. And that's important because it's a serious problem, but really what I want to say today is 'Congratulations' and 'Thank you.' Like I said, a lot of times when we talk about this we get really serious: there's a lot of numbers that talk about all the ways that it's harmful to families and harmful to communities but one thing we don't talk about enough is all the people who get out and make a difference. And I know right now, the people who are listening to this: either you know someone or you ARE someone that escaped this kind of relationship, you escaped the abuse and that is awesome and congratulations and thank you. Some of you probably thought that it would never happen to you,

and then there you were, and some of you thought that it was something you deserved and that you were stuck in this cycle but you did it, you moved on and you made new lives for yourself. You moved into new relationships and you saved your families, and when you did that you did something that was outside of yourself, you really worked to make the world a better place because you changed it. You changed the dynamic and you stopped the cycle and congratulations for that. I also wanted to say thank you to all the advocates and all the people that work tirelessly because some of the people who got out of these relationships did it alone and some of them did it with this wide, wide web of support. That's not easy work; thank you so much to all the advocates that do it. I worked for Humboldt Domestic Violence Services for a long time and I can tell you that is not a thing that people do for money. There are way easier ways to make a living. It's done out of a firm commitment and a real strong passion to make the world a better place & you don't get enough thanks, so thank you. As you move into the New Year, give yourself the credit that you deserve. Congratulations and Happy New Year. This has been Dawn Watkins, chair of The Humboldt County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council on the KINS Community Comment.