**AWARDS SPEECH**

**FOR**

**KENNETH CABRAL**

Hello everyone, and thank you for all the support, hard work, time and compassion you have invested in the Exchange Club. For those of you that know me well, you know that I have been a concerned and vigilant advocate of solving the problems caused in marginalized, abusive environments and believe me, as much as I am humbled by this recognition, and as much as I encourage getting together with all of you for **good** and constructive reasons like this dinner, I do what I do with one focus... to stop virulent patterns of damage to children. I want to express my gratitude to our Executive Director, Donna Miller, who works tirelessly, with families, staff, supporting agencies.... anyone she can, to see to it that the kids in our communities have a decent shot at a healthy childhood and in turn a healthy, productive, satisfying adulthood. (**If you would like to acknowledge family members, do that here**). I would also like to thank my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and my children (**?**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for being the example and the motivation, as well as the sanctuary, that I **personally** come home to. They inspire me every day to remember what it means to have a supportive system of love, respect, partnership, and yes... some healthy debate... and although all of us here tonight can read a thousand books and study even more treatises on the subject, practical application provides the most dimensional and symbiotic lessons when it comes to having an intuitive sense of how to stop the insidious conditions that threaten our youth.

Incidents of abusive conditions in the home are approaching epidemic proportions... maybe that’s because we’re **FINALLY** hearing about many of them. For the most part, the remedy in the past has been to remove the children to treat the adults.... that may not be the most effective course. In the multi-pronged offensive against domestic violence, we also must focus on the father’s presence and **HIS** treatment. In the past, so much has been said.... in largely idealistic terms, about the strength and the importance of a father’s positive presence in the home, but consider this.... we live in an era of rampant information sharing. Word travels fast and there’s not much that can be hidden.... closed door scenarios are finding their way to the forefront in every aspect of life and while everyone may want to continue to see the world through rose colored glasses, that no longer serves us.... or our children. The author, Clarence Buddington Kelland said, “My father didn’t tell me how to live; he lived and **let me watch him do it.**” ... and therein lies the modern problem we face. We have to address issues of domestic violence at the root. And it is **URGENT** that, at that root, fathers are as critical a focus as the children and the mother. The Exchange Club is at the forefront of that mission.

I grew up in a small town... Bristol, Rhode Island... it **HAD** to be small.... the **entire state** was only about ten times bigger than Stamford!! (**Wait for the laugh**) ... But in that small town, we had a sense of community... everyone knew what was going on and for the most part, families looked out for one another. That sense of caring and concern must be recreated in **all** communities. We can not afford to have at-risk families fall through the cracks.... issues of abuse must be identified and addressed... there’s too much at stake. Not one community in this country can afford the damage created by a critical issue that multiplies geometrically through generations of violence and frustration.

Sigmund Freud reminds us, “I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.” Whenever possible, a child deserves to feel protected. I am proud to do what I can for the Exchange Club and for families, children, and communities that have suffered too much at the hand of ignorance and neglect. I sincerely thank you again for this honor and I look forward to the day when **ALL** people... dads, mothers, children... can live in environments that are supportive, nurturing, healthy, and productive. Thank you all!!