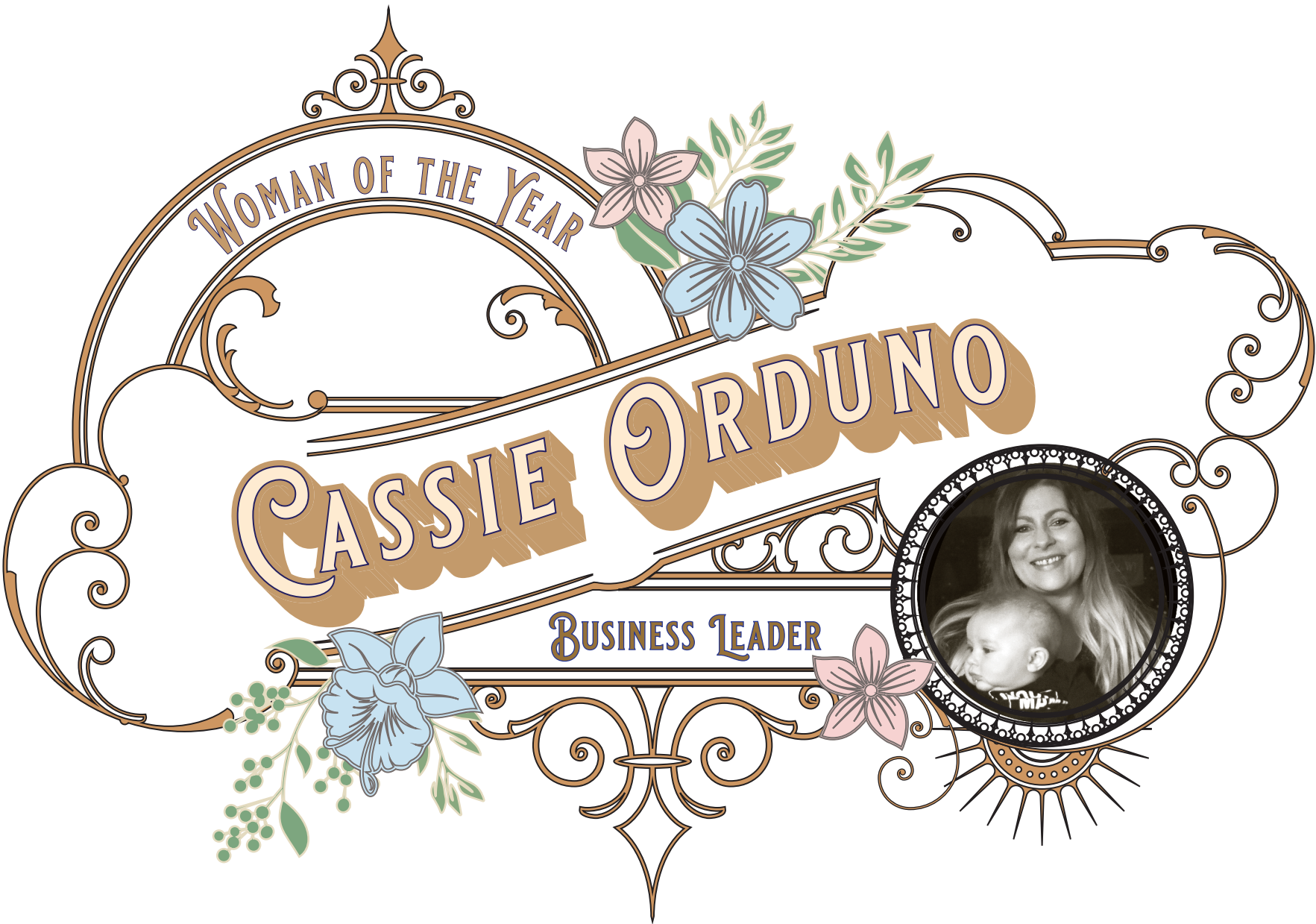


BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR....page 8

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HOME MAKER OF THE YEAR....page 10





For the past 11 years, Cassie Orduno has been the friendly face that patrons of Bella’s Bistro have seen as they walk through the front door to enjoy a unique dinner experience. The daughter of Dan and Pam Kraft, and sister of Alysia Kraft, Cassie has certainly got her hands full.

While one business can be enough to keep someone busy, Cassie and her husband, Tommy, opened up the Saratoga Sandwich Shop in the summer of 2020 in the midst of a global pandemic. In addition to those two businesses, Cassie is mother to Sophia and Thomas and is often balancing the duties of being a mother with the role of business owner.

When the Saratoga Sun opened up nominations for the inaugural Woman of the Year, nominations for Cassie quickly arrived.

“While pregnant and during a pandemic, Cassie opened her second local business in town. She is a dedicated and hard working mother of two,” wrote Shirley Hillyard. “But what truly sets Cassie apart as a business leader is her love, care and devotion to her community and employees.”

For Cassie, the nomination and winning the Sun’s first Business Leader of the Year holds a lot of meaning. Part of that is because it was many of Cassie’s employees who took the time to send in nominations.

“With two kids and two businesses and social responsibilities and responsibilities at home, I walk away a lot of days feeling like I couldn’t give as much as I wanted to any one thing and I sometimes feel like I didn’t give enough to anything,” said Cassie. “So, to be nominated and to win this award while juggling the kids and the businesses and the pandemic and life, it just feels like such a wonderful validation that what I put in is seen.”

Because Bella’s and the Saratoga Sandwich Company are both owned by Cassie and Tommy—though they are different concepts—many of the same faces seen at one restaurant are seen at the other. Some days, people may even see Cassie at both locations. Though she works alongside her staff quite often, she admitted that she was shocked that so many of her staff nominated her.

“It feels like such a compliment to me to know that my staff respects me even when, sometimes, I have to be a boss above being a friend. It’s a huge honor to know that, even through that, they know how important they are to me personally and also to our business,” Cassie said. “The fact that they took time out of their own private lives, of their own volition, to nominate me is the greatest honor I could imagine. Makes me feel like what I put into this business is worth it in

anything that makes it worth it for my staff.”

In addition to her team, Cassie said that much of her success is also due to her multi-level partnership with Tommy.

“We’re partners. We’re partners in our business, we’re partners in our personal life, we’re partners in parenting and we both carry an equal share. I couldn’t do it without Tommy and I don’t think he could do it without me, too,” said Cassie. “I fully accept that I am accepting this honor that it was only possible because of his contributions. Especially since I’ve stepped back with my kids, Tommy takes on a larger role doing some of the stuff that I used to do when I was here full time and I’m very grateful to him for that.”

While Cassie is certainly honored to have won the first Business Leader of the Year, she knows that she is not alone in raising a family while running a business.

“It’s an honor, as a mom, to be recognized for contributing to the community while juggling children because I know that—especially this year where moms have more on their plates, kids at home—it’s been hard just to keep things rolling in a personal sense this year and I know there are other moms out there that are doing the business thing, too,” Cassie said. “I’m proud of me, I’m proud of them, I’m proud of all of us.”





When one thinks of a community leader, the first image that may come to mind is someone serving as mayor or leading a particular board or commission. Often, though, it is the ones that do the “behind the scenes” work that are able to see things get completed and support projects that will ultimately benefit their community.

In her nearly 42 years in the Valley, Irene Archibald has served or is currently serving on nine different boards. As if those didn’t take up enough of her time, she became a realtor in 2015 and currently works for White Stone Realty and is a part-time bookkeeper for the South Central Wyoming Emergency Medical Service (SCWEMS) Joint Powers Board.

Irene serves as treasurer on most of the board she’s a part of, a fitting position due to her master’s degree in finance. Where that degree really comes in handy, however, is serving on the board that oversees the collection and disbursement of the One Percent Specific Purpose Sales and Use Tax (6th penny tax).

“Irene has selflessly donated her time as chair of the Carbon County Specific Purpose Tax Joint Powers Board,” wrote Doreen Harvey in her nomination of Irene. “She has taken countless hours of her own time navigating the board through the bonding process through a very turbulent time. She

has volunteered her talents to many boards and organizations over the years. She has used her talents to benefit us all.”

Many is the operative word. Along with serving on the Carbon County Specific Purpose Tax Joint Powers Board, Irene currently serves as the secretary of the Platte Valley Community Center Joint Powers board, treasurer of the Platte Valley Health Care Project Board, treasurer of the Encampment Dirt Diggers and treasurer of the Saratoga Council of Catholic Women.

“I think I have about four different Quickbooks files,” said Irene.

In addition to those boards, she also serves as the Head of the Finance Committee of the Wyoming Community Foundation Board of Directors, a position she credits to Cathy MacPherson.

“I’m reading like 21 grant applications right now for various programs that we can make donations to,” Irene said. “I think most of them will be funded, but they’re a wonderful organization that does some great work.”

In the past, Irene has also served on the Saratoga/Platte Valley Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors—she was also the Board President at one time—and was the treasurer of the Grand Encampment Museum Board for a period of time. She also served for two terms on the Encampment Town Council

alongside Mary Martin, Marcy Knotwell, Lynn Acord and Greg Salisbury.

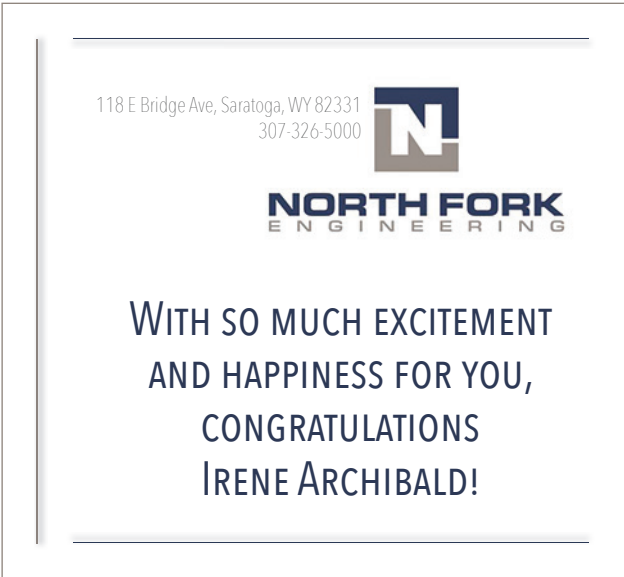
During her time on the Encampment Town Council, the Town of Encampment established the industrial park, rehabilitated the Grand Encampment Opera House, purchased the current town hall and overhauled the town’s zoning ordinances.

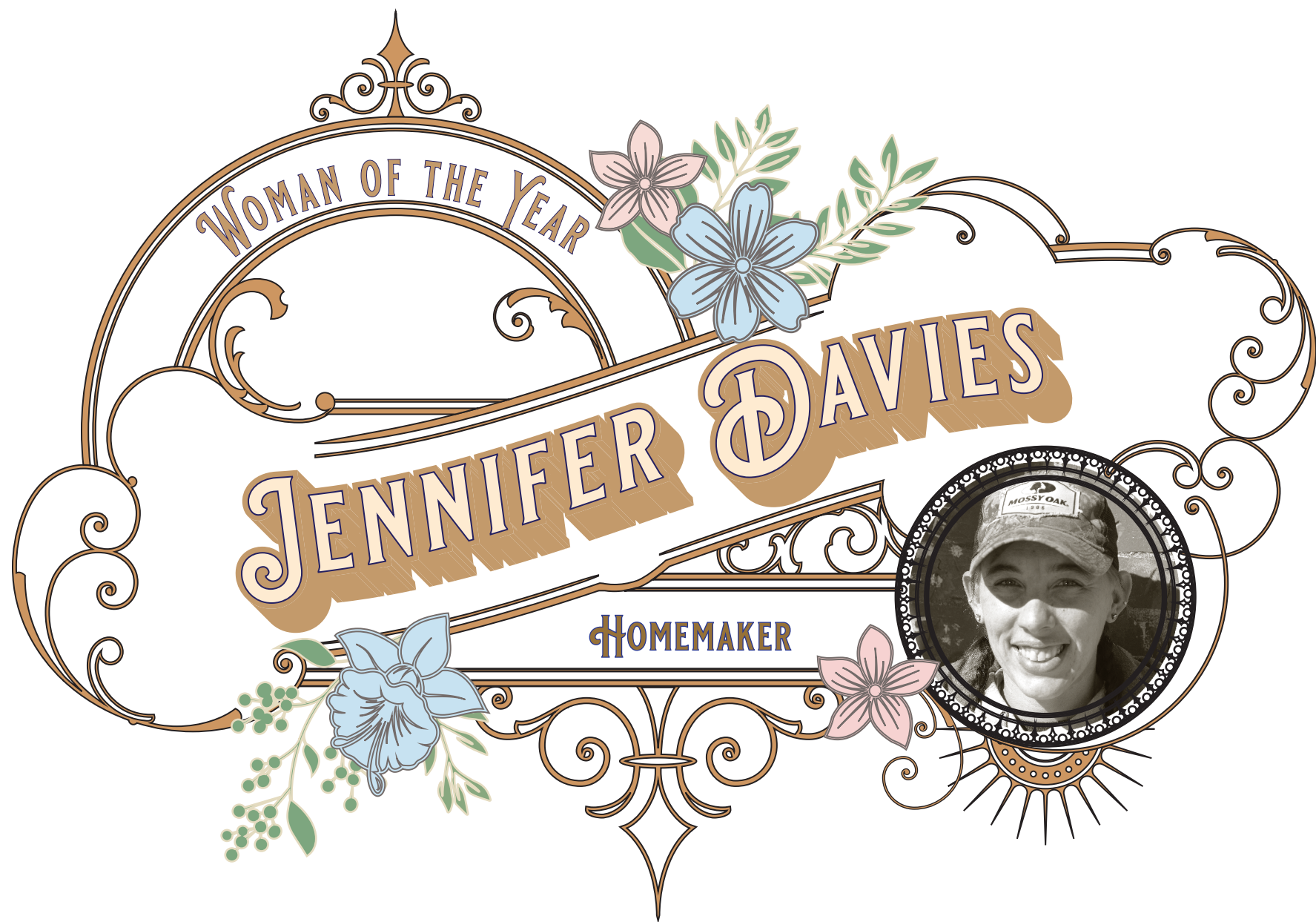
One must ask, however, how does she find the time?

“I have a wonderful husband. I do. He doesn’t mind doing housework and I think that’s one of the main reasons I can get it done. He is the type of person that he likes to get out in public and see people and everything but he’s not a joiner. He never has been a joiner,” said Irene. “He just likes staying home and doing stuff at home and he doesn’t mind doing some of the housework. He knows I’ve always been like this, I’ve always been involved.”

She doesn’t think, however, that she would be as involved if she lived in a larger community.

“In a bigger town, there’s more people to do these things,” Irene said. “I just see a lot of needs in this community and I want to contribute to them. It’s easy to do things around here because you do have the support of others.”





As women continue to make advances in both business and community, one role that can often be overlooked is that of a mother. In some cases, it is estimated that being a mother is the equivalent of working two-and-half full-time jobs. What can make it even harder, at times, is being a single mother.

Most people may not recognize Jennifer Davies right away. Jennifer, herself, admits that she prefers to try and remain off the radar. Up until recently, however, she was working at the Family Dollar in Saratoga while raising four kids, three of them her own. When she was notified she was awarded Homemaker of the Year, Jennifer admits she was a little shocked.

“I thought it was cool, but when I think of homemaker I think of somebody who quilts and cans and all that stuff. So it made me start questioning what people (who) nominated me, what they were thinking of. I didn’t know if it had anything to do with me, at the time, being a single parent, taking on my nephew as a foster (child),” said Jennifer. “It blew me away, especially winning it, because I feel like, most of the time, I’m just that average person that nobody pays attention to.”

While working at Family Dollar and raising her three kids, Jennifer took on the role of legal guardian for a child she considered

her nephew, albeit temporarily. According to Jennifer, the role wasn’t long term and, eventually, he made it to where “he needed to be.”

“It was the right thing to do. He needed somebody to be his cushion and I got to be that cushion,” Jennifer said. “Everybody thought I was crazy for doing it but I don’t regret one bit of it. I was in a position to help out. Somebody had to be his voice and I chose to be that voice.”

According to data from Statista, Jennifer isn’t alone in being a single mother. As of 2019, there were approximately 14,838 single-mother households in the United States. What can make a difference, however, is the type of support a single-mother receives. While she may be alone, she is not always alone.

Jennifer credits her mother—who was a single mother herself for a time—as providing a much needed support system, especially when she was raising four kids.

“In those types of situations—regardless whether it’s a mom or a dad—when you’re put in a situation to take care of your children you have to buckle down and do it. No one’s going to do it for you,” said Jennifer. “My mom was a single mother for a long time, so a lot of that I learned from her. You just got to buckle down and do it. It’s not your kids’ fault you’re

by yourself.”

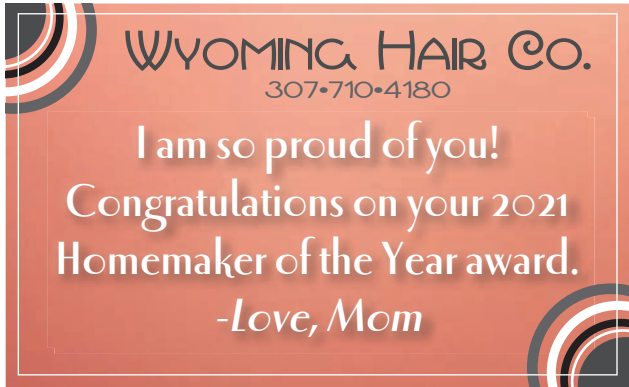
Part of being a single mother means making sacrifices. According to Jennifer, that sacrifice came in the way of being very clear with potential employers that she was raising her kids on her own and that she needed schedules that were consistent. Sometimes, those jobs worked with her. Sometimes, they didn’t. Now, however, Jennifer is working on setting her own schedule.

“Currently, now, I’m not working,” Jennifer said. “I’m trying to focus on trying to start my own business.”

The time that Jennifer is able to spend at home with her children while she tries to start her own crafting business is something she treasures. She is hoping that, within a year, she’ll be able to make it into a full-time gig. Until then, however, she is helping out other parents by offering to babysit their children as they work themselves.

Jennifer is honored to have been nominated and to have won Homemaker of the Year. She said that it can be too easy, most of the time, to feel like what you do as a mother isn’t seen by others.

Said Jennifer, “It’s nice to know that people are actually realizing that I’m a decent person.”



To All Who Sent in Nominations

