



Abby's House

SHELTER ◦ HOUSING ◦ ADVOCACY

40th Anniversary Video

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Abby's House 40th Anniversary Video

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Abstract

This project aims to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Abby Kelley Foster House (Abby's House). It developed a video highlighting the achievements and goals of Abby's House. The project used interviews and other relevant footage to convey the impact that the organization has had in the Worcester area. The resultant video is nine minutes, 35 seconds long, and features many people involved with or living at Abby's House. The video will debut April 26th at Abby's House Spring-Tacular event, and will help promote the organization to the community.

Acknowledgements

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In addition, we would like to thank Professors Robert Traver and Jian Zou for fine-tuning and advising our project. Their counsel was instrumental to our success. We also thank Worcester Polytechnic Institute for giving us this opportunity.

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Executive Summary

Abby's House aims to provide low cost housing and services to women in the Worcester community. Over the past 40 years they have helped over 13,000 women and greatly expanded their housing capacity. The theme for their 40th Anniversary is "Honoring the Past, Building the Future." To celebrate their anniversary, we have created a video that will be shown at their Spring-Tacular event in April.

The goal of our project was to help Abby's House honor their past as well as inspire them to build their future. The video had two main objectives. The first objective was to spread awareness of Abby's House to the Worcester community. The second objective was to celebrate the impact they have had over the past 40 years. These two themes were combined into the final 40th Anniversary Abby's House video. Abby's House can use this video to inspire potential donors and supporters, as well as educate the surrounding communities of their mission.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Many women and their children do not have a home. Homelessness is a growing problem, especially in cities such as Worcester. Shelters such as Abby's House not only provide a bed and a meal, but also provide support and services to help women regain control of their lives and secure a home. Abby's House is the largest provider of emergency shelter and long-term housing for women in the area. Through community involvement and support, they have been able to remain active for 40 years without much government funding. These women's success stories have earned Abby's House and its staff numerous awards since their founding in 1976. Their accomplishments and history will be presented in a short film that Abby's House will use to celebrate their 40th anniversary.

In order to create a video that highlights the past 40 years, we have conducted research and interviews. The resources for this research have included online documents, books, and photos, some provided by Abby's House's founder, Annette Rafferty. Board members, staff, volunteers, and residents have provided interviews to be used in the video. Abby's House has two other videos about their organization, however, they are unrelated to the 40th anniversary. This new video addresses the anniversary and contains more information about Abby's House past and present.

The video was organized into two major sections: "Honoring our past" and "Building our future." This was based on Abby's House slogan going into their celebrations. The video provides a brief history of the organization, as well as overviews of some of the programs they

offer today. Following these overviews is a segment that relates staff and volunteers' hopes for the future of Abby's House, and shots of various residents and guests of the organization thanking Abby's House.

The video will be debuted at the annual Spring-Tacular event in April. This event brings together the Worcester community to celebrate and raise support for the shelter. The community will be able to appreciate the thousands of women Abby's House has sheltered and promoted.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This literature review provides background and current information about Abby's House that was used to generate a video celebrating its past 40 years and its impact on the community. We explored the history of Abby's House by focusing on when, why, and how the shelter was created and how it was supported along the way. We used data to describe the level of service Abby's House provides to the Worcester community. This history, featuring the success stories of women in the home, was compiled into a short film to demonstrate the value of Abby's House and its evolution.

2.1 History

To produce a film that represents Abby's House dedication to helping women, it was necessary to learn about the growth of the organization. Founder Annette Rafferty has written two books that tell the story of Abby's House. To develop a proper context, this section will be a short chronicle of the organization's history.

Abby's House was founded in 1976, just as the battered women's movement was beginning. Shelters were uncommon, therefore, Annette Rafferty recommended opening a new one (Abby's House History, 2009). Abby's House was initially an emergency overnight shelter that over time grew to help women regain control of their lives (Rafferty, 2001). Abby's House began on 23 Crown Street. They now own a total of 4 buildings in the surrounding area (Rafferty, 2001).

Abby's House is able to provide more for their women than just a place to sleep. There are now programs on rape prevention, women's nutrition, poverty, and economics. In 1986, they created Abby's Day Center, a place where women develop plans to better their future. The Day Center has computers that women can use to apply for jobs, a television and couches, and many tables for the Abby's House community to eat meals together. The women who used the Day Center ran the thrift store that is now open 6 days a week. This gave the women an opportunity to learn responsibility. In 1995, Abby's House opened a public walk-in counseling service. They created a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder booklet and provided training for staff and volunteers. The Financial Literacy Program started in 2008 to teach women basic finance skills. These programs have earned their staff and volunteers numerous awards (Rafferty, 2001).

Abby's House has been supported by many people since 1976. They were established without government funding and remain independent. Relying, instead on donations and volunteers from the Worcester Community. In a similar spirit at support their landlord sold them the original house for a low price after hearing about their cause (Abby's House, 2011). Overall, community support has allowed Abby's House to form strong connections with many different organizations in Worcester (Rafferty 2001).

2.2 Impact

Abby's House has been dedicated to helping women in need since its founding in 1976. There are a large number of homeless women and men in Worcester without a safe place to go. In 2014, there were over 1,700 homeless individuals in the Worcester County. Locally, there are 190 homeless families who qualify for Emergency Assistance (Central Massachusetts Housing

Alliance Inc., 2015). Abby's House was one of the first overnight shelters for women in the United States, is one of two shelters that do not require guests to be on welfare, and is currently Worcester's largest provider of affordable housing for low-income women and children (Citizens Bank, 2009). The shelter has helped the community for 40 years. Without it, many families would struggle to find housing and support. Abby's House is more than a shelter. It serves as a safe haven in the community where women can find help and be supported.

Abby's House has a goal to help homeless women regain their footing on the path to independence. Last year, eighty families found affordable housing through Abby's House and fifty-two women and their families were given temporary housing. But more than a place to sleep, all women receive free food, clothes, and counseling. Every woman who enters to the shelter is interviewed by the shelter advocate and assigned their own advocate throughout their stay. The women's center hosts numerous activities such as literacy programs, financial counseling, health services, computer training, parenting support, and much more. These activities positively impact the health and well being of more than 200 women annually.

Currently, ninety-six percent of guests leave the shelter and move to long-term housing or a treatment program, and ninety-eight percent of residents in the housing program move into independent housing (Abby Kelley Foster House, Inc., 2015). These are examples of how the Abby's House programs are a success in helping women and their children across central Massachusetts. The entire objective of the house is to take these women and families off the streets in hope they will leave this facility fully capable of living independently.

2.3 Sustaining Impact

Abby's House hopes to expand. A primary goal for the shelter is to engage more than 200 volunteers to continue the shelter's success (Abby Kelley Foster House, Inc., 2015). The volunteers range from college students to retirees and serve as receptionists, provide overnight coverage at the shelter, work in the Thrift Shop, and help prepare meals. Without this assistance Abby's House would have to hire staff instead of putting money towards the women that stay in the shelter. The volunteers provide invaluable assistance and compassion that Abby's House could not function without. Celebrating successes can motivate these volunteers and workers. An anniversary video is a way to reflect upon these successes.

2.4 Anniversary Videos

Anniversary videos are a way for organizations to acknowledge their accomplishments and supporters. Videos for non-profit organizations like Abby's House are often produced by volunteers or by professionals. Rosie's Place, a women's shelter in Boston, MA, released a 40th anniversary video, *The First Forty Years*, which was produced by a professional crew. This video includes similar content and techniques to the Abby's House anniversary video that come together to both inform and excite the viewer. Because of the effectiveness of Rosie's Place's video, it served as a rough stylistic guide during early planning and editing of the Abby's House video.

The Abby's House video employs many common documentary techniques including interview testimonials, interview voiceovers on historic pictures, zooming into and panning

across still images, transition screens between sections, name bars for interviewees, and L and J cuts. Many of these are evident in Rosie's Place's video, proving their viability. L and J cuts, for example, are employed in both videos to smooth transitions and aid viewer comprehension. J cuts, in which audio occurs first, are used to cover edits to the interviews or undesirable video footage. L cuts, video appearing first, are used to introduce a subject before the audio discusses it. Moving across still images is also employed in both videos, as well as in almost every other non-fiction video. This technique is commonly referred to as the "Ken-Burns" effect, and serves to maintain the momentum of videos. These and other techniques keep the viewer engaged without distracting from the content of the video. Their prevalence in other videos and lists of good techniques for documentary editing proves their effectiveness.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The project delivered a video presenting the history of Abby's House and their impact on the community for the past 40 years. We worked very closely with Abby's House Communications Director, Virginia Marchant, to determine the contents of the video. The project involved historical documents and stories from people at the houses. The methods of producing the video included creating a script, storyboard, and shot list. Historical documents were collected from Abby's House archives. Time was spent at Abby's House and in the Worcester area interviewing people associated with Abby's House. These interviews were compiled into the video with accompanying images and footage.

3.1 Data Collection

The first task was to compile information about Abby's House history through sources such as books that founder Annette Rafferty wrote. Copies of these books were provided for our use during the project. Other sources include historic documents, such as photos and newsletters. Annette provided historic pictures and newspaper clippings, which were scanned for use in the video. In addition, Virginia provided digital photos of more recent events.

3.2 Interviews

A total of 48 staff, volunteers, residents, and guests of Abby's House were interviewed. We created different sets of questions for groups of people based on their involvement with

Abby's House. For example, there were specific sets of questions for the staff, volunteers, residents, etc. These questions were approved by Virginia prior to the interview and can be found in Appendix 1.1. Additional questions were improvised by the interviewer as needed.

Interviews were conducted mostly in Abby's House conference room and offices. At the start of each interview, the interviewee signed consent forms from both WPI and Abby's House. During the interview, one member of the team filmed while another asked the questions. These interviews served as the basis of the video.

3.3 Video Preparation

In preparation for filming, a script, storyboard, and shot list were created. The script was outlined by the interview questions. These questions prompted the interviewee to discuss important topics to be highlighted in the video. A shot list was created to capture important events and locations that would be necessary for the video. After filming, the footage was reviewed so that Virginia could create an outline for the video. From the outline a storyboard was created to visualize the scenes and dialogue. Virginia compiled a list of websites that contained cost free and royalty free music that was used in the background of the video. With the completion of this work, video editing began.

3.4 Video Editing

Sections of the interviews and pictures were arranged to follow the story board. The interview segments were chosen based on quality and relevance. Pictures of events or locations were added as they were discussed in the interviews. These provide the viewer with an image to

connect to, as well as keep the viewer engaged. The images also served to occasionally cover edits, which can be disruptive to video flow. Further edits were made to improve the footage used in the video. Editing was performed in Apple's iMovie video editing software. One song downloaded from www.freestockmusic.com was cut in such a way that it repeated itself for the entire duration of the video. This music was cut using the software Audacity. Progress meetings were held twice a week with Virginia to review the video and make additional changes.

3.5 Focus Groups

Focus groups with Abby's House staff provided feedback. The focus group was conducted with seven staff members. Questions for the staff were developed by Virginia and approved by all team members. They were given to the group as they viewed the video. These questions served as the prompts for the focus group. Written answers were collected for reference during the editing process. After implementing the edits, another focus group was held. Final edits were made to the video based on these suggestions. The final video was approved by Virginia and then presented to the Abby's House staff.

3.6 Ethics

The confidentiality and security of interviewees was taken into consideration at all times. Because of the sensitive information presented in the video, we were advised to omit last names of guests. No video or audio records were collected unless signed consent was given for use in the video. These consent forms were approved by the WPI IRB office. We scanned and sent them signed copies for documentation.

Chapter 4. Results

The video not only shows the impact that the shelter has had over 40 years, but also contains a brief history and information about the services they provide. Annette Rafferty describes the reasons for opening Abby's House and the struggles she experienced. Staff, volunteers, donors, and board members describe Abby's House and the work that they do. Testimonials from residents and guests provide a sense of how Abby's House has changed their lives and its importance to the Worcester community.

The raw footage totaled 6 hours and included 48 interviews. The film also included many everyday activities, special events organized by Abby's House, and shots of the four buildings they own. Black screens with text were used to separate the different themes in the movie. The themes include shelter, housing, advocacy, community, women helping women, future, and because of you. A description of the shelter is followed by a story from a former guest. An account of the acquisition of the four buildings is followed by the Housing Advocate describing available housing. The Shelter Advocate describes the intake process and how a woman can use the services provided by Abby's House. A description of the volunteers, events, programs, and donors involved with Abby's House shows the community of the organization. The women helping women theme includes the partnerships they have with outside organizations. Abby's House staff, volunteers, donors, and board members then describe their hopes for the future. This is followed by a success story of a former guest and thank yous from many guests and residents. The entire video encompassed Abby's House 40th Anniversary theme "Honoring the Past, Building the Future." The final video length resulted in 9 minutes and 35 seconds.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Throughout the past seven weeks, our team has spent many hours together filming, editing, and working closely with Virginia Marchant. Our reasons for choosing this project range from personal connections to the Abby's House mission statement to wanting to gain experience in video editing. Through this project we have learned not only the value of organization and time management, but also the difficulties of working with many different people. Some of our largest challenges involved scheduling meetings and interviews. Due to our short time frame and cancellations because of weather, we found ourselves struggling to gather all of the footage necessary. This made the editing process much more difficult.

From our experience, we have the following suggestions. A project similar to ours that is very demanding in terms of meetings should be offered during a term when weather is less of an obstacle. Before the team arrives at the project site, the sponsor should be very clear on what the deliverable is and what will be needed to obtain it. In our case, scheduling interviews beforehand would save a large amount of time. Informing the advisor of the project schedule can help to keep the sponsor on track. There needs to be a clear vision of what the video will contain in order to script interviews questions and create a storyboard. This will make it easier to obtain the appropriate footage during interviews the first time they are conducted, and will also allow more time to collect footage if necessary. In addition, it is beneficial to have the advisors aid students in getting equipment to ensure that the equipment is of the highest quality available and that it will be available when necessary. Overall, this project has been a learning experience for everyone involved.

Appendix 1

1.1 Interview Questions

If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you do not have to do so

Annette

1. What is your name?
2. What inspired you to open a women's shelter and what were some of the difficulties associated with starting the shelter in 1976?
3. How did this group of women know each other and come together with the common idea to open a women's shelter?
4. What was the single moment where you realized you had to do something to help these women?
5. Can you tell us about how you acquired the first house?
6. Can you tell us how you then proceeded to acquire the last three?
7. In what ways has Abby's House has grown over the past 40 years?
8. How has Abby's House impacted the community over the past 40 years?
9. What single aspect/moment of Abby's House has impacted you the most?
10. Where would you like to see Abby's House go in the future?

Elaine

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been with Abby's House?
3. How/why did you get involved in Abby's House?
4. What role did you play in beginnings of Abby's House?
5. How has Abby's House impacted the community over the past 40 years?
6. Where would you like to see Abby's House go in the future?

Board Member

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been involved with Abby's House?
3. What is your role at Abby's House?
4. How and why did you get involved with the board of Abby's House?
5. How was your experience serving on the board of Abby's House?
6. What is the largest impact that the board has had on Abby's House?
7. How does the board help Abby's House run smoothly?
8. What does Abby's House do that you think is most important/impactful for the women they serve? Elaborate on how this has affected you or the organization.

9. Where would you like to see Abby's House go in the future?
10. Is there anything else that you want to tell us that could be important to the video?
11. If there's anything else you think of, please send us an email.

Donor or Supporter

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you live?
3. How did you find out about Abby's House?
4. How long have you been involved with Abby's House?
5. What do you do for Abby's House?
6. What made you decide to support Abby's House?
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell us that is important for our video?
8. If there is anything else you can think of, please send us an email

Former Resident

1. If at any point in time you feel uncomfortable answering a question or would like to stop please let us know
2. What is your name?
3. Where do you live?
4. When were you a guest of Abby's House?
5. How/why did you come to Abby's House?
6. Where did you stay and what was it like?
7. What do you think of the staff?
8. Overall, how was your experience at Abby's House?
9. How has Abby's House impacted your life?
10. What are you doing now with your life?
11. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Housing Staff

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been at Abby's House?
3. What do you do at Abby's House?
4. How did you get involved with Abby's House?
5. What are some of the unique features that makes Abby's House different from other shelters?
6. What is the average wait to become a resident at Abby's House?
7. How does someone get a bed in the emergency shelter?
8. What is the average length of stay at Abby's House?
9. Could you describe the different types of housing that Abby's House offers?
10. Can you explain what the financial literacy program is and how the women benefit from it?
11. Can you elaborate on some of the women center activities? What services and programs take place there?
12. Is there anything else that you want to tell us that could be important to the video?
13. If there's anything else you think of, please send us an email.

Jean

1. What's your name?
2. How long have you been with Abby's House?
3. What do you do at Abby's House?
4. How many volunteers on average are at Abby's House?
5. What kinds of jobs do the volunteers do?
6. Why do you think volunteers want to volunteer at Abby's House?
7. How do the volunteers impact the staff?
8. How do the volunteers impact the women?
9. How much do donations help Abby's House? (nonmonetary)
10. Where do you see volunteering go in the future?

Julie

1. What's your name?
2. How long have you been with Abby's House?
3. What do you do at Abby's House?
4. What is the history of the Thrift Shop?
5. What are some of the past events that has been put on by the Thrift Shop? What was their impact on Abby's House?
6. What are the vouchers and how do they work?
7. How much impact does the Thrift Shop have on Abby's House and its women?
8. Where do you hope to see the Thrift Shop go in the future?

Justina

1. What's your name?
2. How long have you been with Abby's House?
3. What do you do at Abby's House?
4. What is the importance of community support such as monetary donors to Abby's House? (community support vs. government funding)
5. What is the most successful fundraiser that Abby's House holds?
6. Can you tell us about some other important fundraisers that Abby's House holds?
7. What impact do these fundraisers have on Abby's House?
8. Can you tell us about what the ARST fund is?
9. How does the ARST fund impact Abby's House?
10. Can you elaborate on some of the community partnerships associated with Abby's House?
11. What is the impact of having partnerships with local businesses and corporations?
12. What partnerships do you hope to have in the future and how would you like to see these partnerships grow?
13. Is there anything else you would like to tell us that you think should be in our video?

Katrina

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been at Abby's House?

3. What do you do at Abby's House?
4. How did you get involved in Abby's House?
5. What does Abby's House do that you think is most important/impactful for the women we serve? Elaborate on how this has affected you or the organization.
6. Can you elaborate on some of the programs and services Abby's House offers and how it helps the women?
7. What are some of the reasons that a women would become homeless?
8. How do you think the public stereotypes homelessness? How would you explain to others what homelessness really is?
9. What are some of the unique features that makes Abby's House different from other shelters?
10. What are the lengths of the waiting lists at Abby's House?
11. What is the average length of stay at Abby's House? (for each type of housing?)
12. Could you describe the different types of housing that Abby's House offers?
 - a. Would it be possible for us to get footage of an empty unit at some point?
13. Is there anything else that you want to tell us that could be important to the video?
14. If there's anything else you think of, please send us an email.

Parlee

1. What's your name?
2. How long have you been with Abby's House?
3. What do you do at Abby's House?
4. Can you explain what an advocate is?
5. What is the importance of advocating for the women at Abby's House?
6. Can you describe the intake process?
7. Can you explain what the reunification process is, how it works and why it is important?
8. Can you elaborate on some of the community partnerships associated with Abby's House?
 - a. More specifically the congregate housing partnerships such as Worcester Housing Authority, etc.
9. What is the impact of having community partnerships?
10. What partnerships do you hope to have in the future and how would you like to see these partnerships grow?

Current Residents

1. If at any point in time you feel uncomfortable answering a question or would like to stop please let us know
2. What is your name?
3. How long have you been a resident of Abby's House?
4. How/why did you come to Abby's House?
5. How has Abby's House impacted your life?
6. Could you summarize your experience at Abby's House?
7. What are your plans for the future?

General Staff

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been at Abby's House?
3. What do you do at Abby's House?
4. How did you get involved in Abby's House?
5. What does Abby's House do that you think is most important/impactful for the women we serve? Elaborate on how this has affected you or the organization.
6. Can you elaborate on some of the programs and services Abby's House offers and how it helps the women?
7. What are some of the reasons that a women would become homeless?
8. How do you think the public stereotypes homelessness? How would you explain to others what homelessness really is?
9. What are some of the unique features that makes Abby's House different from other shelters?
10. Is there anything else that you want to tell us that could be important to the video?
11. If there's anything else you think of, please send us an email.

Stephanie

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been involved with Abby's House?
3. What is your role at Abby's House?
4. Why did you want to be the Executive Director of Abby's House?
5. How has being the Executive Director of Abby's House impacted you?
6. What is the community of Abby's House like?
7. Do you feel like Abby's House is a family?
 1. What is it like working with the Abby's House staff?
8. How do the different departments of Abby's House work together to help the women that you serve?
9. Can you explain the Financial Literacy program and how it has impacted Abby's House?
10. Can you explain the ARST Fund and how it has impacted Abby's House?
11. What makes Abby's House different from other shelters?
12. What do you think has been Abby's House biggest accomplishment?
13. Where would you like to see Abby's House go in the future?
14. If there's anything else you would like us to know, please send us an email.

Volunteer

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been with Abby's House
3. What is/was your day job?
4. What is your role at Abby's House?
5. How did you find out about/start working at Abby's House?
6. What do you think about volunteering at Abby's House?

40th Anniversary Kickoff Founder Interview Questions

1. What's your name?

2. How long were you with Abby's House?
3. What single aspect/moment of Abby's House has impacted you the most?
4. Why was it important to you personally to open a shelter without gov. funding for women with and without children, jobs, etc.?
5. What do you think about where Abby's House is today?
6. Where would you like to see Abby's House go in the future?

1.2 Focus Group Questions

1. Does the video convey the impact of Abby's House over the years? Why or why not?
2. Does the video accurately show the community of Abby's House. Why or why not? If not, what do you think should be added or changed?
3. Does the video feel emotionally uplifting or inspiring? Why or why not? If not, what emotional response does the video elicit from you? Do you have suggestions to improve the video's emotional impact?
4. Is the video visually appealing to you? Why or why not? If not, what you think should be changed?
5. Do you see any scenes or photos that could be problematic in any way? If so, which ones and why?

Appendix 2

2.1 Interview Schedule

January 26, 2016:

- 8:45 - Shelter Staff Meeting
- 11:00 - Annette Rafferty and Elaine Lamoureux
- 1:00 - Housing Staff Meeting
- 1:00 - Katrina McNamara

January 27, 2016

- 1:00 - Gloria Todd and Jeanne Rosenblatt
- 2:00 - House Tours

January 28, 2016

- 11:00 - Jean Anger
- 1:00 - Parlee Jones and Camilla Rodriguez

January 31, 2016

- 11:00 - 40th Anniversary Kickoff

February 2, 2016

- 11:00 - Barbara Duso
- 12:30 - Current Residents: Kathy Cleland, Lynn Young, Jeanne Davies, Jessica Dickson, Dorena Henderson
- 2:00 - Take Photos

February 3, 2016

- 11:00 - Annette Rafferty
- 1:00 - Julie Komenos
- 1:30 - Ellen Griffin
- 2:00 - Shots of Thrift Shop
- 5:45 - Tina Potenti

February 4, 2016

- 11:00 - Mattie Vance
- 12:30 - Paws for People
- 12:30 - Jan Fisher

12:30 - Carolyn Howe
12:30 - Jeanne Davies
12:30 - Kerry Provost
1:00 - Pat Korandanis
2:00 - Sylvia Nyambura
2:30 - Lisa Engel
3:00 - Mary Chenaille

February 7, 2016

1:00 - Marie Poirier

February 8, 2016

10:30 - Stephanie Page

February 12, 2016

9:00 - Patti McKone
9:30 - Justina Lachapelle
10:30 - Thrift Shop Shots
10:30 - Genevieve Georges
12:30 - Sue Manero, Peggy Dix, Susan Luring
1:00 - Karen Nunley
2:00 - Wendy Harvey
2:30 - Alaina Olson

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