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Pat Zettas Speech given on July 30th, 2023, in Fresno, CA at the Award Ceremony

Good afternoon,

I'm Pat Zettas. Today I have the honor of representing the SJV Medical Scholarship Foundation, an organization which I believe has a great purpose. The scholarship award I will be presenting has been named in memory of my husband, Dr James Zettas. This is a proud and emotional event for me, and I thank the Scholarship Foundation for bestowing this honor in my husband's name.

Jim and his brother Paul were born and raised in Chicago. They were first generation Greek Americans. Their family was supported by a restaurant his father owned, the same restaurant that Jim and his brother worked in to get through medical school. They both became medical doctors.

I would like to relate some facts leading up to this auspicious occasion.

The story starts on an April day, April 2nd, 1975, with a "spring blizzard of the century", as it came to be called. We were living in a town outside of Chicago, Illinois. With the blizzard raging my husband, an Orthopaedic surgeon of over 20 years, sat reading his Bone and Joint Journal, and happened to glance at the medical positions available section. He found one for Chief of Surgery in Fresno CA at the county hospital, then named Valley Medical Center. With this position also came a teaching opportunity for rotations of medical students from UCSF – San Francisco. The challenges of this opening were so desirable that before the end of that year we were Californians, living in Fresno! Jim would always reflect on those next 21 years as the best of his medical career.

He arrived in Fresno with an excellent background and some 20 years of experience that prepared him to face this new challenge. His education included the University Illinois Medical School, and residencies in Orthopaedics at Cook County Hospital and Boston Children Hospital. He also served as a physician while in the Navy at US Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Maryland.

In memory, our Fresno years were very gratifying both professionally and personally.

Our friendship with Sergio Ilic and his wife, Carmen began there.

After my husband's death I was searching to find a way to honor his life. It all came together while visiting and listening to Dr. Ilic's passionate desire to create what is now the SJV Medical Scholarship Foundation. It seemed the perfect fit with Jim's views. From our earliest valley days, he was aware of the medical desert that existed for those living outside the large towns or cities within the valley. In addition, he had a strong belief in education, and respect for medical care. I believe that Jim would have wholeheartedly embraced the mission of the Foundation: to help educate doctors and expand accessible medical care throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

I would now like to invite Tania to join me. Tania and I met in person for the first time today, but I was already aware of and impressed by her outstanding history and determination. Today, she has completed her dream- and is a fully qualified Family Medicine Doctor.

Tania says she dreamed of becoming a physician since she was a little girl. When she was 12, her family moved to Turlock. This move put her on the path to fulfilling her dream, by giving her an education. I have read her story. Not only has her family experienced some of the difficulties of medical care in the valley but Tania grew up living among the population of people who had to continually face the challenge of language barriers, finances and worse, the lack of medical availability. These are facts that fueled her desire to pursue her dream and work to improve these problems as a Family Practice physician somewhere within the central valley.

The next step in her dream involved facing the financial expenses of schooling-significant loans. She accepted that burden and added working her way through college to succeed. As proof of her strength and dedication, this incredible young woman stands here today as the first recipient of the SJV Medical Scholarship. I take great pleasure in being asked to present this year's Medical Foundation check in the name of my husband, Dr James Zettas, to Tania.