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Celebrating the People Who Make Us Great

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This year, during my term as president of the American Podiatric Medical Association, I am going to celebrate people. I am going to honor those persons who have helped APMA grow in the past, those who continue to make this the strong and solid organization that it is today, and, most importantly, those who will lead our great profession in the future.

Let me start by looking at the leaders who have come before us. We have many past presidents seated in this House, and it is because of their help and guidance that we officers and members of the Board of Trustees have made it to this point in our professional lives. I could not think of going through the process of leading this great profession without the ability to call on many of our past presidents for advice and counsel. Will the past presidents please stand so that we can all thank you for what you have done and continue to do for our profession?

What about our future leaders? Certainly, many of them are also sitting in this room today. Yet many others do not see the need to make a commitment to leadership, and I must ask, "Why not?" Some of our future leaders are students who will join us in the near future, but too many are not here because they do not see the need, they do not want to make the sacrifice that is necessary to serve, or they are hampered by obstacles along the way.

Today's leaders must take a close look at how we govern our profession, so that all qualified members who desire to assume positions of leadership are encouraged and welcomed to do so. We need to train and mentor those who show the interest and the ability to lead, and we need to look at the ways to streamline the path to leadership. In order for podiatric medicine to grow to the next level, diversity is key. We leaders of today must make this House of Delegates and this Board of Trustees look like our profession.

Those of us here today do not have to be concerned about the present. Where we are today is because of your doing. This House has chosen the profession's leaders well. The current APMA Board of Trustees is one for the ages. Over the years, there have been excellent people on our Board, but the people in this room who make up our Board of Trustees today are very special. They are bright, hardworking, and totally passionate for podiatry and for each other. They are, in the truest sense, a team—and one that we should all be proud of. Please stand and be acknowledged.

For now, I will single out only one member of this group. You know, it is amazing to hear the stories of adversity that we all go through and manage to survive. It truly does make us stronger, but I, for one, pray that we are all strong enough already. This member of our Board has had more than his share of adversity, and yet I have never seen him angry. He always has a smile on his face. He is the consummate gentleman and, for me, the best ambassador our profession has had in my 29 years of service to APMA. All he wants is for other people to succeed and for podiatry to grow and prosper. He is our president, and he always makes a difference. Harold, we all owe you more than can be imagined.

What, then, is the glue that holds our world together? What connects us with both our progress in the past and the hopes for our future? No question, it is the people at APMA who work to make a difference in our lives every day, and I don't mean just our great staff, but our affiliates and state components as well. I look forward to working with the leaders of the affiliates. I congratulate Drs. Stienstra and Bernstein for their wonderful year as president of their respective organizations, and I want to congratulate Dr. Craig Garofolo, ACFAOM's new president, and Dr. James Thomas, the new president of ACFAS. We will work hard together to build a stronger profession for all of our members. I see my friends Richard Block and Kevin Kruse, Corky Kyle, Jon Hultman and Mike

Davis, Mary Feeley, Herman Hammerschmidt, and my friend Len Thaler from the great state of New York. These men and women, and all of the state executives, help our members every day. Without them we would not enjoy the success we have achieved. I am deeply sorry that our friend Gary Fetgatter could not be with us today, and our thoughts and prayers are with him for a total recovery. Please, will all of our state leaders stand and be acknowledged? And let's make enough noise so that Gary hears us back in Ohio.

We are fortunate to have such a first-class staff at APMA, from the mail crew to Joellen, who answers the phone when you call. And from our committee support staff to our department heads—this is the best group of people working in any medical association in the country today. Will our staff please stand and be recognized?

Let me single out one person from this group—even though he has been honored by this House in the past. It is his attitude, his pleasant personality, and his drive to be the best that makes David Zych the model for all those who make their home at APMA. Thank you, David.

We have many special guests here with us today. One of them is fairly new to his current job and is attending this meeting for the first time. But in the few years that I have known him and his work, I know for sure that he wants to make a difference. I am honored to introduce you to Rick Abrams, the executive director of the Medical Society of the State of New York. Please stand up, Rick!

I need to talk briefly about two more people from our organization. I know that everyone there works hard, but I have never met anyone who produces more work than Dr. Jay Levrio, a man of unusual intellect, dedication, and loyalty. We would not be enjoying the success that this organization has today without Jay. Thank you.

Leading our staff is Executive Director Glenn Gastwirth, a man I have known since my days as a student. Our lives have been touched by each other both personally and professionally, and his wisdom and good humor are a continuing inspiration to me. Actually, a member of Glenn's family has been responsible for almost all of the happiness in my life. His cousin Robin introduced me to Greta, who is now my wife of 35 years. Thank you, Glenn, for everything.

And now I segue to this distinguished House of Delegates, saluting all of you here today, as well as those who have served in the past. You have honored me with the opportunity to lead our wonderful profession. You were even thoughtful enough to tell me when you were not completely happy with my performance; but here we are today, and I stand before you truly humbled at the confidence you have placed in me. I look ahead with joy and excitement, and I realize that without the loving support of my family and friends, this wonderful day would not be happening for me. I will introduce you to my family tomorrow at the installation, but allow me one comment: I am blessed by the presence of my mother, June Schofield, truly a woman way before her time and a role model who has made us Schofields a little tougher to deal with than the rest of the folks growing up on 14th Street in Manhattan. I love you, Mom.

So this year, let's celebrate the people who make podiatry the great profession that it is. Let's celebrate our victories, and let's celebrate our members—in the small towns and in the major cities—who face the difficulties of running a small business and a professional practice every day, knowing that APMA makes that a little easier.

As we hear from Dr. Gastwirth on a regular basis, "You win with people." Let's celebrate those people, and let's recognize that we have come a long way so that we can start working on a better tomorrow for all of us.

I am told that this is my acceptance speech, so I will close with a few "I do's":

- Do I accept the responsibility of leading this great organization? Yes, with great passion and humility.
- Do I accept the trust in which all of you place in me by allowing me to become the president of APMA? Yes, with love and profound respect.

Thank you.

DAVID A. SCHOFIELD, DPM
President