My name is Riley Johnson, I am a first-year student at the School of Dental Medicine here at CU Anschutz medical campus.

Let me start off by saying how incredibly humbled I am to be here; how incredibly humbled I am to represent my class in showing our appreciation as part of this special service. We do not know your loved ones, we do not know their names, we do not know their interests or their talents, we do not know the life they lead, we do not know the special way they cared for others, we do not know their smile or their laugh, we do not know much about their lives at all, but what we do know is that they were incredible individuals, in our lives and in the lives of everyone at this school they are absolutely incredible.

The breadth of things that a lifetime has to offer is awe inspiring. Its full of times that are amazingly wonderful and times that are unimaginably hard. In so many ways, a lifetime is so short and yet it is the longest thing that we have or will ever experience. And through it all we have been given a single medium by which we experience everything, a body. My belief is that our body is the most personal and meaningful object that we will ever be given. It is the medium through which we experience the world and it is beautifully complex. To me and everyone in my class, your loved ones have helped unlock the door to a career of meaningful service. The knowledge we have gained from them will help bless the lives of countless others and we cannot thank them enough.

To give a rough idea of just how much good they have done, I wanted to share with you the magnitude of how many people have been blessed by this wonderful act. We have 3 health professions (Medicine, Dental Medicine, and Physical therapy) represented here as well as the department of Human Anatomy. All of which, greatly benefited from your loved one’s contribution. The number that a sole practitioner serves in each of these professions throughout their career is around 172K (Medicine), 115K (PT), 144K (Dental), plus thousands more that will be helped through the Department of Human Anatomy. Multiply each of these by the number of students in each program and add them all together and you have quite an incredible number in the magnitude of tens of millions. Knowledge gained from the charitable act of your loved one will contribute to every visit. To me, it is one of the most noble things you could possibly do, to pay it forward to the next generation that will undoubtedly do many great things.

Many of my fellow students feel the same way and I want to share some of their words aswell. Keith, a first-year student from the SDM said, “I want to express how fortunate I feel that your loved ones selflessly donated their bodies to enhance my education. It was an experience I will never forget... Today we celebrate the life of your loved ones and I hope you can feel peace knowing they contributed to the greater good of society.

Mo, another student at the SDM said, “I want you to know that I feel the weight of your loss and offer my condolences to you and your family. No matter what any of us believe happens after death, it is a rarity for a person’s remains to have such purpose, meaning and influence on others. Your body is something you get to know intimately, it is the vessel that carries you
throughout your life, you truly are closer to nothing else. Bequeathing that part of you to benefit the education of future health professionals and all of the patients they will interact with is such an admirable and beautiful thing. Your loved one performed one last charitable act that ultimately will keep on being paid forward. The students who were lucky enough to learn from those who donated their bodies to science have a deep respect for these individuals; I personally thanked the donors at the beginning of my time with them and will always be thankful for the gift they provided us. Their legacy lives on!”

Your loved ones have truly performed an incredible act. On behalf of the school of Dental Medicine and on behalf of all those at the Anschutz Medical Campus I want to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts to those individuals who have donated their most meaningful possession for our benefit. And to the loved ones who likely gave up an opportunity for closure that they were looking for, we thank you deeply for your support, and want you to know that your loved one’s donation will never be forgotten.