

South Seminole Sertoma Club
SERVICE TO MANKIND AWARD 2018 RECIPIENT

Thomas Gekas
Patio Grill Sanford

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This year's South Seminole Sertoma Club's recipient of the Annual Service to Mankind Award honors an individual who truly provides "service" to not only SERTOMA but also those other community groups and organizations that are committed to Serving Mankind. Sertoma has been on the receiving end of his support for over a decade.

We have chosen to award Thomas Gekas (Tom), for generously providing meeting space, technical support, discounts on meals and overall outstanding accommodations for our Club and dozens of other Community Service, Civic Organizations, Church and Religious Groups, and Clubs of all kinds from across the Central Florida Area.

An unlikely restaurateur today, Tom immigrated from Athens, Greece after studying at a school for electronics. Speaking no fluent English, he started out helping his Uncle in Ohio improve his Diner—resulting in a popular locally known Greek Style Restaurant.

Moving with his family to Florida in 1990, he started working at an established Family diner group and within 8 years bought the Patio Grill from them, followed by buying their other restaurants. In 2007/08 Tom and family purchased a vacant restaurant building on busy Highway 17-92 that was slated to be torn down. Working with Seminole County, City of Sanford and the Redevelopment Board, through mountains of red tape, The Patio Grill Sanford was opened for business in 2009. It has become the "clubhouse" for just about every small group, organization, chamber of commerce, church group and "service" club because of the community meeting room Tom insisted on including in the building rehab.

Tom, Connie and the rest of his family and staff have become the "go to" meeting and eating space for literally dozens of groups from the League of Women Voters and the Daughters of the American Revolution, to the Rotary and Kiwanis. Church sponsored Groups like the Good News Ministry and Knights of Columbus; as well as retiree groups such as AT&T Pioneers, Sears Retirees, Sheriff's Retirees. Even specialty groups like the RC Airplane Club and Mane Event Horse Club now call the Patio Grill and Tom Gekas' hospitality home.

South Seminole Sertoma especially has benefitted from the support of Tom and the Patio Grill Family for our annual Super Student Award Program Breakfasts held monthly during the school year and our Annual "Freedom Essay Contest" Awards Breakfast sponsored by our local Sheriff and video-taped for replay. Previously, we had to hold these events at hotels with costly room fees, minimum charges, slow service and very expensive video/audio upcharges—starting at a minimum of \$300 just for audio/video tech support. Tom gives us a special kid's rate for the children and their families so we can afford to encourage them to come see their Super Student be honored. Holding our special events and monthly dinners at Patio Grill, instead of at area hotels, has helped stretch our sponsorship dollars; allowing us to do more community service with the money we raise. And one more very important thing....

You see, with his training and enthusiasm for electronics, Tom provides all of us (everyone using the community room for their meetings) with his TECH support for our computer presentations, our speakers technology and video needs AS PART OF HIS SERVICE AND SUPPORT TO THE COMMUNITY.

Tom's kind nature, patience, generosity and cooperation has been so appreciated and invaluable on a number of occasions for SERTOMA and so many other groups... We want to honor him for being such a wonderful community partner and for his Service to Mankind. Congratulations Thomas Gekas and all of the Patio Grill Family! Sertoma Salutes you.