

IN MEMORY OF HIS FATHER'S DEDICATION, DENTIST STARTS SCHOLARSHIP

By DENNIS TAYLOR

EHSAN REZVAN, a Monterey Peninsula dentist with a history of community service, has established an annual scholarship — four years, worth up to \$25,000 per year — for a student whose story of ambition and need most closely resembles that of Rezvan's father.

He started the scholarship fund with \$20,000 of his own money, and is asking the public for help, not only by making donations at www.rezvanfoundation.com, but also by attending a \$250-per-person gala event on Feb. 4 to be emceed by Iranian comedian Maz Jobrani, a regular on the NPR radio show, "Wait, Wait ... Don't Tell Me," and a frequent performer on late-night television. The gala (6 p.m., Hotel Sofitel in Redwood City) will include a cocktail hour and a four-course dinner with wine pairing.

Ahmad Rezvan, Ehsan's dad, lost his father at the age of 14 in his home country of Iran. As the oldest surviving male in the family, the teenager was expected to quit school and find full-time work to support his mother and three siblings.

"My father did what was expected at that young age — he found a job. But what he kept secret the whole time is that he never quit going to school," said Rezvan, a periodontist with offices in downtown Monterey and Gilroy. "He'd attend classes all day, until about 3 p.m., and go straight to his job from school and work until 10 p.m. Then he'd come home and study under a lantern every

night until he fell asleep."

Ahmad Rezvan graduated No. 1 in his high school, was admitted to the University of Tehran Medical School (Iran's version of Harvard), and went on to become one of the leading pathologists in his country.

"My father was very humble. I never knew his full story until about four years ago, after he passed away very suddenly at the age of 75. That's when I started asking my mother about him," said Rezvan, 45.

"Because of his devotion to education, my siblings and I also became educated," he said. "My brother Izad earned a master's degree in civil engineering. My sister Azadeh became a urogynecologist — a urologist for women. And I became a dentist."

A long journey

Rezvan credits his parents for motivating him and his siblings to achieve, despite a sometimes disjointed upbringing. His family emigrated from Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, first settling in Turkey when he was 13. Four years later, thanks to his father's efforts, they were able to secure green cards and moved to Columbus, Ohio, where Rezvan finished high school and enrolled at Ohio State University.

"It was difficult, and it was culture shock," he said. "You're taking a kid from Iran to Ohio, where he barely speaks the language — doesn't really know how to read or write in English — putting him in a huge university, and saying, 'OK, go! Swim!'"

"I feel like I probably worked about four

times harder than the average kid to get through Ohio State," he said. "I graduated in four years, but afterward I was so burned out that I took three or four years off before I went back for dental school."

Candidates for the Rezvan Foundation Scholarship will include any student from Monterey County, as well San Benito County students, he said.

"I want to help kids who have stories that are similar to my dad's," he said. "They've grown up orphaned, or with a single parent, or as foster kids. They are exceptional students from poor families. And they have a strong ambition to continue with higher education, but need a helping hand to move forward."

The launch of the Rezvan Foundation isn't the first time the doctor has opted to give back to his community. In 2016, for the third straight year, he teamed up with a Gilroy dentist, Dr. Jernell Escobar, to provide free dental care on a Saturday to more than 100 migrant farm workers, half of whom had never been to a dentist. Both den-

tists and their staffs volunteered their time.

"It's always challenging, but at the end of that Saturday, we feel blessed by our profession — that we have the ability to help people this way," Rezvan said. "I think we often take for granted what we do, and what we have. It's actually a very humbling experience to donate our time every year."

Rezvan, married five years (his Greek-Iranian wife, Elizabeth, designs high-end handbags), said the example set by his dad has helped him become a better father to his own children — daughters ages 4 and 20 months, and a 2 1/2-year-old son.

"Now that I have children of my own, things are more clear to me why he was a certain way with us. I understand the rationale behind it," he said. "And since my father's passing, I feel a need to honor him by helping other kids achieve their goals, the same way my siblings and I were blessed to achieve ours."

Dennis Taylor is a freelance writer living in Monterey County. Contact him at scribelaureate@gmail.com.



Dr. Ehsan Rezvan (at right) with his (from left) father-in-law Morteza Naimi Yazdi, wife Elizabeth, and father Ahmad. Rezvan has launched a fundraising drive for a scholarship fund to honor his father.

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