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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 533

Offered January 23, 2025

Celebrating the life of Stella Dikos.

Patrons—Carr, Bloxom, Bulova, Cousins, Jones, McQuinn, Runion, Watts and Willett; Senators: Bagby, Deeds, Ebbin, Hashmi, McDougale and VanValkenburg

WHEREAS, Stella Dikos, an icon in the Richmond dining scene who served delicious meals to generations of loyal patrons at a series of restaurants proudly bearing her name and inspired others with her passion for food, family, and fellowship, died on June 28, 2024; and

WHEREAS, born in a small village in Greece, Stella Dikos began to understand the importance of community after her mother died when she was young and learned to cook from the women in her neighborhood who helped nurture her, along with her father and grandmother; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from high school, Stella Dikos was introduced to her future husband, Stavros, who had grown up in her mother's village but was living in Richmond as the owner of the Village Restaurant; and

WHEREAS, Stella and Stavros Dikos were married in Athens in 1962, then returned to the Commonwealth, where Stella helped with paperwork at the restaurant and eventually began working in the kitchen; and

WHEREAS, open from 1956 to 1981, the Village was an institution in downtown Richmond, catering to bikers, beatniks, and bohemians alike, a homey melting pot where all were welcome and Stella Dikos thrived as their beloved matriarch, serving up delectable homemade bread and succulent stews; and

WHEREAS, when the Village closed, Stella Dikos briefly partnered with her brother, Nick Kafantaris, who had also settled in Richmond as the owner of Joe's Inn, then pursued her own enterprise to showcase the traditional Greek recipes she learned in her youth; and

WHEREAS, with a line of former patrons of the Village spilling into the street, Stella and Stavros Dikos opened Stella's on Harrison Street in the Fan on April 24, 1983, and changed fine dining in Richmond forever; and

WHEREAS, the menu at Stella's originally featured Stella Dikos' signature homemade breads and soups, along with a few simple appetizers and entrees, but as the restaurant grew in popularity, she added unique dishes reflecting her Greek heritage, such as branzino, stuffed grape leaves, flaming cheese, baklava, and rice pudding, all using the freshest and finest ingredients; and

WHEREAS, after Stella's closed in 1995, Stella Dikos continued working as a chef in the area until 1998, when she opened Stella's Cafe at the corner of Main Street and Rowland Street with her daughter, Katrina, and her son-in-law Johnny Giavos; and

WHEREAS, with Stella Dikos' loyal followers demanding her mouthwatering Greek specialties, Stella's Cafe grew from offering just coffee, pastries, and sandwiches to becoming the full second iteration of Stella's, which delighted diners until 2007; and

WHEREAS, the third and current location of Stella's restaurant opened on Lafayette Street in 2011 and was another hit with local diners; Stella Dikos continued working with Katrina and Johnny to open the Stella's Grocery gourmet markets, the Our Life by Stella's boutique store, and a Stella's restaurant in Charleston, South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, as one of the longest-tenured restauranteurs in Richmond, Stella Dikos was an inspiration to generations of fellow chefs and business owners through her grace, elegance, resilience, and unrivaled skill in the kitchen; and

WHEREAS, Stella Dikos reshaped the Richmond dining scene by staying true to her roots and offering the traditional dishes that told the story of her life, infusing every dish with love, and ensuring that diners made enduring memories over her tables; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by her husband, Stavros, Stella Dikos will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by her children, Demetri and Katrina, and their families, and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Stella Dikos, a pillar of the Richmond restaurant community who touched countless lives through her warmth, creativity, and culinary excellence; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Stella Dikos as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.