

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Teachers and Volunteers benefit from Soroptimist Awards

March 1, 2012 (LOOMIS, CA) –Soroptimist International of Loomis Basin (SILB) presented community awards on Wednesday, February 29 at the Train Depot in Downtown Loomis. The club’s fundraising efforts, such as the upcoming Tostada Bingo on March 24, enable the club to fund these awards. Soroptimist supports women and children locally and throughout the world.

Violet Richardson Award

Renae Leveille, a Del Oro High School student, received the Violet Richardson Award that recognizes young women who make the community and world a better place through volunteer efforts. She volunteers for JDRF, a global organization focused on type 1 diabetes (T1D) research. Renae recruited teams for the annual Walk to Cure Diabetes and raised over \$6000 for diabetes research. She also volunteers as a Diabetes Teen Support Group Leader. She wrote that “having diabetes shaped who I proudly am today. ... I am to be able to live with diabetes and still do the things I love.” Renae selected JDRF to share her award.

Women’s Opportunity Award

Leslie Clark won the Women’s Opportunity Award that aids women who must support their families and need additional training to upgrade their employability. Leslie was a stay-at-home mom for 18 years and is now reentering the workplace to support herself and her daughter. Building on her previous experience as a commercial interior designer, she is training to become a decorative painter. She is currently participating in an internship, plans to become certified in plaster work and cabinet transformation, and is preparing for her C-33 Contractor’s License. Joy Smith, President, FieldHaven Feline Rescue, where Leslie has contributed her design talents, wrote: “Never one to look for sympathy, Leslie continues forward, looking for ways to reinvent herself while providing love, guidance and support to her daughter.”

Ruby Award

Tracy Neill won the Ruby Award for Women Helping Women that is given to those who improve the lives of other women or girls through their professional or personal activities. Tracy has volunteered for numerous organizations including 13 years with St. Vincent de Paul preparing hot meals for the homeless in Roseville and entertaining underprivileged children at the People to People Thanksgiving meal in Sacramento. Starting in 1999, she organized the Dear Santa program supplying toys, clothing, food and household items to families in Placer and Sacramento counties and now uses a U-Haul to make all the deliveries. She helped with Hurricane Katrina Relief in New Orleans and has volunteered in Uganda as well as raised funds to place five water wells in villages.

Woman of Distinction

Jenny Knisley, co-president of Soroptimist International Loomis Basin, received the Woman of Distinction Award for her extraordinary dedication to charitable organizations, active support of Soroptimist projects and many contributions to the Loomis community. She is also on the Senior L.I.F.E. Center Board and the Loomis Parks and Recreation Committee, serves as state coordinator of the Northern California Professional Disc Golf Association, and works as manager of the Loomis Chamber of Commerce and in two family businesses. According to fellow Soroptimist, Chris Hebard-Summers, Jenny has been in Soroptimist for over 15 years. "Jenny's heart is gigantic. She loves the Loomis community and you can always count on her to jump in and take charge," said Hebard-Summers.

Sanford J. Weinberg Reader Award

Bebe Lee received the Sanford J. Weinberg Reader Award, given to a volunteer who reads to students. She has been volunteering at Franklin School six hours per week in the first and second grades for two years. Jane Ryan, who nominated Bebe, wrote: "She not only builds their self-confidence, she builds their phonics skills ... [and] teaches these children the tools that they need to become successful readers ... [with] warmth, patience and love."

Teacher Grants

SILB provides small grants to help fund teachers' long-term projects that will benefit numerous classes over time.

Laurie Balsano, 8th grade teacher at H. Clarke Powers School, received a grant to purchase non-fiction books that tell unforgettable accounts of American and world history through biographies, autobiographies and memoirs.

Danielle Duffet, 1st grade teacher at Loomis Basin Charter School, will use her grant for an International Pen Pal Project with Korea. The grant will be used to purchase video cameras so her students can make movies to share their culture with the Korean students.

Brooke Haydu, 1st grade teacher at Penryn Elementary School, was awarded a grant to purchase MP3 Players that enable students to hear fluent reading of text to improve their comprehension, motivation and vocabulary.

Julie Hupp, Amy Nash and Jen Tverberg are first grade teachers at Loomis Grammar School. Julie will use the award for the Author's Tea project. Students write, laminate and produce books and read them aloud to parents at the tea. Both Amy and Jen will purchase books for the "Daily Five," a program that encourages literacy by giving students a choice of reading materials at their level.

Kristine Sohrakoff, 7th grade teacher at Loomis Grammar School, will use her award for a permanent, centralized storage shed for props, equipment and drama sets that are needed for the school's Broadway musical and dance productions.

Traci Wade, 4th grade teacher at Loomis Grammar School, was given a grant for non-fiction books to help prepare students for the STAR test that uses a non-fiction format to test comprehension.

Special Recognition

Fred & Acsa Hitchen received a grant to continue their work at the Senior L.I.F.E. Center of Loomis, a place where adults over 55 years of age can enjoy leisure through social and educational activities. Soroptimist International Loomis Basin helped establish the center and has supported the program since its inception.

Vivian E. Adams and Carole Larsen received recognition for establishing the Second Blessings Thrift Shop that funds affordable childcare for low income single mothers.

Bill Ryland of Koinonia received a Special Award to replace basic language arts and grammar books for teaching 9th - 12th grade students.

To learn more Soroptimist International of Loomis Basin, contact Nancy Hogan, co-president, at 530-613-1541. Meetings are held weekly on Wednesdays at 8 AM at the Train Depot at the corner of Taylor and Horseshoe Bar Roads in Loomis.

Soroptimist (soroptimist.org) is an international volunteer service organization for business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. Soroptimist International of Loomis Basin is a 501(c)(3) organization. The club supports Loomis LIFE center, women's transition home and other community projects.

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