

STHS students' achievements recognized

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – The English language does not have enough adjectives to justly describe the five young women who were honored Wednesday by Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe.

Erika Cook, Hannah Elder, Glory Pillsbury, Diku Sherpa and Kelsey Smith were recognized as Young Women of Distinction for their academic and extra curricular achievements.

All are South Tahoe High School seniors with ambitions that, if fulfilled, are likely to have a lasting impact in whatever community they live in as adults.



Standing, l-r,
Diku Sherpa,
Hannah Elder,
Kelsey Smith;
front Erika
Cook and Glory
Pillsbury.

“I don’t know how at such a young age these girls have accomplished so much,” Ivone Larson, STHS principal, told the more than 70 people in attendance at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe.

She introduced each of the women – all of whom were sitting with at least one family member – giving a synopsis of their achievements that led Soroptimist to single them out.

Larson on Cook: “Erika is not only a fun-loving outstanding student with a 4.5 gpa, she is also actively involved in a multitude of service organizations including being in the S-Club, she is the corresponding secretary in National Honor Society, she is the treasurer of the Key Club, and is the director of Student Affairs for the Associated Student Body. She has volunteered in the Lake Tahoe Marathon, the Pennies for Polio project, and the Multiple Sclerosis Walk. During high school she has received the All State Award for earning straight A’s, was nominated to attend People to People conference as well as Camp Ryla, received multiple Golden State Student Awards, is the team captain for soccer, and was most recently selected for the soccer First Team All League by the Sierra coaches.”

Larson on Elder: “Hannah participates in ALLY, a tolerance club at STHS, is president of the Friends of the South Tahoe High School Library, makes Baby Book Bags for Barton Hospital newborns through AVID, is a staff member of Bookworks, a nonprofit bookstore which generates funds for the Tahoe Family Resource Center, and is the founder and president of the Book Club at STHS. Notice a merging theme? Hannah has a 4.1 gpa and surprise – her favorite subject is English. She has applied to an interesting variety of colleges and her first choices are Stanford or Berkeley to major in Classical/Ancient Civilization.”

Larson on Pillsbury: “Glory has a 4.0 gpa and loves life sciences. She wants to become a nurse practitioner and would love to go to Africa to start her career while helping people in need. She is active in Key Club, and continues to raise funds to sponsor schools in Africa through Schools for Schools and the S Club, and raises funds to fight polio through the National Honor Society. As a Girl Scout since she was 5, Glory

mentors young Girl Scouts by coordinating the activities for the Scouts on the North Shore. She has earned numerous merit badges, her favorite, of course, being the Wilderness Badge, as well as the highly prestigious Silver Award in recognition for her commitment and dedication to Girl Scout service. She has been in ASB Leadership since middle school and continues to serve on the council. She tutors other students through National Honor Society. As a result of her noted leadership, citizenship, and academics, she was sponsored by Rotary Club of South Lake Tahoe to attend Camp Riley, a leadership camp that provided her a life changing experience at the end of her junior year."

Larson on Sherpa: "Diku Sherpa left her family and friends in Nepal to join her father and brothers here in the United States when she was 14 years old. When she arrived in Lake Tahoe, Diku quickly acquired the English language, adding to her already long list of languages including Nepalese, Hindi, Sherpa and Tibetan. Due to inadequate health care providers in her native Nepal, Diku would like to attend Sonoma State University and pursue a career in nursing as she has been inspired by one of her role models, her step mother, Catherine Gaehwiler. Diku's talents and interests vary. In high school, she has played basketball and volleyball and has participated in Generation Green, a group geared toward environmental protection, and the Key Club, which is a member of the Kiwanis International family focused on teaching leadership through serving others. Outside of school, her passion is horseback riding, playing guitar and piano. She has extensive volunteer experience including volunteering for the Lake Tahoe Marathon, participating in and volunteering for the AVID program, setting up the school assembly for Heritage Week, planting trees in the Angora Fire burn area, helping with the Christmas Dinner for Angora Fire Victims, participating in the Mystery Box program with kindergartners, and participating in the Project Learning Tree program."

Larson on Smith: “Kelsey Smith loves to run. Whether running for fun on trails throughout Echo Summit, or working on reaching her goal of running a marathon on all seven continents, many would argue that she doesn’t run, she flies. She has won so many awards that it is hard to name them all. She received the AP Scholar Honor Award; she made the Nevada All-State Academic Team from 2007-2009. She won the Nevada Gatorade Cross Country Runner of the Year in ’08 and ’09, is the Wendy Heisman winner from South Tahoe High School, was the USA Track and Field Junior Olympic All-American for 2005-2007, and in 2008 she won both the 3200m and the 1600m at the Nevada State Track & Field Championships. She is the Nevada State Champion in Cross Country Running, was named the Female Athlete of the Year by the Tahoe Daily Tribune, and is the Runner of the Year for the state of Nevada. Whew! I am out of breath just listing some of the awards Kelsey has earned in her spare time –” while maintaining an incredible 4.61 gpa. With her love of math, yes, AP Calculus is her favorite class, combined with all she has already overcome in her life, it is no wonder that she wants to attend Stanford to major in biomedical engineering and become a pediatric surgeon. By helping kids, she will continue to make a difference in the future of our world.”

All of the young women thanked Soroptimist for the honor – some even saying they’d like to be a member of the Tahoe club one day.