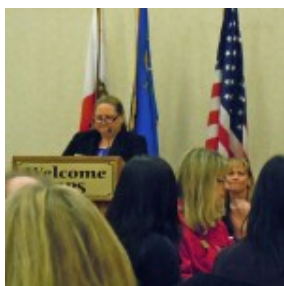


# 8 young women from STHS rise to the top of their class

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Parents. They are the common denominator of the eight South Tahoe High students selected to be Young Women of Distinction.

Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe each year singles out seniors who have risen to the top of their class beyond having exceptional grade point averages. Still, the averages are impressive – ranging from 4.08 to 4.57.



STHS Principal Ivone Larson talks about the eight women being honored Dec. 8.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

As Principal Ivone Larson described each young woman's accomplishments, the tears started to flow. With parents in the audience for the Dec. 8 lunch at Harrah's Lake Tahoe, it was obvious this event was a culmination of 17 or 18 years of hard work on everyone's part.

All of the girls spoke of their parents' influence on their lives. The majority wants to pursue an education in science or a career that will involve science. All have a wealth of community service on their resume. Some are dancers, some athletes, some artists – above all they are distinct in their own right.

Here is a bit of what Larson had to say about each girl.

**Katie Burba:** “With her multilingual talents in Spanish and French, Katie hopes to travel to Spain and Europe to teach English. While there, she hopes to pick up a few more languages, including Italian, as her family is Sicilian.” Burba’s passion is dance – spending five days a week on her toes. She may minor in dance. Her first choice college is UC Davis.

**Elisa Escobar:** When she arrived in the United States from the Philippines at age 7 she spoke no English. Now she is fluent in four languages, has a 4.27 gpa and wants to go to UC Santa Barbara to eventually become a marine biologist, oceanographer, or nurse practitioner. “It is fitting that Elisa credits her parents for teaching her who she is and giving her strong morals. She also acknowledges her teachers for being her inspiration. Elisa, you have already made a difference in the lives of so many and we can’t wait to hear about your future adventures.”

**Annie Lineberry:** The acting bug bit her when first auditioned for a high school performance. She has been on stage every since. She aspires to be a company member in the Oregon Shakespearian Festival in Ashland or possibly a high school drama teacher. “Annie says her Dad is a constant source of encouragement and pressure to do her absolute best in everything she does. She credits him with inspiring her acting dreams. Her Mom challenges her to think about real issues and to question the morality and intelligence of everything that occurs on a day-to-day basis. She says she challenges her to

form her own opinions on issues based upon fact and truth even if they don't line up with her Mother's beliefs."

**Tiffany Racz:** "She attended the National Youth Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., last year and came home a changed person in the sense that her career goals are now global instead of national. Her goal is to be an epidemiologist somewhere remote studying and researching epidemics hoping to be part of a close team that will find solutions to serious global problems." She has taken every science class the school offers.

**Ariana Truszewski:** She works 20 hours a week to support her riding habit. She owns a horse and has been in the saddle since age 7. "Therefore, it is no surprise to any of us that she hopes to become an equine veterinarian working in the thoroughbred-racing field. This past summer she did an internship at an equine sports medicine and rehabilitation center in Lexington, Ky. She worked side by side with veterinary students, working long hours through extreme heat and humidity, leaving exhausted and grimy at the end of the day, but loving every minute of it."

**Dana Tumbaga:** With psychology and English being her favorite classes, she is considering a career path that may involve those disciplines as well as sociology. She is fluent in English and Ilocano. "Dana is not certain about her future endeavors, but as an artist, she can appreciate the potential of a blank canvas when provided with the right tools and inspiration."

**Hannah Wheelen:** "She is passionate about the environment and hopes to someday return to Tahoe to work as a scientist protecting our precious natural resources." Quiet and introspective are words to describe her, but so are busy and giving with a slew of extracurricular activities and volunteering outside the school.

**Stephanie Zepeda:** “She has applied to several universities, but hopes to be accepted to UC Berkeley in the fall and eventually become a bilingual criminal psychologist.” She has been on the cheerleading squad all four years. Last year she received the nomination for the National Youth Leadership conference in Washington, D.C. In her spare time, she studies and scrapbooks.