

Soroptimist recognize 6 women making a difference

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Jen Gurecki summed up the night the best: “I believe service is the rent you pay for life.”

She was one of six women recognized March 8 – on International Women’s Day – for her contribution to the South Shore community and beyond.



For years Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra and South Lake Tahoe have given the Violet Richardson Ward, Women’s Opportunity and Ruby awards, with this being the second year for the clubs to do so at a joint dinner.

Gurecki and Sue Jackson were recipients of the Ruby Ward, which is bestowed upon women who have worked to improve the lives of women and girls through their professional and/or volunteer lives.

Gurecki started V Day South Lake, which puts on the “Vagina Monologues”, and is the force behind the Zawadisha Fund that helps women in Kenya.

Jackson has for years been a tireless volunteer for a variety of entities that cross generations – from Lake Tahoe Boys and Girls Club to Meals on Wheels.

The first awards given out Thursday at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe are named after Violet Richardson Ward, the first president of Soroptimist. Girls ages 14 to 17 whose volunteer efforts help others can be nominated.

Kate Albrecht is a junior at South Tahoe High who started the school year getting chemotherapy for Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Now

she is back on campus, maintaining a 4.0 gpa and a member of the National Honor Society.

She created a program for young cancer patients to have stuffed bears they can call buddies, who they can talk to, who listen, who give them comfort in ways family members and medical professionals can't.

Morgan Kaufer also received the Violet Richardson Ward Award. She has been active with the Invisible Children Foundation.

"Invisible Children taught me to see, care and react," Kaufer said.

The Women's Opportunity Award is given to individuals who have overcome substantial obstacles. Each received a \$2,000 check to continue their education.

For Kim Nesbitt, she overcame a life of domestic violence that included temporarily leaving her children until she could get on solid ground. She regained custody of her two sons, overcame being downsized by El Dorado County and is in school to obtain a degree in business.

For April Torrez, her story is one of survival. She was taking care of her siblings at age 5, at 11 sent to live with her father who was into drugs, by 13 was running away, and at 19 gave birth to her second child.

She is in a healthy relationship, going to school and raising her daughter.

Torrez told the group through tears that getting an education for herself is the only way she will be able to provide her daughter with the life she envisions.