

# 11 women receive special awards from Soroptimist

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Courageous, committed, tenacious, dedicated, inspirational. Those are just some of the words used to describe the 11 women who were honored Thursday night by the two South Shore Soroptimist groups.

Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe and Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra recognized three distinct groups March 7 at Harrah's Lake Tahoe. With a mission of helping girls and women, the two groups come together once a year to choose who to give the Violet Richardson Ward, Women's Opportunity and Ruby awards to.



Soroptimist honor 11 women March 7. Photo/Sharon Sterling

Six South Tahoe High School students were singled out for their volunteerism. The Violet Richardson Ward Award is named after the first president of the first Soroptimist club. Girls must be between the ages of 14 and 17 to be considered.

This years winners are: Catherine Baghadikian, Grace Bronken, Rose Campion, Margaret Carlson, Stephanie Thomaselli and Carli

Valney.

While some of them have exceptional grades, or are star athletes, this award goes beyond those achievements – and doesn't even have grades or sports as criteria. It's about what they are doing for others that counts.

Several of them volunteer at Bread & Broth, are involved with church groups, volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club, are in Girl Scouts, in the National Honor Society, started a music program, planted trees post-Angora, help at Tahoe Youth & Family Services, and help at Barton's Skilled Nursing Facility.

Michelle Flury and Marisol Jimenez-Torres were there to receive the Women's Opportunity Award. They each received a check to help with their continued education.

These women have overcome the odds and obstacles, and yet know higher education is the answer to being self-sufficient and able to provide for their families. The award is not only money to help them, but recognition for their courage and determination.

For Susan Baker, Diana Hankins and Karin Holmes, the Ruby Award is bestowed on them for their work in making the lives of other women or girls be better. But none would take sole credit for her efforts, instead saying the team around them made their accomplishments become a reality.

Baker is the reason Mount Tallac High School has the Young Parents Program, and a big reason why in 1999 when it started there were 32 girls who were pregnant or young moms, and today there are three at the school.

Hankins is the woman behind the local chapter of NAMI – National Alliance of Mental Illness. Every day she is working to wipe away the stigma of mental illness and help those who have issues.

Holmes is the reason the South Tahoe Middle School track got built. She has been a coach and teacher for decades.