

Soroptimist honor South Shore women, teens



Ten women receive awards March 6 from Soroptimist International. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Women helping and recognizing other women. That in large part is what Soroptimist International is all about.

The two South Shore groups came together Thursday night to honor local high school students, women who have made a difference in the community, and to honor two women who despite struggles are turning their lives around.

In the latter category, the Women's Opportunity Award was given to Monica Mata and America Ramirez Aranda. They were each given \$2,000 to help further their education.

Mata is a full-time student at Lake Tahoe Community who hopes to earn her associate of arts degree in a year. Then she plans to pursue a degree in criminal justice at CSU Sacramento.

But Mata is also a single mother of five children between the ages of 2 and 10. She works 40 hours a week at MontBleu. She has overcome domestic abuse and abandonment. But she said if it weren't for her parents, she would not be on the path she

is today.

For Aranda, she too is a single mom – of one son. English is not her native language, but she was able to learn the language well enough to graduate in three years from South Tahoe High School. She has an AA from LTCC. Now she is working on a bachelor's.

Aranda has worked at the local college for 10 years. After she gets her degree she wants to become a certified public accountant and work with low-income people.

She is chairwoman of the local Latino Affairs Committee.

The Ruby Award honors women who have worked to improve the lives of women and girls through their professional or volunteer work.

“Kathy has built a legacy and changed a school and the community forever,” Wendy David said of Kathy Haven.

Haven was the driving force behind getting Bijou Community School to have a two-way immersion program.

“It's so nice to hear, but it's really not about me. It's a lot of people coming together,” Haven said. “I just have the biggest mouth.”

Also receiving the Ruby Award was Jeanette Shippee. She is the supervising cook at the El Dorado County Jail in South Lake Tahoe.

She does more than cook food. She has designed a culinary arts program in conjunction with LTCC that gives inmates college credits. They also leave jail with job skills. And while they are incarcerated, the inmates are doing most of the cooking.

The Violet Richardson Award is given to girls who are above average when it comes to volunteering in the community.

This years winners from South Tahoe High School are Emily Aminian, Zoe D'Angelo and Jessica Pak. The winners from Whittell High School are Danica Bunnett, Kelsey Kjer and Tori Jimenez.