

A history of service to the community

Clubs and Associations - 2010

10-20-11

Soroptimist International of Watsonville

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF REPORT

Just seven years after Soroptimist International was founded in October 1921, Watsonville chartered its own club on Nov. 3, 1928. Since that time, local professional and businesswomen have joined together in an effort to improve the lives of women in their community and around the globe.

A large part of that effort is recognizing the efforts of women and girls striving to improve their education and assisting them. Watsonville Soroptimists' scholarship program tradition includes the Lorraine Scott Scholarship, a \$20,000 award given to a graduating high school girl so that she can attain her college degree. Additional scholarships are also awarded.

Soroptimists' signature project, the "Woman's Opportunity Award," aids head-of-household women to enter or re-enter the job market by providing cash awards to assist with their education and training needs.

This year's winner was Aldinette Lockett. Lockett is raising two grandchildren and vigorously pursuing her education. She has a GPA of 3.75 at UC Santa Cruz and plans to graduate by 2013. After graduation she plans to enroll in the masters program in education and then get her Ph.D. in sociology.

"I want to become a professor and hopefully be a benefit to the community, my family and this nation," she said during the awards ceremony held in March.

Rose Chavez-George was given the Ruby Award by the Watsonville Soroptimists. The Ruby Award is given to women who are helping women and girls. Chavez-George was recognized because of her work as director of Primeros Pasos, which helps pregnant women who are in crisis. Counseling, health care, nutrition advice and more are available through the program. Chavez-George said the program, in many cases, basically keeps Child Welfare Services from having to intervene later.

"Words can't express how much I love what I do," Chavez-George said.

Three young Watsonville women were honored with the Violet Richardson Award, which recognizes girls for their volunteer service. Bridget Smith, president of the Watsonville Soroptimists, said the Carmel Bay had no applications for the award so Watsonville was only too happy to share some of the deserving candidates and invite the club to join them for the joint awards dinner held at Green Valley Grill.

Vicenta Becerra was recognized by the Watsonville club for her work helping students who are undocumented, like herself, achieve in school and to not drop out. She also volunteers for the Salvation Army.

"She's taken the initiative to help try to solve a community issue," said Ana Espinoza while presenting the award.

Natasha Guaracha and Melenise Espindola-Ortega were honored by the Carmel club. Guaracha, a senior at Monte Vista Christian High School, has volunteered for a variety of organizations, including an effort to secure prom dresses and prom tickets for less fortunate students.

"Volunteering has brought so many positive things to my life," she said.

Espindola-Ortega is a black belt in tae kwon do and volunteers as a martial arts instructor for the Watsonville Police Activities League.

"I really enjoy helping at PAL," she said. "Through martial arts, they build self-esteem and character."

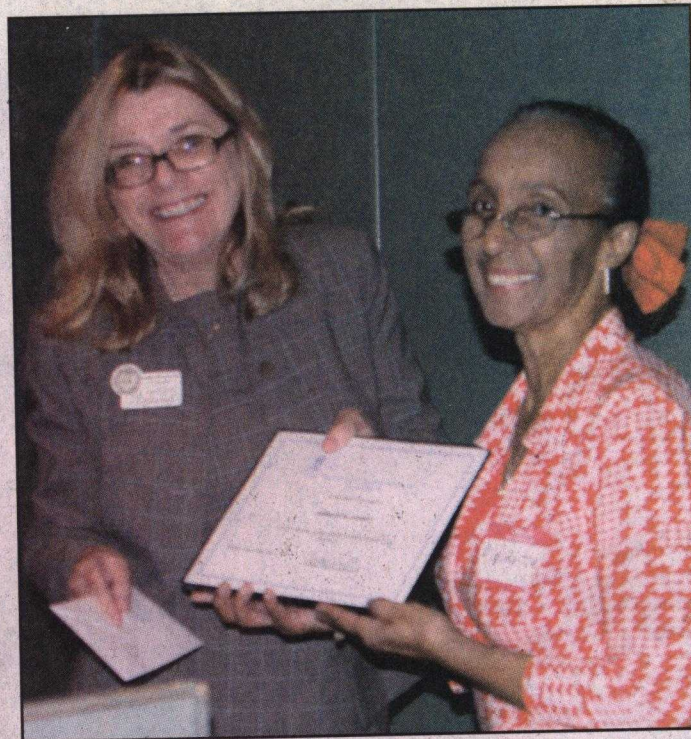
Notable Soroptimist programs also include the annual "Saturday of Service" project, a worldwide program throughout the organization that provides hands-on service to local community organizations. For the past few years, Watsonville Soroptimists have focused on helping the Pajaro Valley Shelter for Women and Children, including improving the shelter itself as well as providing a "spa day" for the women living there. Another community project is the "Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence," which places emphasis on women's issues within the workplace.

It's for this kind of work that the Soroptimists were named the 2009 Community Service Organization of the Year by the Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture.



Jon Chown/Register-Pajaronian file

Myrna Medina (right) paints the nails of Irma Cruz at the United Presbyterian Church on East Beach Street during the Soroptimists' Saturday of Service in 2009.

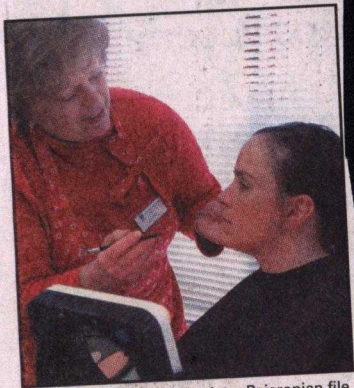


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Soroptimist Kathy Franke presents Aldinette Lockett the Women's Opportunity Award during a dinner ceremony held in March.

Soroptimist International of Watsonville continues to seek new members who also wish to make a difference in the lives of women and girls. The club meets weekly on Mondays at 12:15 p.m. at Valley Heights Senior Rental Community at 925 Freedom Blvd. Discover the benefits of membership in the Soroptimist of Watsonville. For information on membership, email member@siwatsonville.org.

prom tickets for less fortunate students.



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**Jan King (right) applies
makeup to Corissa Temple
during the Soroptimists'
Saturday of Service in 2009.**