

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Loomis Soroptimist Invests in Dreams with Awards and Scholarships

February 28, 2022 (LOOMIS, CA) – Soroptimist International Loomis Basin club invested over \$9,000 in awards on February 23 to encourage women to continue their education, support teachers and recognize women making a difference. The Loomis club is part of a global Soroptimist International (SI) service organization that helps women and girls achieve their individual and collective potential, realize their aspirations and have an equal voice in communities worldwide.

Through a generous donation, the Loomis club gave out three “SI Live Your Dream” awards this year to help women overcome obstacles such as abuse, addiction, domestic violence, lack of life skills and financial hardship to continue their education so they can pursue careers that will support their families.

Marcella Russell won the Loomis Live Your Dream scholarship and was selected to be considered for additional awards through the Soroptimist Sierra Nevada Region. The single mother of two completed her associate degree in Business Administration at Sierra College and started her bachelor’s at San Diego State University Global Campus this spring.

“There are many things that I have had to overcome and getting a college education has always been a dream, and seemed impossible,” said Russell. “It hasn’t been a cake walk getting where I am today, but I’m showing my boys that mama doesn’t give up.”

Her Sierra College counselor wrote: “She is a strong student who has faced barriers outside of academics and has shown great success. Marcella has a strong GPA, while taking a full course load. She is a capable individual who has great potential.”

Live Your Dream award winner Erica Jefferson is a single mother receiving support from Acres of Hope to transform her life. “I am aiming to become a certified pharmacy technician,” said Jefferson. “I’m thankful for the obstacles that were placed in my path to shape me. ... I want to give back to others, ... using my voice and standing up for what is right.”

Asia Jones, mother of twins, attends Unitek College in the Vocational Nursing Program and is the third Live Your Dream recipient. “My career goal is to become a Nurse Practitioner,” said Jones. “I have to make this dream not only happen for myself but for my children as well.”

Del Oro High School student Kirby Gilliland received the Investing in Dreams scholarship recognizing leadership in community service. She coached younger girls in volleyball and founded a campus Sand Volleyball club. As Vice President of the Women’s Athletic Club (WAC), she invited the Colfax High School WAC to join them in sewing reusable sanitary products for Days for Girls.

With plans to major in engineering/math at college, Gilliland said, “... because of the strong women I have surrounded myself with, and the power I now know I have to encourage and support younger girls, I can be confident in myself and my career.”

Kaera Anzalone, owner of Rejuven8 Wellness Spa, nominated Julie Nakayama, recipient of the Soroptimist Ruby Award for Women Helping Women. “Julie’s Purse Project is as grassroots as it gets,” said Anzalone. “When she started Julie’s Purse Project in November 2015, the plan was to help homeless

women by collecting purses to give out filled with essential items such as tampons, toothbrushes, socks and basically anything a homeless woman would want in her purse. The project grew from giving 75 purses to women in distress in 2015 to 6,123 purses in 2020.”

The Loomis Soroptimist club started Senior L.I.F.E. Center of Loomis in 1978 to provide meals as well as social and educational activities for seniors. Soroptimist presented the center with a grant to fund educational programs.

The club also presented Teacher Grants to fund special projects that will have lasting impact on students in the Loomis Union School District.

From Franklin Elementary School, Jennifer Brandt, K-3 grade teacher, will use her grant for gardening books, seeds and plants. In the school garden, students with special needs can improve motor skills, creativity, social skills and self-confidence. Bonnie Robinson, Franklin first grade teacher, received a grant to purchase another iPad so more students can access pre-recorded videos she has made of reading lessons so that they can work at their own pace.

Three teachers from H. Clark Powers Elementary School were selected. Jennifer Bramer, fourth grade teacher, sought funds for 10 foam Merge Cubes which use virtual reality with an app to teach science through a multi-sensory experience. Through a 3D lens, students can explore cells, volcanos, the solar system and other concepts. Third grade teacher, Claudia Diele, will purchase books so students can research people who have made an impact on society for the “Where We are in Time and Place” unit. Stephanie Freitas (7-8 grade) will use the grant for triple beam balances so students can gain hands-on experience using tools in science labs.

At Loomis Basin Charter School, Greg Carson, 7-8 grade teacher, will invest in wood working tools to teach hands-on skills while incorporating math and design skills as students build puzzles, duck boxes and other projects. Christine Clark, K-8 teacher at the school, will buy books so that 30 school teams can read 12 books each as part of the nationwide “Battle of the Books.” Melissa Davis, 6-8 grade charter school teacher, is creating new Performing Arts curriculum and plans to purchase script books of monologues, scene work and one-act plays to use in class.

At Loomis Grammar School, 7-8 grade teacher Carrie Marovich plans to increase her students’ academic success by igniting a fire for reading with new books on subjects that will interest them. Jennifer Mishler, the school’s K-8 librarian, wants to invest in books that are age appropriate for low level readers and English language learners. Students will build their skills and confidence more quickly when they can relate to the characters and interesting stories.

Sarah Tavernetti, 6-8 grade teacher, started a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) club at Penryn Elementary School and will purchase 10 solar powered robot kits that students can use in the makerspace. Also at Penryn, 5th grade teacher Kimberly Chicourrat has selected books to add to her classroom library that will interest students, model quality writing and provide sources of information for research writing projects.

The Loomis Basin SI club fundraises throughout the year to support the awards program. The next fundraiser is St. Patrick’s Dinner To-Go on Thursday, March 17; learn more at <https://www.soroptimistloomis.com/stpat22/>.

About Soroptimist International Loomis Basin

Soroptimist (soroptimist.org) is an international volunteer service organization for women who work to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. Soroptimist International of Loomis Basin is a 501(c)(3) organization.

To learn more about the club, go to www.soroptimistloomis.com and find Soroptimist Loomis Basin on Facebook and Instagram @SILoomis.

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Photos:

13 (LtoR) Single mothers, Erica Jefferson and Marcella Russell received Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards to continue their education.

24 (LtoR) 24 Julie Nakayama won the Soroptimist Ruby Award for Julie's Purse Project and was nominated by Kaera Anzalone.

36 (LtoR) Del Oro High School student, Kirby Gilliland was presented with the Investing in Dreams scholarship by Soroptimist Ardella Newton.

