



S O R O P T I M I S T[®]
Investing in Dreams

Obstacles Delayed, But Didn't Defeat Top LYD Awardee

(Photo not available)

Teresita "Teresa" Lopez overcame some huge obstacles on her way to being named recipient of SI Milwaukee's top Live Your Dream award this year.

Teresa, who lives in Kenosha, was not born in the United States and was not allowed to attend college here after graduating from high school in 2005 because she did not have a Social Security number. That prohibition was lifted when the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was put in place, but by that time Teresa had already started a family. She feared being overwhelmed by trying to work and raise two small children while attending school, so she put off starting for a time.

But she was determined to get an education and she had a passion for technology and for helping people. Today she has earned an associate degree at Bellevue University and has a job as an IT Helpdesk Specialist. She is working on her bachelors degree in Computer Science and Information Technology, needed so she can apply for the post of Systems and Network Administrator at Fox Conn in Mount Pleasant.

While all this is going on, she is raising a 2-year-old son and daughters 7 and 10. It is her children who motivate her. "As I take the next step in my career I am showing them that everything is possible if there is a passion for it and school can help make that possible," she said.

Eventually, she said, she would like to be in a leadership position at Fox Conn where she would be able to work with and help others using the skills she is mastering today.



Angelaique "Angie" Dunbar

Psychiatry Is Goal for LYD Awardee

A career in medicine beckons Angelaique "Angie" Dunbar, recipient of SI Milwaukee's second place Live Your Dream Award.

Angie (she says that's just easier for most people than Angelaique) lives in Milwaukee and is enrolled at Milwaukee Area Technical College working virtually toward the Associate Degree in nursing which she is due to receive next year. At the same time she is raising a 5-year-old son who has a form of degenerative glaucoma. "The steps we are taking now could keep Ethan from eventually going blind," she

(Continued on Page 2)

Ava Tryon Earns Virginia Wagner Honors

The Dr. Virginia M. Wagner Educational Award is unique to the Soroptimist Midwestern Region. The awardee selected this year by the Milwaukee club is fittingly unique as well.

Ava Tryon's accomplishments earned her step-up awards from District I and the Region, and that is not surprising.

Ava, who lives in Oshkosh will be graduating in May from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh in three years with a grade point average of 3.9. She has a strong work ethic, is a critical thinker and has a positive attitude and a personable nature, according to Jean Kwaterski, adviser to the Oshkosh Student Association.

Carrying a double major in Psychology and Political Science has meant a heavy academic load, but it has not limited her outside activities. She has held leadership positions in the Psychology Club, National Society of Leadership & Success and the Psi Chi International Honor Society and she's on the Dean's List.

Equally important to Ava is her advocacy for diverse and under-represented populations. She was the Women's Advocacy Senator in OSA, a liaison to the Women's Advocacy Council and is a member of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee on campus. According to Jean, she has a passion for learning more about the world and social justice.

She works with children with autism and has volunteered at a mental health outpatient clinic. These experiences helped her decide that her goal after graduate school will be to become a Licensed Professional Counselor and to focus on working with children and adolescent populations experiencing intellectual disabilities or mental health-related issues. She hopes eventually to earn a leadership position where she can supervise other aspiring counselors and possibly research intervention and play therapy strategies to help this population succeed.



Barbara Collignon read this timely inspiration by Laura Kelly Fanucci at the March meeting.

Angie Dunbar

(Continued From Page 1)

said. These steps include the surgical insertion of a tube into Ethan's eye.

Yet this is just the first step in the future she sees for herself. After earning the Associate Degree at MATC Angie will pursue a Bachelors Degree at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and then she plans to apply for admission to medical school, preferring the Medical College of Wisconsin at Madison. "I want to go into psychiatry," she said.

Angie graduated from Wauwatosa West High School and started at MATC, but circumstances caused her to drop out after a year. It was seven more years before she could return to her studies. "It was hard at first, especially with the pandemic causing so many changes. It took a while for me to get reacquainted, to work out a schedule for classes and caring for Ethan and working part time at a pre-natal agency." When she occasionally needs help, her 80-year-old dad is there for her. "It's been a difficult year for everyone," she said.

It's a long road ahead, but Angie's determination to reach her goals remains strong.

When this is over,
may we never again
take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theater
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.
When this ends,
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we want to be
we are called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way—better
for each other
because of the worst.

At the Spring Conference...

Ending Female Genital Mutilation Is Mission of Keynote Speaker

Torture of Girls Is Still Done Globally, Even in the U.S.

Nina Smart is a medically educated PhD advocate for human rights, an author, a world traveler, and a Soroptimist who gave the keynote address April 23 at the Midwestern Region Spring Conference.

Nina is the child of a Romanian mother and a father from Sierra Leone, in western Africa. Her mission is to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM). Since Sierra Leone was her home for many years, that country's practices are where she concentrates her efforts, but the mutilation of young girls for the pleasure of their husbands-to-be is practiced widely in Africa and, in fact, globally, including in Nina's current home of Los Angeles.

The ritual circumcision is carried out differently in different societies. In Sierra Leone it is done in secret, with no medical supplies or anesthetics and can involve cutting genitalia with pieces of broken glass, razor blades or rusty knives.

When girls reach puberty they can be kidnapped and hauled into the bush for the procedure, which is both cultural and economic. It is usually done by a woman who is very highly regarded in the tribe and paid for by the men. The money that might otherwise be used to educate the girls goes instead to the cutter. The girls are left with no option but to marry much older men who often are abusive to the property they have purchased.

Mutilating the girls makes intercourse easier for the males and assures that the females will never be able to get any pleasure during sex. It also affects them in other ways, such as making urination a very slow and painful process, and, of course, it scars them mentally and emotionally for life.

Nina is founder of Female Genital International, a human rights organization that seeks to bring this practice into the light, and, by educating both men and women about it, to eventually see its demise. Jan. 30, 2021, was declared International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM through the United Nations-UNICEF. There are 20 organizations worldwide seeking to end this extreme form of violence and discrimination against women and girls. Soroptimist



International has had a role for the past 10 years through the President's Appeal and Nina is its spokeswoman.

Nina pointed out that about 3 million girls are potentially deprived of an education and a future while being used as a political tool. Some have escaped to safe houses and some become advocates themselves, risking their very lives to spread the word.

Nina tells her own story, including how she was able to avoid FGM, in her book "Wild Flower." It is available through Amazon and other booksellers.

Activities in Brief

HELPING WOMEN RISE

For SI Milwaukee club members a highlight of the Midwestern Region Spring Conference, held virtually in Fond du Lac, was learning that the club's and District I's Dr. Virginia Wagner Educational Award recipient placed fourth in the region, adding \$1,000 to her award. Ava Tryon is a Psychology and Political Science major at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh who is also an advocate for women and children.

Also at the convention, Alexandra Coons SI Canton/Stark County, was named Soroptimist of the Year for her work that included serving as public awareness chair for the region and guiding creation of SLACK inter- and intra-club communications.

SIA President Penny Babb encouraged members to increase donations beyond the annual dues, which cover administrative costs. She said members can designate their preferred program in order to reach more women and girls. The goal is to serve half a million women and girls.

SI President Sharon Fisher acknowledged the SI Africa Federation, chartered in June, 2020, becoming the fifth federation. Soroptimist International includes 120 countries worldwide in addition to United Nations (Continued on Page 4)

Wrap-up

(Continued From Page 3)

recognition and 22 representatives in seven locations. She also said the next international conference will be July 27-29, 2023, in Dublin, Ireland. A virtual event for all federations Oct. 1-3, 2021 will celebrate Soroptimists' 100th anniversary. The cost is \$40 and early-bird registration is open online until June 1 at <https://100.soroptimistinternational.org/si100>

Midwestern Region Governor Darcy Merritt gave assurances that clubs have dealt successfully with limitations forced by the pandemic, though the restriction on face-to-face meetings has been lifted. The Region is also in good health financially and in terms of retaining membership. The next Big Goal, for 2021-2031, is to serve 500,000 women and girls. She encouraged nearby clubs to partner together for the best results.

The 114th Spring Conference will be April 21-24, 2022, in Akron, Ohio.

Other presentations included the giving of awards, thanking participants and reviewing business meeting particulars and a trivia contest.

Dates to Remember

Saturday, May 15, 11 a.m.—SI Milwaukee business meeting via Zoom.

Oct. 1-3, 2021—Celebration of 100 years of Soroptimist, via Zoom.

Friday and Saturday, Oct. 15-16—District I and III meeting, Canton, Ohio.

April 21-24, 2022—Spring Conference, Akron, Ohio.

July 20-23, 2022—47th SIA Convention, Seoul, Korea.

July 27-29, 2023—Soroptimist International Convention, Dublin, Ireland

Deep Meaning in Few Words

Brief and thoughtful inspirations were offered at the SI Milwaukee April 10 meeting by Janet Nortrom and Barbara Collignon.

From Janet, out of the Buddhist tradition:

Each day we are born again. What we do today matters most.

And Barbara presented this insight:

The important things are invisible to the eye.

Ideas From the Vision

Clubs from throughout the Midwestern Region came up with some fund-raising ideas and ideas to help women and girls that they had tried successfully during this particularly trying year. They offered up the ideas in the April edition of The Vision.

SI Fond du Lac created a challenge to collect and donate at least 100 books featuring female authors and protagonists, with an emphasis on marginalized groups. They also activated a Soroptimist DreamCasters Award for videos from high school students.

SI Bloomington-Normal held a virtual baby shower for new moms from the local social service agency. Members contributed shower items such as diapers and soaps.

SI Grosse Pointe is celebrating Soroptimist's 100th Anniversary each month with projects of 100, starting with donations of non-perishable foods to a Detroit food pantry. They exceeded the 100-pound goal, donating 602 pounds of non-perishables. Other projects include 100 acts of kindness, 100 pairs of glasses, 100 masks and more to come. For fund-raising, they raffled two baskets of wine and accessories.

SI Suburban Chicago delivered bling bags and heart-shaped necklaces for a local women's shelter. The gifts brought some cheer to the women who have lost everything.

SI Mt. Vernon and Knox County raised more than \$5,000 with their Half-a-Hog Raffle. Two winners each received more than 50 pounds of pork including chops, ham, steaks, bacon, sausage, ribs and roasts. The money will benefit local women and girls through educational grants and preparation of programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

SI Kenton-Hardin County organized a ceremony honoring outstanding women in their communities.