

Single mom claims awards

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After winning \$17,000 in awards to help with her college education, an Ashland single mother finally experienced the proverb: “Good things come to those who wait.”

Kimberly Thompson was awarded a \$10,000 Women’s Opportunity Award by Soroptimist International of America on July 8 at its convention in San Francisco. SIA is a volunteer organization for professional women with the mission of improving the lives of women worldwide.

She also received two other awards from the same organization. The Soroptimist Club of Ashland awarded her \$2,000 in May, and in April she received a \$5,000 Women’s Opportunity Award from the Soroptimist Northwestern Region, based in Anchorage, Alaska.

Ashland Soroptimist Sue Kurth nominated Thompson for the award after meeting her at Helman Elementary School through Thompson’s 6-year-old daughter, Anissa.

The Soroptimists began the Women’s Opportunity Award in 1972 with the goal of helping women improve their chances of employment. Award winners are primary family wage earners, have chosen education to improve their lives and usually have overcome considerable obstacles in their lives.

After a lifetime of dealing with her own obstacles, Thompson, 28, says she now can concentrate on her education and building a better life for her family. Working toward a teaching degree in elementary education, she attends Rogue Community College.

Thompson encountered difficulties at an early age. Born and raised in Ashland, Thompson lived with a mentally ill mother and an alcoholic father with six other siblings until she was 10. At home she experienced severe neglect and physical abuse — she rarely bathed, missed school often and used her desk at school as a place to sleep.

“For me, going to school was a safe haven from everything,” she said.

At the age of 10 she was placed in a foster-care home in Jacksonville, but said her situation was far from perfect because she was faced with a verbally abusive foster parent.

“I’m left-handed and my foster mom would slap my hand for using it,” she said. “I was forced to be right-handed.”

Despite those difficulties, Thompson was able to attend school regularly. She suffered with learning disabilities, including dyslexia, and relied on teachers to help her through school with special education.

“I was so far behind in school by the time I was 10,” she said, but with the help of teachers she caught up by the eighth grade.

After she turned 18, Thompson’s foster mother sent her to the Job Corps in Sacramento, Calif., where she met the father of her daughter. That also turned into a physically abusive relationship, so she and her daughter left the state and returned to the Rogue Valley.

— Vera Westbrook



Kimberly Thompson plays with her daughter, Anissa, 6, in Lithia Park recently. Thompson has received \$17,000 in Soroptimist awards, which will allow her to pay her bills and continue her education.

Jim Craven