

VALLEY & STATE

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Community dinner celebrates girls' successes

Girls participating in Soroptimist Strong Girls Strong Women program, along with their families, teachers and volunteers, packed the Helman Elementary School cafeteria for the program's first annual community dinner earlier this month.

The crowd of 160 people sat at tables decorated with colorful tablecloths, autumn leaves and pumpkins. Soroptimist members served a family style spaghetti-and-meatballs dinner prepared by the kitchen staff.

The dinner celebrated the end of the first six-week after-school science and math program for the fourth- and fifth-grade girls, who gave demonstrations of their science experiments. Second- and third-grade girls in the program were joined by their Lunch Buddy mentors from Soroptimist International of Ashland, the Ashland branch of the American Association of University Women and other women from the community.

The evening ended with a slide show of the 62 girls in the program, produced by fourth-grade teacher Trish Dorr. Child development counselor Jenni Egan and Principal Susan Hollandsworth expressed pride and thanks to all those who helped with the dinner and for "supporting our girls in such a strong way. It was magical," Hollandsworth said.

Soroptimist Strong Girls Strong Women is sponsored by Soroptimist International of Ashland in partnership with Helman Elementary. It promotes self-confidence and academic success for young girls. Research indicates that girls who are nurtured and supported by caring adults in elementary school have a greater opportunity for success in middle and high school, according to event organizers.

For more information on Soroptimist and the Strong Girls Strong Women program, contact Sara Brown at 482-5561 or sarabrown@bisp.net.

