

Soroptimists honor women

Six outstanding local women were honored by Soroptimist International of Merced for their contributions in the areas of women helping women, health, social/economic development, international goodwill and understanding, environment and education.

The honorees received medallions and certificates of recognition at a luncheon in their honor April 10 at the Elks Club.

The "Women Helping Women" award went to Diana Almanza who serves as the director of a Woman's

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HONORED -- Six local women were honored by Soroptimist International of Merced for distinctive contributions in many areas of community life. Recognized were (left to right) Joan Sortini, Shirley Olson, Diana Almanza, Cynthia Ann Leshner, Ernestine Woods and Melissa Smith. (See other photos on page 11)

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WORSHIP & ENCOURAGEMENT

Soroptimists . . .

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Place. Almanza was selected for her outstanding contributions to the education and protection of women in abusive relationships.

The five honorees for the Women of Distinction awards are:

Health: Ernestine Woods, Merced City Schools nurse and chairperson of the Golden Valley Health Center's Board of Directors.

International Goodwill and Understanding: Shirley Olsen, Hospice nurse and active volunteer for

organizing the itineraries and housing of foreign students locally.

Environment: Melissa Smith, zookeeper at the Merced Zoo for the past 18 years. Melissa has contributed thousands of volunteer hours to her job by fundraising, visiting classrooms, acting as a tour guide, and coordinating numerous improvements and special projects.

Education: Joan Sortini, executive director of the Merced County Arts Council. Sortini founded the

Merced Artists in the Schools program and was actively involved in the planning of the new Multicultural Arts Center.

Social and Economic Development: Cynthia Ann Leshner, vice president and a director of the Leshner Foundation, is a former owner of the Leshner Newspapers. Working through the Leshner Foundation, she has improved the status of the Boys and Girls Club, the Merced Arts Center, the Merced County Historical Society and many other local organizations.