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**Women Making a Difference 2017**

## Living Your Dream winner wants better life for her family

By **Amy Maginnis-Honey** From page WMD3 | March 12, 2017



Tasha Rome is the winner of the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award, honoring women who are head of households and are furthering their education. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

FAIRFIELD — Tasha Rome doesn't have a lot of great memories from her high school years, because no one insisted she attend.

"School didn't matter," said the single mother of three.

A pretty bold statement from a woman who will finish up her studies at Solano Community College this spring and has her sights set on earning a nursing degree at a four-year college.

Rome is the recipient of this year's Soroptimist's Living Your Dream Award.

She was 19 when she had her oldest son, Daniel Diaz, now 10. She was three months pregnant when she graduated from high school.

She gave birth to her daughter, Anaya Alexander five years later. Her second son, Ryder Alexander, followed. He's 3.

That's when Rome decided she wanted a better future for her children and enrolled at the community college, where she's set to earn several associate's degrees.

"I had three different lives to take care of," she said.

Determination is her secret weapon. She's not letting anyone, or anything, stop her from her reaching her goals, Rome said.

Christie Speck, director of the Early Learning Center at the college, has watched Rome's zest for achievement the past three years.

"In the time that I've known her, I have observed her ability to access resources to support the completion of her education at Solano and the transfer to a college where she will achieve a bachelor's degree," Speck wrote in an email. "She has faced several personal challenges but refuses to allow adversity to distract or deter her."

"A lot of people think I'm crazy," Rome said of being a full-time college student, working part-time, serving as president of the Early Learning Center's parent club and participating in the Parent Leadership Training Institute.

She's been accepted by four California State University campuses in the area. Rome is leaning toward Sacramento State because it's more convenient.

Speck told her about the Living Your Dream Award. Rome considered applying for it a few years ago, but didn't. She submitted the paperwork this year and was happy, and surprised, to be chosen.

In five years, Rome said she hopes to have her nursing degree, be settled in a job and enjoying financial stability.

"Nothing is impossible," she said. "If I can do it, you can do it. You just have to be determined. A lot of people get discouraged. There were many times I cried. The first semester it seemed my two little ones got sick almost every single week."

"It can be difficult for all parents to balance their time between family and career/college; it's remarkably more challenging for single parents," Speck wrote. "When children get sick or have trouble at school a parent must drop everything to take care of them."

“Single parents often do not have the other parent to rely upon to help and must miss college classes and or work when needing to place their child’s needs first.”

Speck said she knows parents who dropped out of school, or reduced their course load, to care for ill children.

“Single parents who do not have help or resources become discouraged and oftentimes depressed. Meeting basic needs for themselves and their children can be a daily struggle,” Speck wrote.

Rome said it’s going to be tough to say goodbye to the college.

“I wish I could take every teacher with me,” she said, adding their support was key to her success.

“I’ve always been impressed by Tasha’s ability to maintain her focus to achieve her educational goal,” Speck wrote. “She sets a good example for her children by modeling the importance of education. She is intrinsically driven and knows that her effort will result in a good life for herself and her three children.”

*Reach Amy Maginnis-Honey at 427-6957 or [amaginnis@dailyrepublic.net](mailto:amaginnis@dailyrepublic.net). Follow her on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/amaginnisdr](http://www.twitter.com/amaginnisdr).*

This version corrects the surname of the youngest children.



## **Amy Maginnis-Honey**

Amy Maginnis-Honey joined the staff of the Daily Republic in 1980. She’ll tell you she was only 3 at the time. Over the past three decades she’s done a variety of jobs in the newsroom. Today, she covers arts and entertainment and writes for the Living and news pages.