

**Member Feature - Melissa Kreck****Former Scholarship Recipient is Now an SITM Member**

By Melissa Kreck

I was born and raised in Portland, Oregon by my dad and grandfather and followed them to Reno in 1995. In 1997 I became pregnant and had my daughter, Naomi, when I was 18.

Though no one in my family had gone to college and I really didn't have an understanding of what college was, I knew it was important for me to obtain a college degree. Not only to better myself and be able to provide financially for me and my daughter but also because I knew by me having a college education, statistically that would improve my daughter's chances to have a better life.

Vicki Schultz was one of the first people I met after moving to Reno. Knowing I was enrolled and attending courses at TMCC, Vicki told me about the Soroptimists and their scholarship opportunities. I enthusiastically applied and was awarded the Nancy Gomes/Mary Gojack/Sue Camp Scholarship in 2003. Meeting with the scholarship committee was a very significant event in my life. It was the first time anyone had sat down to talk to me about my goals and ambitions and told me they believed I could achieve those goals. From that moment, I knew I wanted to join the Soroptimists one day so that I too could be part of providing women with the encouragement they need when they need it.

I graduated from UNR with my Bachelor of Science in 2005. As soon as I started college, I instantly enjoyed attending classes and learning. I quickly knew I wanted to continue my education and attend graduate school. I

returned a few years later and earned my Masters of Business Administration from UNR in 2011.

Raising my daughter, working, and attending school all at once never seemed hard or impossible. I wanted to do it, knew I could, and I knew I had to. Some of my fondest memories are reading textbooks out loud to Naomi while giving her a bath or passing a textbook off as a bedtime story. She never once complained when I dragged her to the library on weekends to meet with study groups and she never made me feel guilty for not having more free time. Naomi and I are very close and I could not have asked for a better kid.



*Melissa and Naomi at her graduation at Reno High School.*

Though times were not always easy or stable for us, I knew it was all worth it when I dropped Naomi off at college in August 2017. She is attending Seton Hall in New Jersey and working on earning a Bachelor of Science in Finance. For being so far away, she adjusted quickly and is doing very well. She comes home every break she has and I go out to visit her often. I am absolutely proud of her and know she will do great in life!

I had been so focused on raising Naomi and finishing my education, my personal life had been on stand-by until just recently. Unexpectedly in 2016, I met the most perfect man for us, Casey Kreck. He immediately became part of mine and Naomi's life. From day one of meeting Naomi, he put himself into parent mode and the three of us became an instant family. With Naomi's permission, Casey proposed while we were swimming in the ocean on our first family trip together to Bora Bora. And again with Naomi's permission, Casey and I eloped in Patagonia, Chile in February 2018.

It has been 15 years since I was first introduced to the Soroptimists and experienced the group's truly remarkable strength and support. With the encouragement and friendship from Vicki Schultz, Millie Mitchell, and Becky Moody, who I have been lucky enough to know over the years, I am now a Soroptimist!



*Melissa shown with her daughter Naomi Smith and husband Casey Kreck at a UNR football game.*