

EDUCATION AND ARTS IN OUR COMMUNITY

BY JANET ZIPSER ZIPKIN | **TAHOE DONNER GIVING FUND COMMITTEE**

Last month, Tahoe Donner Giving Fund provided a snapshot of health and human services data based on the recently released Community Report Card – compiled by the Community Collaborative of Tahoe Truckee, a program of Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation – and the good work of our local non-profits. This month, we take a look at how our community’s needs are being met in the areas of education and the arts.

READING TO LEARN

There is a pause in the reading and a brief quizzical expression. The head lifts up, the eyes open wide and the smile broadens as the child’s face literally explodes with joy. This is a youngster who just has learned something from what he or she has read. This phenomenon of transitioning from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” opens a world of knowledge to satisfy a child’s never-ending curiosity and sets the stage for future academic success.

Typically, this transition occurs at about third grade. But 67 percent of students nationwide – and more than 80 percent of those from low-income families – are not proficient readers. The statistics for Tahoe Truckee Unified School District (TTUSD) are considerably better at 47 percent – with 68 percent of these

from low-income families – but that means that almost half of our youngsters are not experiencing this joy of learning.

Recognizing that third grade reading proficiency is an important predictor of academic success and high school graduation, several local non-profit organizations collaborating with TTUSD are providing community bookshelves, facilitating book distributions and offering literacy programs targeted to low income neighborhoods.

GRADUATION

Our local educators proudly announce that 84 percent of 2014 TTUSD graduates attend post-secondary two- or four-year institutions, and the most recent California Department of Education statistics indicate a 90 percent 2013

TTUSD high school graduation rate, versus 80 percent statewide. Overall, Tahoe Truckee elementary to college-aged students outperform their peers across California in many areas, yet our English language learners have lagged behind.

Closing the achievement gap for students below the proficient level in all academic areas has been the goal of the TTUSD and the community for the past five years. Strategies to meet this goal include hiring English Language Learner Program coordinators, and working with both staff and parents in areas such as reading proficiency and overall academics.

ENRICHMENT

Our community is blessed with a variety



Left to right: Tahoe Truckee Unified School District Trustee Dianna Driller, Superintendent-Chief Learning Officer Dr. Rob Leri, Trustee and Board President Kim Szczurek, and Trustee Randy Hill in a recent board meeting. Leri and Szczurek are Tahoe Donner residents.



Visual and performing arts are an integral part of our community. Below, a Native American flutist performs during a recent Trails and Vistas, a local Truckee event celebrating arts in nature.

of local non-profit organizations that offer enrichment programs for kids. Some efforts celebrate our unique surroundings with offerings in conservation-oriented environmental education, winter sports training, history and interpretation of our natural resources and avalanche safety information. Other programs work to prepare under-resourced students for the future, provide culinary education, bring arts and artists to the schools, or enhance life and work skills.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Non-profit organizations extend the pleasure of visual and performance arts beyond the school grounds both for children and adults in our community. Our cultural and artistic passions are stimulated through dance, drama, music, literature and history in ways that are unique to our area—interpretive dance in the forest, drama on the beach, music under the stars.

Have you seen the new artistic bike racks around town? Creativity expressed through installations, painting, sculpture, drawing and writing enriches our lives and forms an identity for our community. Whether we love it or not, public art inspires our own creative thinking as we ask ourselves, “What is the artist trying to say?”

SUPPORT

The key to maintaining this breadth and depth of educational and artistic opportunity is to support the non-profit organizations that contribute so much to the welfare of our community. Collectively, Tahoe Donner members’ tax-deductible gifts to the Tahoe Donner Giving Fund (TDGF) will provide the funds for these organizations’ much-needed grants. Find out how you can contribute: tahoedonner.com/giving-fund.

With appreciation to the following for providing insights and facts for this article:

- **Alison Schwedner**, Director of The Community Collaborative of Tahoe Truckee
- **Laura Brown**, Executive Director, Excellence in Education Foundation
- **Carole Sesko**, Visual Artist and Truckee Art Advocate



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