

TAHOE DONNER GIVING FUND GRANTS \$5,000 TO LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP



BY DICK GANDER , TAHOE DONNER GIVING FUND

The Tahoe Donner Giving Fund is pleased to provide critical funds to purchase a bike pedal-generated speaker for shows and assemblies put on by local non-profit organization Sierra Watershed Education Partnerships (SWEP). “This unique speaker system allows SWEP to directly engage students during their 15 school-wide assemblies about energy in an experiential, engaging, hands-on demonstra-

tion,” said Dick Gander, chair of the Giving Fund Operations and Grant Committee.

“SWEP is grateful to the Tahoe Donner Giving Fund for assisting us in fulfilling our mission to promote stewardship in the Tahoe-Truckee region in a unique and meaningful manner,” said Missy Mohler, executive director of SWEP, adding that students retain information 90 percent more successfully

through real experience, especially through a dramatic presentation.

SWEP promotes environmental stewardship by connecting students with their community and local environment through watershed education and service learning. It further fulfills its mission through collaboration with local teachers, the school district, and community partners—such as Tahoe Donner Association—to teach about pertinent environmental issues. Operating in the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District (TTUSD) since 1996, SWEP programs engage over 9,000 students annually in kindergarten through grade 12, with an emphasis on service learning.

SWEP connects students to their local community through sustainability club outreach. The SWEP-advised high school Envirolution Club performs 15 “Trashion” shows to local schools and community audiences annually, as well as two per year in San Francisco and other locales such as Washington DC and Atlanta, Ga. Club members work to create outfits from otherwise discarded materials with messages advocating for our local community in the area of waste, energy and the environment. These same students become natural mentors to younger students in the area of



Sustainability clubs, such as the high school Envirolution Club, educate the public and provide mentoring opportunities through programs such as their “Trashion” Show, presented at Earth Day festivities. Photos courtesy SWEP.



Elementary students planting native plants in SWEP's "Wonders of Water" ("WOW") program.

youth voice and environmental advocacy. From the success of these "Trashion" shows and student advocacy for the environment, there are now nine sustainability clubs at schools within TTUSD, working with local restoration projects and other meaningful environmental projects.

SWEP connects students to their local environment through working with native species. SWEP has supported all TTUSD fifth graders for years by bringing them directly into the creek at the UC Sagehen Field Station to collect, observe and learn about the vital role macro-invertebrates play in our fragile stream eco-systems. SWEP's Trout in the Classroom (TIC) programming has also trained and assisted local teachers for over 18 years in raising native Lahontan cutthroat trout eggs in the classroom for students to help raise, observe and then release into our local streams and lakes. TIC was even featured in an episode of This American Land on PBS. These kinds of programs teach students about the vital role native species play, the life cycle and stewardship.

SWEP assists teachers with fun, hands-on science. SWEP reaches over 700 third through fifth grade students annually with winter ecology lessons at the Winter Discovery Center. SWEP also reaches over 4,000 students with science fair assemblies, engaging students with hands-on scientific exploration that emphasizes the scientific method. "SWEP touches thousands of students in our community and this grant is a clear demonstration of our campaign, "Tahoe Donner Cares,"" Gander added.

The Tahoe Donner Giving Fund is chartered by the Tahoe Donner board of directors. All contributions are voluntary tax deductible gifts from Tahoe Donner members and friends. The TDGF is administered through the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation. For more information on the TDGF, or to make a contribution, visit tahoedonner.com/giving-fund/. Contact tdgf@tahoedonner.com with questions or to volunteer for the committee.



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