

It takes Friends to keep libraries open

By Kathryn Reed

"Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."

– Walter Cronkite

But it takes a slew of volunteers to keep libraries open and to provide the diverse programs. No longer do taxpayer dollars foot the entire bill.

It is through nonprofits called Friends of the Library that these institutions remain a stable resource for communities. South Lake Tahoe is no different.

"Long term, when times are good the Friends have the opportunity to enrich resources that are available to the community. When times are tough, Friends can support libraries on the basics," Kay Henderson, president of South Lake Tahoe Friends of the Library, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Book sales help fund library programs. Photo/Denise Haerr

The local chapter has existed for more than 50 years.

“The upstairs loft of Pat Amundson’s house at 961 Cave Rock once held the library. Then it was moved to Bob Wakeman’s on Highway 89, before the Friends of the Library finally were able to build the present library. The ‘new’ school (now South Tahoe Middle School) had a wall in one room devoted to books once it was built,” according to the Lake Tahoe Historical Society.

The South Lake Tahoe organization is one of six chapters of El Dorado County Friends of the Library.

The local group’s contributions include:

- Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, “Farewell to Manzanar” author presentation.
- Free family summer performers.
- Free book distribution to children at community events.
- Improvements to community meeting room and community display case.
- Yoga instruction, nutrition instruction, farmers’ market cooking demo.
- Refreshments for Saturday morning classic movie series.
- Spanish language books for adults and children.
- Audiobooks and DVDs for children and adults.
- Free holiday concert for the community.
- Kindle and Nook instruction.
- Teen journaling workbooks.
- Summer music series on the lawn.
- Laptops for teen homework use.

- Supplies for early literacy storytime.

Book sales are the common way for Friends of the Library to raise money. On Sunday, the Friends are trying something a bit more ambitious.

“Whenever we have had the opportunity to bring a major author we get a major response. It seems to me there is a hunger for intellectual stimulation in the community,” Henderson said.

That, coupled with the knowledge of successful fundraisers in Placerville, the Tahoe group came up with the idea of a Toast to Twain. Legendary Twain impersonator McAvoy Layne will help celebrate Twain’s 178th birthday Nov. 3. The library will also be celebrating the publication of “Autobiography of Mark Twain, Volume 2”.

Money for the South Lake Tahoe branch also comes in the form of grants, donations from the community, as well as people who have left a portion of their estate to the library.

No longer are libraries just about stacks of books – though those still exist. Libraries have been great adaptors to technology as well as keeping up with what interests the community.

“El Dorado County Library has been a real leader in providing digital books. You can check out books digitally,” Henderson said. “You can check online to see if the library system has a book, and you can order it to be saved for you at your local library.”

Programs at the library are often the result of the Friends coming up with the money to make it happen. The volunteers put a high value on the young children and teen reading programs. Library workers put on the events, while Friends buy supplies and prizes.

In the last handful of years the Friends have brought in

speakers that range from authors to gardening specialists to cooking experts.

The whole goal is to provide enrichment to the community. And all of these events have been free because people support Friends of the Library.

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Notes:

- A Toast to Twain is Nov. 3 from 4-7pm. Tickets are limited and must be purchased by Oct. 30 at the library – 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd. They are \$40. The library is open today and Wednesday from 10am-8pm.
- To become a member of Friends of Library, applications are at the front desk or may be downloaded. Cost is \$10/year. It's not necessary to attend a meeting or volunteer at an event.
- The South Lake Tahoe branch is open Tuesday-Wednesday from 10am-8pm and Thursday-Friday-Saturday from 10am-5pm.