Marketing push brings people to South Shore

By Kathryn Reed

More heads in beds is bringing in a substantial amount of money in order to promote the South Shore to even more people.

The South Lake Tahoe Tourism Improvement District's budget is more than 20 percent higher than it was a year ago; $2.3 million v. $2.6 million. (In 2009 the budget was $1.8 million.)

Officials attribute the increase all to more room nights, not the price of rooms going up because the TID fee is a flat fee and not a percentage of the cost of a room night.

The TID gets its money by charging $3 per room on most hotels, with $4.50 a night assessed to time shares, condos and duplexes that operate as a tourist rental. This is just for properties in the city limits.

Ninety-five percent of what is collected goes to the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority. Forty-eight percent of that percentage goes to marketing and 10 percent for special events.

Jerry Bindel, president of the TID, said the reason for the upswing is the increase in marketing. He spoke at last week's City Council meeting. The city manages the collection of money, receiving a 1 percent administrative fee for doing so.

Carol Chaplin, who heads the LTVA, said events and international travelers are making a difference.

"The important thing with the international visitor is how long they stay and the money they spend," she said.

Material is on the tourism bureau’s website in a variety of languages as a way to be instantly accessible to would-be travelers.

LTVA, which is integral to the annual celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe, continues to see more residual benefits from the event. Chaplin said the American Century Championship has a $10 million economic impact on the community.

In 2015, an attendance record of more than 41,000 was set. It was broken this year with more than 47,000 attending the July tournament in Stateline.

The contract to have the tournament here goes through 2022.

LTVA is in talks with Amgen to bring the women’s cycling event back to the South Shore in May.

While the LTVA has often targeted Northern California and Los Angeles, San Diego is a new market. Results so far are positive, with the plan to continue to attract that Southern California population.

Different air routes out of Reno are helping to bring people here – like Jet Blue’s Long Beach and New York services, Alaska’s Orange County route, Allegiant increasing flights to Los Angeles, and Delta’s Atlanta flights.