Opinion: Caring about the news matters

By Joann Eisenbrandt

“Why should people who live in South Lake Tahoe care about this?”

I have written articles for *Lake Tahoe News* for many years. Every article had to first pass this relevancy test. Granted, Kae Reed and I have had our disagreements about what was relevant and what wasn’t. We burned up quite a few cell phone towers in the process. However, we have never disagreed about our role as journalists.

Kae viewed *Lake Tahoe News* as the gatekeeper for the information highway between Lake Tahoe residents and those making the decisions that would impact their lives. She took this role very seriously. It often involved asking the hard questions, not taking things at face value and being willing to dig beneath the surface to find the truth.

Telling that truth sometimes led to acrimonious backlash. Truth and transparency have been in short supply on the lake’s South Shore a very long time. The same small, inbred circle of corporate and governmental power brokers or their hand-picked successors has had control there for decades. This has led to a sense of entitlement and a lack of any real accountability.

It has also led to the failure to effectively solve the core problems that lie buried to this day beneath the lake’s mysterious blue waters. Kae did as much as any single doggedly determined truth seeker could do to bring them up into the light. She told me many times how vital it was that those who lived at the lake had meaningful input into local officials’ decisions. Lapses in protocol and secret back door deals violated her sense of what good government should be.

Regurgitating glossy press releases and filling her stories with self-serving quotes was not her style.

On July 31, *Lake Tahoe News* will cease publication. Kae was a stern editor and taskmaster, but that was a good thing. I am sad my time writing for her will be over. Still, I am even sadder about the gaping vacuum the publication's departure will leave behind.

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For the majority of residents, living at the lake can be a day-to-day struggle. Low wages and the lack of affordable housing mean they often must sacrifice what is less important just to hang on. *Lake Tahoe News* made sure they did not sacrifice their right to be informed about what was really taking place in the city where they lived. I fear the much-needed unvarnished truth that Kae told will be much harder to come by in the future.