RAOK: A cupcake changes the mood for the day

Erin Bechtol and three friends are going to see Gizmo Guys on Jan. 27 – all because she was nice to her boss and Tahoe Arts Project donated the tickets.



Erin is *Lake Tahoe News'* Random Acts of Kindness winner. The thoughtfulness toward her boss was returned by Erin being nominated in the monthlong RAOK promotion.

TAP is one of the many organizations/businesses providing a reward for people who perform a Random Act of Kindness, witness one or receive one.

To get involved, all you have to do is write about a Random Act of Kindness at the bottom of this story. Each day a new story is posted, with a new winner getting a reward.

There are a few rules associated with Random Acts of Kindness. If you want to read them, check out this story.

Opinion: Grateful for giving community

To the community,

The fundraiser committee for Jake Fonken & Taryn Callahan would like to thank you all so very much for your kindness, care, and thoughtfulness.

The turnout for the fundraiser on Jan. 6 was amazing and donations for the silent auction and raffle exceeded all expectations.

We would also like to thank the Flight Deck at Lake Tahoe Airport for providing such an amazing venue for this event. We are so lucky to have a community like ours. Please keep Jake & Taryn in your thoughts and prayers.

Friends of Jake & Taryn

Tahoe-ites think big and small to help women in Kenya

By Jennifer Gurecki

Barey's eyes widened with wonder as she held the piece of paper in her hand. She struggled to decipher the words on the document, but understood its significance – the number, 5,000 Kenyan shillings, would be paid to her to start her own small business baking and selling chapati to support her family.

As a child, Barey never had a chance to learn to read or write, or learn anything else besides street smarts and the necessity of hard work. But now, as a 41-year-old widow, she has earned an opportunity to break free of the vicious cycle of living hand-to-mouth, day after day after day.

The loan to Barey, the equivalent of $59, was one of nine loans provided to aspiring Kenyan women entrepreneurs this past December by the Zawadisha Fund, a South Lake Tahoe-based organization that Julie Lowe and I co-founded in 2010. The idea germinated when I wrote my master's thesis on how social

norms impact women’s ability to participate fully and freely in society. When I surveyed women in Eldoret, Kenya, they repeatedly said the greatest barrier to prosperity, and thus empowerment, is access to capital and participation in the economy.



South Lake Tahoe's Jen Gurecki, co-founder of Zawadisha, congratulates Barey on her micro-loan. Photos/Provided

Armed with this knowledge and inspired by the success of the Grameen Bank – which along with its founder Mohammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for providing small low-interest loans to Bangladeshi women – Zawadisha has sought to develop an effective microfinance program to improve the lives of Kenyan women and their families.

The results so far are encouraging. Aptly named the Tuinuane Project by the loan recipients, which means “to lift up” in Swahili, after just one year the women report they have been able to contribute financially to their families for the first time in their lives. And of the eight women granted loans for 2011, six paid back their loans enabling us to lend additional funds to the successful six and provide loans to Barey and two

other women in December.

Though the sustainability of the program is promising, we strive to innovate to increase the project's effectiveness. For example, while in Eldoret in November, we implemented a new savings program in which the fund will match any savings deposited by the women upon full repayment of their loans. Promoting savings is especially vital in Kenya where life is precarious and one bad turn – an illness, an accident, a marginal decrease in earnings – can prove disastrous to families without savings.

Zawadisha has also joined the fight for the well being of women on another front: confronting an epidemic of rape and violence against women in Kenyan society. In a survey conducted by the United Nations AIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Gender and HIV, nearly half of Kenyan women reported experiencing violence in their lifetimes and one-quarter reported such violence had occurred within the preceding 12 months.

Of these women, an overwhelming 83 percent experienced violence during their childhood, and 46 percent of those incidents were sexual abuse. Additionally, the U.N. Task Team found that in more than 60 percent of these cases, the abused women and children did not report the crime to anyone. Among its findings, the Task Team concluded that education is a social vaccine that can prevent the spread of violence and HIV.

To promote this "social vaccine," Zawadisha has partnered with a Kenyan couple, Winnie and Duncan Bomba, who founded and run the Dolphin Anti-Rape & AIDS Control Outreach program. The Bombas had lived a "normal" life in Kenya until social activism was abruptly thrust upon them. While staying at her family's home in Eldoret, Winnie woke the next morning to discover that a girl had been beaten, raped, brutalized, and left to die on her family's doorstep.

Regret and concern permeated the neighborhood, but for only so long. Each and every day is a new chapter of survival and struggle, and after several chapters, reflection fades. In Kenya, confronting the past and changing the future seem like fruitless endeavors when faced with the ever-pervading tide of the present.

But Winnie refused to let it be. She resolved to rage against complacency because she suddenly felt complicit otherwise. Her husband, Duncan, had martial arts training and magnetism to match Winnie's determination and energy. Together, they founded the Dolphin program that propelled them to visit schools throughout their "neighborhood" – Greater Nairobi – to teach girls how to avoid confrontations, but defend themselves if necessary, and stem this seemingly endemic cancer on their society. To date, Dolphin has instructed more than 250,000 women and girls in their anti-violence and self-defense workshops.

Zawadisha has bolstered the Bombas' program by providing organizational, technological, fundraising, and material support.

Zawadisha has been greatly aided in its efforts through the generous support of South Tahoe CrossFit, Elevate Wellness, GWOF, Indigo Photography, IRIE Rafting Company, Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra and many other local donors who believe that global issues are relevant locally and that Lake Tahoe residents have a great deal to offer in human and material resources.

If you would like to learn more or donate to the Zawadisha Fund, go online www.zawadisha.org.

Sean Turner and Julie Lowe contributed to this article. Jennifer Gurecki is co-founder of the Zawadisha Fund.

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Windy and white the forecast into Saturday

The first of two storms heading for the Lake Tahoe Basin is expected to strike Thursday afternoon.

The stronger of the two is forecast to arrive late Friday afternoon. Locations above 7,000 are expected to get the brunt of the storms.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter weather advisory for the basin from 4pm Thursday to 4am Friday – above 7,000 feet.

From Friday through Saturday morning snowfall rates could be in excess of 2 inches per hour. Between 4 and 8 inches could fall above 7,000 feet Thursday, with 2 inches at lake level.

Wind will be a factor with these storms, which could make driving precarious at times.

A foot or more of snow could fall during the second storm at locations above 7,000 feet.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Angora area prescribe burn scheduled

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will resume prescribed fire operations in the Angora area on Jan. 19.

Fuels management crews will begin work in small sections of the unit near the north end of Tahoe Mountain. The project area is approximately 123 acres. Operations will continue through the weekend.

In addition, operations may begin this weekend in Ward Canyon, weather permitting.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from these prescribed fire project areas. Smoke may be visible on Highway 89 near the Camp Richardson/Pope Beach areas and Highway 89 on the West Shore near Sunnyside.

The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed. To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Fire destroys house in Incline Village

An alert neighbor helped keep a residential fire in Incline Village from spreading beyond the lone structure on Wednesday.

North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District officials said the cause of the fire at 665 Country Club Drive is still being investigated. The loss has not been quantified in dollars.

The neighbor reported seeing smoke at 3:40pm Jan. 18.

Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District and Sierra Fire Protection District also responded.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

South Tahoe man to compete in MMA fight in Reno

Ryan McCarthy of South Lake Tahoe will be participating in Fight Republic III in Reno on Jan. 20.

The mixed martial arts fights are at Harrah's Reno convention center starting at 6:30pm.

Confirmed bouts include:

Matt Lively of Susanville vs. Memo Vazquez of Reno; Steven Livel of Susanville vs. Joey Angelo of Las Vegas; Shawn Goode of Reno vs. Daniel Reese of Reno; McCarthy vs. Adam Hill of Reno; Matt McCrary of Reno vs. Chris Halloway of Reno; Phillip Wilson of Reno vs. Richard Vanderploeg of Bridgeport; Danielle

Mack of Los Angeles vs. Veronica Rothenhausler of Reno.

Tickets are $25 for general admission, $50 for cageside and $100 for VIP. Tickets available online and at the door.

A fresh heir to Muir country

By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times

LEE VINING — Gale-force winds were whipping whitecaps and spray across Mono Lake when Robert Hanna spotted a distant hiker.

It was a crummy day to chat up a stranger in a state park, but Hanna was upbeat, as usual.

He stepped hurriedly along a trail to introduce himself. “Hello there!” Hanna said, flashing a toothy smile. “Do you know that California wants to shut this place down? Would you like to sign our petition to keep it open?”

“Yeah, I guess so,” the man said.

“Wow! That’s great,” Hanna said, reaching to shake his hand. “Every signature counts.”

The hiker signed and traipsed off, not realizing he’d just shaken hands with the great-great-grandson of John Muir.

Read the whole story

Blood drive

North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District is hosting a Community Blood Drive on Feb. 3 from 8am to 3pm at the main fire station located at 875 Tanager St., Incline Village.

To make an appointment, call (775) 831.0351, ext. zero.

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1 man’s campaign to upend Nevada’s tax structure

By Michael Squires, Las Vegas Sun

A Las Vegas attorney will launch a legal and political effort this week aimed at establishing and funding a parallel state budget, beyond the reach of the Legislature and governor.

Kermitt Waters seeks to place on the November ballot a proposed constitutional amendment calling for a sweeping overhaul of Nevada’s tax system – abolishing property taxes on single-family homes among other things while identifying and allocating new tax revenue.

Waters said last week his proposal is borne of frustration with the status quo in Carson City. The state’s 63 lawmakers represent the powerful interests who fund their campaigns, he said, not the voters who elect them.

“The people of Nevada don’t have a Legislature. Mining and gaming have a Legislature,” Waters said. “If the Legislature could get their hands on this money, none of this would ever happen.”

Waters will begin his effort in the courts, where he says he will file suit this week targeting the law that limits citizen initiatives to a single subject. That restriction would prevent his sweeping tax proposal from reaching the ballot. He will ask that the so-called single-subject law be eased or overturned.

Should he succeed in court and then gather enough signatures for his proposal to win a place on the ballot, voters would consider an initiative that would remove property taxes on single-family homes, and institute a 20 percent levy on mining and a gross-receipts tax on businesses with revenue of over $1 million a month. Gaming companies and nonprofits would be exempt, as well as food for home consumption.

Read the whole story