Clubs provide safe place for South Shore's LGBT students

By Shannon Early

In August, a private college in Elmhurst, Ill., announced it would include a question on applications about whether a prospective student identifies with the LGBT community. If applicants answer yes, they might be awarded an Enrichment Scholarship which could cover up to 40 percent of Elmhurst College's tuition. The question is designed to promote acceptance on Elmhurst's campus, as well as to diversify the student body and to enrich students' lives.



Though Elmhurst is seemingly the first to directly inquire about a student's sexual orientation, it is not the first to award scholarships based on the LGBT community, nor is it the first campus to welcome diversity.

Last year, Friends of ALLY, a LGBT club at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe, awarded $750 worth of scholarships to students based on essays they submitted related to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender issues. The scholarships were open to any student who wanted to share his or her coming out story or an experience with a friend or family member who identifies as gay or lesbian.

Chris Sidell, president of Friends of ALLY, said the scholarships this year will be of equal value so a non-LGBT student would receive the same amount as a LGBT student. He said the scholarships help students make a connection with the club who may not normally seek out the club for support.

Lisa Shafer, adviser for Friends of ALLY, said the club, as well as scholarships, should be open to all students, not just

those who identify with the LGBT community. In addition to providing scholarships, Friends of ALLY will begin to offer peer support once a month and strengthen its bond with the ALLY club at South Tahoe High School.

Shafer said the club is welcome to people who “want to be a part of social justice and equality for all.”

Friends of ALLY was founded last year, while STHS’s ALLY club is in its seventh year

STHS recently hosted a guest speaker who spoke about HIV in front of 100 students. Nearly every class at STHS bears a “Safe Zone” poster on classroom doorways and every Thursday is “ALLY Day”, where staff wears ALLY T-shirts to remind students they are in an environment free of harassment.

STHS instructor and adviser Bridey Heidel said the club was not always welcome. A bulletin board covered in ALLY flyers and messages outside of her classroom was torn down and vandalized the first few years. But this year the billboard remains unscathed from hateful words or actions.

“We don’t really work to change anyone’s opinions because I don’t really think you can. I just work to protect the children and I hope that they feel comfortable as they graduate going out into the community,” Heidel told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Both clubs have been successful in recruiting members and fundraising for special events and trips. More than 100 people signed up for Friends of ALLY within three days. And the club hosted a widely successful dance last winter. ALLY participates in Winterfest – the gay ski week – and has gone to the Queer Youth Advocacy in Sacramento to instruct students how to lobby for their cause.

Overall the clubs have received positive feedback for their work from the community and schools.

Shafer said she has met amazing people since becoming adviser of Friends of ALLY and from the looks of the first meeting members want to support an important cause but also have a good time. Shafer believes the students deserve all the credit for the group.

“It’s their lives. It’s their stories,” she said.

The next event hosted by Friends of ALLY will be a Back to School BBQ on campus on Oct. 11 from 11:30am-1pm.

Tahoe Pride may not be affiliated with an institution, but with its nearly 600 friends on Facebook it attempts to connect the LGBT community in Tahoe.

Dawn Harkins, one of three creative members of Tahoe Pride, said the group supports ALLY and Friends of ALLY and hopes to interact with them more in the future. The group hosts mixers and events throughout the year.

Tahoe Pride’s mission statement is: “Tahoe Pride is a safe, welcoming place for LGBTQ people and their friends, a place to build a strong community while forming lasting friendships. We build community by organizing a variety of social, cultural, and outdoor activities where we promote equality and respect toward each other. We are committed to diversity and are open to all: men and women; straight and gay; couples and singles. Tahoe Pride and its friends care strongly about equal rights. We strive to promote tolerance, education, and communication about issues that affect our community through being active and visible in the community in which we live. As we grow we are taking steps to form a board and move forward in our vision of providing programs and services that benefit the LGBTQ community and their friends.”

Their next monthly mixer is Oct. 11 from 6-9pm at Murphy’s Irish Pub. The mixer coincides with National Coming Out Day.

While the LGBT community mostly considers Elmhurst College’s

inclusion of a question about sexual orientation a positive step, Shafer and Heidel agreed all underrepresented groups deserve opportunities to earn scholarships. As evidenced by the work of groups in town, the LGBT community is working toward an atmosphere accepting of all lifestyles.

For more information:

LTCC Friends of ALLY Club Facebook page

STHS ALLY Club Facebook page

Tahoe Pride Facebook page

Winter weather about to hit Lake Tahoe

The first winter storm warning of the season has been issued – 12 days into fall.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for the severe weather from 11 tonight through 1pm Thursday above 7,000 feet.

The heaviest mountain snow is expected late tonight into Wednesday morning, with snow showers continuing into Wednesday evening. When it's over, 5 to 10 inches may have fallen above 7,000 feet, with slushy snow expected at lake level.



Expect chain controls this week in the Sierra.
Photo/LTN file

Wind will likely be an issue, which will make for interesting driving conditions. With this being the first moisture of the season, the roads will be particularly slick because of oil accumulation for the past few months.

Winds will be out of the southwest at 15 to 25 mph, with gusts up to 40 mph below the ridges. Ridge gusts could hit 100 mph late Tuesday night and early Wednesday morning.

The snow level will likely drop below 6,000 by late Wednesday morning.

The weather is such that California Emergency Management Agency acting Secretary Mike Dayton is urging residents to be prepared for the unseasonably chilly and powerful storm by having at a minimum an emergency supply kit that includes a three-day supply of drinking water for each person, food, a first aid kit, battery-operated radio, flashlight, extra batteries, cash and manual can opener.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

EFT workshop

Emotional freedom technique and the law of attraction workshop on Oct. 8 from 9am-noon at the Center for Spiritual Living 4685 Lakeside Drive, Reno.

Register by calling (775)826.0566 or walk-in registration begins at 8:45am.

Cost is $40, which includes the workbook.

East Coast protests spreading to Reno

All of the recent protests on Wall Street are spreading across the country.

Demonstrators will be in Reno on Oct. 5 starting at noon at UNR.

More information about Occupy Reno is on the group's website.

Ohio woman named director of tourism in Nevada

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Gov. Brian Sandoval has appointed Claudia Vecchio as the first director of the new Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. She will begin her job Nov. 14.

The newly constituted department is comprised of the Nevada Commission on Tourism, Division of Museums and History, Nevada Arts Council and the Nevada Indian Commission.

“Claudia is an experienced destination marketer with a solid background in social media and branding,” Sandoval said. “Together with her appreciation for history and culture, her background is ideally suited to taking us to the next level in how we engage with Nevadans and tourists alike.

“I look forward to her leadership in promoting Nevada’s many fine destinations, as well as preserving and enhancing our sense of history, appreciation for the arts, and well-being of our Native American population,” he said. “I am pleased to make this appointment as we kick off Nevada History Month.”

Vecchio previously served as the tourism director in Ohio. In that post, she supervised the overall brand development of state tourism, working closely with the Ohio Historical Society and the Ohio Arts Council to create development programs.

While in Ohio, Vecchio and her team developed a marketing program to assist in the opening of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. She also helped open the Toledo Glass Museum and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati.

In a telephone interview, Vecchio said she was intrigued by the position because of all the state has to offer, from Las Vegas to Virginia City to Lake Tahoe and the many other gems waiting to be discovered by visitors.

“It has everything from one of the largest tourism destinations in the world to these rich, textured, smaller, rural communities that have so much appeal,” she said.

“I so look forward to working with the governor, and with the lieutenant governor and all of the industry partners to help shape this new role – but when we bring that cultural affairs piece into it then you’re really taking about the heart and soul of the state with that kind of a product,” Vecchio said.

Vecchio said she has experience working on Olympic bids as well, which fits in well with efforts under way by the state to submit a bid for the 2022 Winter Olympics for the Lake Tahoe region.

The new agency was created in part due to the state's budget difficulties. The former Department of Cultural Affairs was eliminated as part of Sandoval's budget. The museums and other programs will continue, with several functions operating under the new agency.

Vecchio also has an extensive background in marketing, having worked with the Edelman public relations firm in Chicago and Burson-Marsteller in Dallas. She is currently president of Destination Integration in Dallas, where she provides marketing programs for small and mid-sized communities that integrate tourism and economic development components.

Vecchio has a bachelor's degree in organizational communications from Brigham Young University. She is the recipient of several Public Relations Society of America and America Marketing Association Awards, including recognition for web marketing. She has also served on the Travel Industry Association of America's Council of State Tourism Directors.

Halloween event at S. Tahoe Denny's

Spooky Night is Oct. 5 from 6-10pm at Denny's in South Lake Tahoe.

It is for the whole for family, with the first 100 kids getting a free pumpkin courtesy of Corley Ranch.

The actors from “Terror in Tahoe” will be on hand to make the evening fun and spooky.

Twenty percent of the proceeds will benefit the Clean Tahoe Program and the Dinner Table Project.

Call Clean Tahoe at (530) 544.4210 if you have questions.

Federal grant to pay for 8 deputies in Placer County

The Placer County Sheriff’s Office will be able to hire eight deputies to help combat the cultivation and use of illegal drugs throughout the county with a $2.6 million federal grant.

“This is great news for our county and its residents,” county Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery said in a press release. “Placer County’s grant will allow the Sheriff’s Office to add eight front-line deputies and will cover 100 percent of the funding for salaries and benefits over the next three years.”

The grant funds will be used to launch a multi-agency project that will:

* Expand communications with community-resource networks and strengthen working relationships with schools, nonprofit social service agencies, and other law enforcement agencies;

* Equip deputies working in the field with a better drug-related database;

* Conduct public forums to heighten public awareness of drug issues in local communities;

* Strengthen community oriented policing by expanding the Sheriff’s Special Investigations, Special Operations and Air Operations teams;

* Develop stronger partnerships with minority communities; and

* Help prevent youth drug abuse and protect youths from drug-infested environments through a host of strategies, including an expansion of educational programs in schools.

The sheriff’s office is proposing the introduction of an anti-drug program called the Drug Store in local middle schools, which is something the South Shore does now.

Placer County’s grant is part of almost $72 million in grant funds awarded to local governments throughout California by the Office of Community Oriented Policing, a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Pink Party is all about raising money for breast cancer patients

The 7th annual Truckee Pink Party Fundraiser coined “The Best Pre-Halloween Costume Party” in town is hosted by Tahoe Forest Health System Foundation to raise money for local breast cancer patients.

Festivities start at 6:30pm Oct. 21 at Bar of America, Pacific Crest in Old Town Truckee.

Through the years a major highlight of the Truckee Pink Party is the outrageously wild pink costumes guests sport in honor

of their support for local breast cancer patients and programs. Costume creativity is judged. Prizes are given to the best male and female contestants, assuming judges can tell them apart.

Tickets for the Pink Party cost $25 per person in advance and $35 at the door. To purchase a ticket in advance, go online or call (530) 582.6277. Cost includes one free drink (beer or wine), light appetizers and live music by Truckee's Emily Tessmer Band. The evening also includes live and silent auctions.

Services in S. Tahoe for man killed in Afghanistan

Services for Army Spc. Garrett Fant, 21, will be Oct. 7 in South Lake Tahoe.

Fant, who attended South Tahoe High School, died Sept. 26 fighting in Afghanistan.



Garrett Fant

His body will be flown to Lake Tahoe Airport on Oct. 5.

This document has more information about the memorial services.

The city of South Lake Tahoe is flying its flags at half-staff in honor of Fant.

Spooky Night at Denny’s

Spooky Night is Oct. 5 from 6-10pm at Denny’s in South Lake Tahoe.

It is for the whole for family, with the first 100 kids getting a free pumpkin courtesy of Corley Ranch.

The actors from “Terror in Tahoe” will be on hand to make the evening fun and spooky.

Twenty percent of the proceeds will benefit the Clean Tahoe Program and the Dinner Table Project.

Call Clean Tahoe at (530) 544.4210 if you have questions.