

'Buddy system' – the legacy of Alyssa Byrne

By Mary Callahan, Press Democrat

Friends and relatives of a young Petaluma woman who perished in the snow after attending an outdoor New Year's Eve concert in South Lake Tahoe are trying to use their grief to help others avert tragedy.

Using funds donated in memory of their daughter, Alyssa Marie Byrne, 19, Kim and Kevin Byrne and others have launched a public service campaign promoting the buddy system to help keep teens and young people out of danger.



Kevin Byrne, Alyssa Byrne's father, welcomes family, friends and supporters to a memorial service for Alyssa in January. Photo/Alvin Jornada/Press Democrat

They're targeting middle and high school children, asking them to pledge to seek safety in numbers, and encouraging them to call a trusted adult at the first sign of trouble.

Assigning buddies is a tradition for outings involving young children, who customarily double up and holds hands so all can be accounted for in a group.

But even older children need to stick together, and beyond that know to get help and who to call if a buddy is at risk, Kevin Byrne said.

A key piece of advice offered through the campaign, dubbed "Always Buddy," is that kids whose cellphones are packed with friends' phone numbers should make sure they also have contact numbers for their friends' parents or other family members.

"It's your responsibility to reach out, talk to your buddy, have a contact list of who to go to if you think something is going wrong," Kevin Byrne said. "They need to buddy more than just being there."

The effort is born of lessons learned from Alyssa Byrne's death and a desire for something positive to come out of it. But it's also steeped in the love the Byrnes have both received and cultivated in its wake.

"Kevin and I and Greg (their son) count ourselves so fortunate to live in this town that has been nothing but loving and supportive," Kim Miller-Byrne said. "We definitely want to pay it forward in any way we can."

The Byrnes' daughter, a 2011 Casa Grande High School graduate, disappeared New Year's Eve and died alone – her body frozen in the snow for three days before a utility worker peered over a snow bank and discovered it.

Byrne had gone to Tahoe with three friends, shared a room with them at a hotel in Stateline, and attended the three-day SnowGlobe Music Festival in their company, as well as hanging out with many other friends from Petaluma who drove up for the event.

But the last night of the concert, Byrne was walking ahead of her friends when she apparently decided to go back to the hotel before the last show was over. She left without a word, though she later told one of them by phone that she was on a shuttle bus heading back to Stateline. Authorities now believe Byrne decided to walk to the hotel, frustrated like many other concertgoers by the long wait for a bus.

They presume from the location of her body that she turned the wrong way on a main road back to Stateline. The temperature dropped below freezing that night, and friends said she had been drinking.

Kevin Byrne has been leading the buddy campaign in conjunction with several younger friends, including one who decided at Alyssa's memorial service that those in attendance should take a pledge to stay together when they're out and about in an unfamiliar place.

Taylor Derby, 19, one of those who initiated the pledge, said she was inspired in part by her recollection of a 2-year-old Rohnert Park girl who was struck and killed by a texting college student in December 2010. In the aftermath, some students signed pledges never to text behind the wheel.

"Alyssa was one of my best friends," Derby said last week, "and I don't ever want to lose somebody so close to me again."

Kevin Byrne said he and his wife decided the pledge would be a good way to use donations supporters began making when their daughter disappeared.

Derby ordered 300 hot-pink bracelets printed in memory of her friend and sold them for \$3 apiece while she, the Byrnes and others worked out ideas for a larger campaign.

Casa Grande senior Sara Frazier is working with Kevin Byrne to develop a program for middle school students as part of her senior project. "I knew I wanted to do something for Alyssa,"

she said.

Frazier plans to visit schools and deliver bracelets and pamphlets that extol the virtues of staying safe in numbers. The pamphlets have a section where kids can fill in their friends' phone numbers or others they could call for help.

Friends have organized a benefit hip-hop concert Feb. 23 at The Phoenix Theater in Petaluma to raise funds toward the program.

"I know the word is all over the place," said concert promoter Jay Donnellan. "We're hoping for a sellout."

"It gives me a great feeling to see these kids and talk to them and (see) how they've rallied around this," Kevin Byrne said. "It's a shame it takes this kind of tragic situation, but the kids are all responding to it in a very positive way, and they're trying to learn something from it."

"And, again, they're trying to make sure this doesn't happen to anybody else."

4-week class to focus on gay-lesbian poets

Homopoetica is a four-week class that will be taught at Bona Fide Books in Meyers starting March 7.



Each session is from 6-8pm.

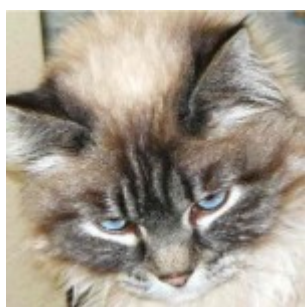
Join Sara Wiseman for a discussion about the work of gay and lesbian poets throughout history. The class is free, although donations are accepted.

To sign up or for more information, email homopoetica.lit@gmail.com.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Lena came to the shelter when her owner no longer wanted her.

It's difficult to believe that no one would want this beautiful, friendly cat.



And look at those bright blue eyes.

She has lived with other cats, dogs, and children, and she loves to be petted and to sit on laps. Lena was severely matted when she arrived at the shelter and had to be clipped to make her comfortable, but her coat will grow out beautiful and long.

Lena is spayed, microchipped, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online to see photos and description of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

– Karen Kuentz

2 workshops focus on marketing strategies

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce and Lake Tahoe Community College's Connect Community Education are partnering to offer two marketing workshops to be presented by Constant Contact.



On Feb. 20 from 4-5:30pm, Constant Contact representatives will be going over numerous ways to Supercharge Your Facebook Marketing. In this workshop attendees will acquire the what, why and how of a social media campaign.

The second marketing workshop, The Power of Engagement Marketing, will teach the importance of building lasting relationships with existing clients. Participants will discover the three components that lead to engagement

marketing success, and leave with a stronger marketing strategy to help inspire their customers to promote their business for them.

This workshop is March 6 from noon-1:30pm.

Both are at Lake Tahoe Community College.

To register for either workshop, go online or call Megan Waskiewicz at (530) 541.4660, ext. 718.

April home and garden event looking for vendors

The second annual Lake Tahoe Home and Garden Show is April 26-27 at the Recreation Complex on Rufus Allen Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe.

✖ It will feature live music, food, door prizes, drawing prizes, and free admission. Friday's event will be open to the public from 4-8pm and Saturday's from 10am-6pm.

Vendors for all types of services and goods that relate to anything for the home, garden, maintenance, protection, decorating, auto, health, fitness, and recreation will be participating.

The Master Gardeners will answer questions, and the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department will provide a public service by allowing hands-on practice on how to properly use a fire extinguisher. Lake Valley Fire will talk about defensible space around houses. Second Chances will be offering short classes on how to repurpose just about anything for your home, garden, or auto.

There is still booth space available. For more information, go online or call (530) 544.7412.

Film festival coming to Stateline

The silver screen meets glittering Lake Tahoe at the 8th annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival on March 8.

The event at the MontBleu showroom in Stateline is a benefit for the Sierra Nevada Alliance.



The festival combines award-winning environmental and adventure films with the energy of local activism. Featured films at the event will cover outdoor adventures, battles to save the environment and inspirational stories of people

making a difference.

Filmmaker Mike Wier will be presenting films at the event and participating in the Filmmaker Q&A session. The Film Festival will also include an Activism Area where attendees can learn more about the issues affecting the Sierra Nevada. It will be a zero waste event.

Advance tickets are \$12 for Sierra Nevada Alliance members, \$15 for non-members and \$10 for students. Advance tickets may be purchased online and at Patagonia South Lake Tahoe. Tickets will be available at MontBleu the night of the show for \$20. Doors open at 6 pm; films start at 7 pm.

V&T rail offers glimpse into Nevada's past

Nevada's window into the Old West is wide-open with tickets available aboard the historic Comstock-era Virginia & Truckee Railroad.



The 2013 season starts in May with runs from Carson City to Gold Hill and Virginia City.

The V&T Railroad offers two options with steam or diesel locomotives that pull Old West-era passenger cars through the rugged Nevada high desert.

Retracing the famous Comstock-era right-of-way, rides feature scenic vistas of the Carson River and Sierra Nevada, with engines passing through two tunnels, abandoned mine shafts, old cemeteries along country-side where sightings of wild mustangs are routine. The historic train travels the same silver route paved by the miners of the Wild West 1860s silver boom.

The V&T offers a variety of ticket options and packages.

For Historic Route schedule and ticket prices, call (775) 847.0380.

Some bookstores contemplate charging to browse

By Ron Charles, Washington Post

Chapter 1: You stumble upon an interesting book at your neighborhood bookstore.

Chapter 2: You go home and order it from Amazon for half as much.

Chapter 9: Your favorite bookstore is bankrupt.

Booksellers call it “showrooming,” and it drives them crazy – and out of business. Barnes & Noble believes that 40 percent of its customers use the store as a place to discover and examine titles, but then buy the books online.



This bookstore in McCloud in Northern California is fine with browsers. Photo/LTN

How might “real” bookstores fight back against their Amazonian

nemesis?

During an interview on BBC this weekend, UK HarperCollins CEO Victoria Barnsley referred to certain shoe shops that charge customers to try on merchandise. Perhaps, she suggested, bookstores could do that, too. The idea of asking customers to pay for the privilege of browsing physical books before purchasing them is “not that insane,” she said. Bookstores could become, in essence, “book clubs.”

Would you pay to page through novels in a book showroom?

People I spoke with in the industry saw no hope in that direction.

“If it comes to charging admission for customers to browse, we’re done,” said Mark Laframboise, the manager of Politics & Prose in Washington. Rather than expect customers to pay more, he placed the onus on publishers. “What we need is some recognition from publishers that people are learning about books at brick-and-mortar bookstores and buying them through a multitude of channels and platforms. Publishers, in recognition of this, should offer increased co-op and increased discounts to stores.”

Tim Huggins, a former bookstore owner in the Boston area who now works as an industry consultant, said that Barnsley’s idea made him “laugh and then cringe.” He imagined a carnival carney standing in front of the store shouting: “See the bearded lady turning pages! See the world’s tallest man with two-covered tomes!”

Eileen McGervey, the owner of One More Page Books in Arlington, had a similarly skeptical reaction. But she notes that her business is changing fast since she opened in 2011. “While I don’t see the ‘cover charge’ happening anytime soon (if ever) . . . sometimes there are events where people pay to see an author or participate in an event. But one of the things I love about today’s model is that anyone interested in

learning about a book or being surrounded by books, can do it.”

Politics & Prose co-owner Lissa Muscatine said showrooming is a major problem for the industry, but not so much for her store. “As long as customers appreciate the services that indies provide – a gathering spot that offers human interaction, expert booksellers who can make thoughtful and customized recommendations, other kinds of programming, and the browsing and discovery experience that readers enjoy – we won’t have to contemplate something as draconian as charging people to browse the aisles. I certainly hope it never comes to that.”

Perhaps the closest example of the “book club” model is in the San Francisco Area, where the famous Kepler’s bookstore recently resurrected itself by collecting more than \$700,000 in donations from area customers. The store is also exploring the possibility of selling charitable shares of its business. But that’s a particularly beloved store, set among a particularly wealthy clientele, and it remains open to anyone, whether they want to buy or just showroom.

Knopf Publicity Director Paul Bogaards scoffed at the idea of charging customers to look at physical books. “We already have a pay-to-browse model,” he said by e-mail. “They are called ‘libraries,’ and they are supported by our tax dollars.”

Putting stress in perspective and learning to control it

By Mandy Kendall

I had, shall we say, an interesting day last week. Our puppy got a gastro-intestinal thing and proceeded to have multiple accidents around the house, a water pipe burst and was flooding our living room and then a speaker I had organized to come and present to a group of professionals called to say that his connecting flight had been canceled and he would not make the presentation. So when my phone rang in the middle of this, and I snapped a less than friendly welcome to the caller, I realized that I was perhaps feeling a little stressed.



Mandy Kendall

We all experience stress in our lives in a variety of ways and on a number of different levels. There's the short term – I'm going to be really late for my appointment if this traffic doesn't move along – type stress. There's the medium term – I can't wait until this project is over and I can relax again – type stress. Then there is the long term chronic – I can't see a way out of this – type of stress.

While the short-lived stress might not seem as bad as the longer lasting versions, the tendency is that we will have multiple short-term stressful situations that all add up to having about the same impact on us as one big stressful event.

You may have heard people say a little stress is good for you, but research is showing that no stress is particularly good for you and studies are finding the significant impact stress can have on our health.

Columbia University Medical Center equated chronic stress with being as dangerous as smoking five cigarettes a day. During their research they discovered that people who said they felt overwhelmed and anxious were 27 percent more likely to suffer a heart attack than those who said they weren't under any undue stress.

Increasingly stronger correlations are being discovered between stress and sickness. Studies are showing that cortisol, produced when you are under stress, impacts the immune system and causes more inflammation than an actual cold would produce, thereby increasing the symptoms and the duration of the illness.

There is some good news however. Studies of cancer patients found those who underwent stress management programs had a significantly better physical recovery than those who didn't.

So here are a few *Qwik-e* tips on how to help lower those stress levels and improve your overall health.

Listen to your heart – If your heart starts racing, or you can feel your heartbeat in your chest (and you are not physically exerting yourself) chances are you are experiencing something you perceive to be stressful. Try and remove yourself from, or resolve to change the situation. If your heart is not in it, then chances are, if you go ahead and do it any way, it will only lead to you feeling some sort stress.

Don't stress to impress – Life's too short to do things for other people that puts stress in your life. Politely saying no can be a very liberating and calming experience.

Go to your happy place – Looking at, or thinking about, a place (or person or thing) you love can have a remarkably soothing effect on your body and your mind. The Mayo Clinic reports that a good belly laugh produces happy endorphins in the brain and relaxes muscles, which is very effective for stress relief.

Avoid stress eating – I know it might seem fairly obvious that a junk food fest is not the best remedy for combating stress, but here is why. Stress slows down our digestive systems (supposedly stemming back to when we thought it more beneficial to delay digesting our food and run away from the saber tooth tiger first). This increase in digestion time however leads to increased weight gain. Conversely, healthier foods like nuts and fish (admittedly not exactly what we might crave when we are stressed out) may reduce inflammation and reduce anxiety.

Put it in perspective – Whenever I got in an emotional state growing up my dear old mum used to stop me in my tracks and say, “Is anyone going to die?”. Sometimes things get blown out of proportion and taking a moment to assess what is going on and focusing on what’s really important can really calm things down.

Find your thing – There will be something for all of us that we know just calms us down. It could be talking a walk, watching a movie, chatting with friends, exercising. etc. Whatever your de-stresser is, try to do more of it.

Let it out – When all else fails, sometimes you just need to let off steam. Pick an appropriate place, the more private the better, and let ... *it* ... out.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

TERC hosting science program for youngsters

UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, together with Tahoe Expedition Academy, other community partners, and with sponsorship from the Rotary Club of Tahoe-Incline, will host the eighth annual Science Expo March 18-21 for students from the region.



The Science Expo is open to the general public on March 20 from 4-6pm for children of all ages together with their families at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences in Incline Village.

Ice cream will be provided by Susie Scoops of Incline Village. Admission is free.

The event will feature dozens of hands-on, interactive science experiments, activities and demonstrations emphasizing physical science concepts such as physical and chemical properties of matter, density, energy, electricity, magnetism, light, and sound.

Students from Kings Beach, Incline Village, Tahoe City, Truckee and South Lake Tahoe will be attending during the school days of March 18-21. High school students participating in the Youth Science Institute will facilitate science investigations with the younger students in the community. UC Davis AmeriCorps volunteers and docents will also be staffing some of the activity stations, and other volunteers and parents in the community are asked to participate. Additional volunteers are still needed.

If you are interested in volunteering at this event, contact UC Davis TERC AmeriCorps member Hannah Leigh at (775) 881.7560, ext. 7474 or hkleigh@ucdavis.edu.