

Foster children in S. Tahoe deserve stability in their lives

By Leila Rosner

More than 750,000 children are abused or neglected each year in the United States. At least 410,000 children live in foster care because their families are in crisis and cannot meet their day-to-day needs. In California, approximately 60,000 children are in the foster care system, 300 in El Dorado County, and approximately 100 foster children are from South Lake Tahoe.

These kids are from our local schools, from Bijou to the Magnet school, and our own neighborhoods, from Meyers to Stateline. They may take the bus to school with your children or play with them on the playground.

But here's where it gets messy. A foster child from South Lake Tahoe is more than likely not going to be placed in a foster home in Tahoe, but will instead go to Placerville, Sacramento, or Jackson. Why? Because the need exceeds the number of foster homes in South Lake Tahoe.



Leila Rosner

Let's put this into perspective. Meet Bradley (name changed to protect privacy), who came into the foster care system at age

2. Bradley was an adorable boy with brown hair and green eyes, an outgoing personality and a melt-your-heart smile. The toddler rarely laughs, but when he does, his chuckle is contagious. Bradley, however, was born to a mother with mental health issues that caused her to act more like a child than a capable, caring adult. For example, when Bradley misbehaved he was slapped, pushed, or, worse, held upside down by his feet and his head shoved into the toilet. After he choked up the water he had swallowed and gasped for air, his mother would shake her head in disappointment, with a “look what you made me do” expression.

Stories of abuse and neglect like Bradley’s unfortunately are not uncommon in South Lake Tahoe. Foster children may arguably be the most vulnerable of all human beings. They are completely dependent upon adults to provide for their needs. But when those caregivers mistreat, neglect, or cannot care for them, they are pulled from the only semblance of a family they have known. The only foundation, no matter how shaky, they have ever known.

Nationwide, foster children are meant to be placed in a family setting because this is where children thrive. They are also meant to stay in their school and even neighborhood if possible. Why? Because everything else is crumbling and changing around them. They deserve to wake up to a mom or dad, albeit, in a different family, and go to the same school the next day. They deserve to have their same friends. They deserve the consistency of having the same teacher.

This ideal is not, however, what many South Lake Tahoe foster children experience. If there is no available home in South Lake Tahoe, these kids are placed off the hill. They are completely uprooted from any and all routine, any and all familiarity. Not only do they have to get used to a new family, but they have to go to new city, a new school or day care, have a new teacher, and make new friends.

The life of a foster child is never easy, but it becomes even more difficult and confusing if that child has to start over in every aspect of life. This is called compounded trauma. Trauma on top of trauma. Being abused and neglected is traumatic. Being taken from your parents is traumatic, no matter how abusive or neglectful they were. But being placed in a different city is a trauma that doesn't need to happen and wouldn't happen if there were enough people willing to become foster parents in Tahoe.

The problem not only has an emotional impact, it can also make reunifying the child with the parents more difficult. Children deserve to have visits with their parents and siblings, but what happens if they are placed in Sacramento and there is a snowstorm that makes it difficult to drive over the pass? They don't get to see their parents that day. What happens when a child is in first grade and has twice weekly visits for two hours? If you do the math, that's actually a six hour day for the child. They have to be in a car for four hours just to see their parents for two.

Let's go back to Bradley's story. Bradley was lucky. When Bradley was taken from his mother and placed into foster care, he was fortunate to live in a local foster home. He was able to play outside in his neighborhood, on his own playground, with the same familiar faces. He was able to attend the same preschool with the same teacher – the same teacher who greets him with a big hug and smile as soon as he opens the door.

Because of his abuse and neglect, Bradley had some issues to work through. For example, he was terrified of the bathroom. He would start to cry as soon as he thought he had to go into a bathroom. Bradley also would not make eye contact with anyone. He was hiding. He was scared. And, he didn't trust adults.

Today, however, Bradley has been adopted into a loving family. The very same family who took him on that first day in foster

care. Bradley makes eye contact. He is no longer fearful of the bathroom. He is able to trust adults. In fact, observing Bradley, you would never know there was trauma in his background. Even though the family had no intentions of adopting, that little 2 year old won their hearts and will be a part of their family forever. Bradley is loved.

All of our children deserve a safe and stable home, whether in foster care or not. Maybe your own home could be this safe place.

In honor of Foster Care Month in May, would you consider making a difference in the life of a child?

Foster parents have monthly reimbursement for expenses ranging from \$609 to \$790 depending upon age. Foster children come with their own medical, dental, and vision insurance. Support services are available through 24 hour on-call social workers, transportation help, and training through Foster and Kinship Care Education at Lake Tahoe Community College.

To learn more about becoming a licensed foster parent or adoptive parent, please contact one of the following:

Foster Family Service – (530) 544.2111

Koininia Family Services – (530) 541.1870

El Dorado County Child Protective Services – (530) 573.3201.

Leila Rosner is an instructional specialist in Foster and Kinship Care Education at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Week of wildfire awareness in Lake Tahoe Basin

The third annual Lake Tahoe Basin Wildfire Awareness Week is May 26-June 3. The theme is Wildfire Survival: Your Home, Your Responsibility.

The focus of the week will be to promote homeowner and resident actions that reduce the risk from wildfire to homes and communities.

Fire agencies, fire safe chapters and local organizations are collaborating to provide coordinated outreach to Tahoe basin homeowners and residents on how to reduce wildfire risk to their homes by upgrading vulnerable home components, conducting defensible space activities, and having a plan in place for evacuation.

Fire resistant homes have fire-rated roofs, covered vents to reduce the risk of ember intrusion, fire resistant construction materials and are in good repair. Creating defensible space involves selecting and maintaining vegetation near the home, thereby reducing the risk homes will be ignited and destroyed during a wildfire. Successful evacuations during wildfires require having a plan in place and an evacuation kit assembled.

Local organizations will be hosting neighborhood meetings, community clean up days with free chipping and pine needle pick-ups, evacuation drills, and educational activities including a webinar series on reducing wildfire risk so those living remotely can participate in the week's events.

For information on activities, how to upgrade homes or create defensible space in basin, go online or contact Susie Kocher at (530) 542.2571 or sdkocher@ucdavis.edu.

'40s-era musical performance at LTCC

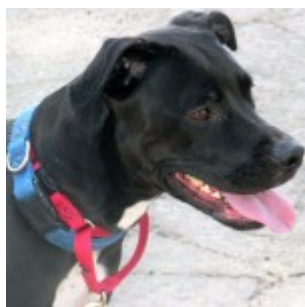
The Tahoe Choir and Lake Community College Chorus will be "Puttin' On the Ritz" during the three concerts in May.

The shows at LTCC Duke Theatre are May 4 and May 5 at 7:30pm, and May 6 at 2:30pm.

The box office will open one half hour before each performance. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors and students.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Lani is a 3-year-old Lab mix who has had her ups and downs. She was adopted out of the shelter when she was a puppy, and now her owner, who loved her very much, has lost his job and his house and can no longer take care of her.



She is house trained and has been to training classes. She loves to play with other dogs and has lived with cats. She has had a good life so far – going on car rides and swimming in the lake, and now she is waiting for her next adventure.

Lani 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

Concerts, kayaks, food – all part of Lakeview Commons

By Kathryn Reed

It will neither be Julie Andrews making the hills come alive with the sound of music nor the bass of bands from SnowGlobe. Instead, a mix of jazz, reggae and blues are expected to resonate from Lakeview Commons this summer.

OnCourse Events has been granted a permit to bring music to the South Lake Tahoe venue. Every Thursday starting June 28

through Sept. 6 from 4-8:30pm a different band will perform on a temporary stage that will be built in the sand. Spectators can sit – for free – on the terraced area or up top where there are picnic tables.

“I want to introduce locals to different music,” Rob Giustina, with OnCourse Events, told *Lake Tahoe News*. He expects most acts will be from out of the area. However, the first band is likely to be Jump Start, though local, they don’t often play in the basin.



Free concerts on Thursdays are coming to Lakeview Commons starting in late June. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Giustina is more often associated with competition event productions. But as someone who was born and raised here, he wants to help the town resurrect itself in terms of fun and economics.

“I wanted to be proactive in saving our community,” Giustina said.

He expects to make money on the summer concert series selling booth space at \$75 a pop for a 10-foot-by-10-foot spot. Artists, nonprofits – he will consider them all. Vendors will be at the top of the commons area.

Until the city votes on who will be operating the food part of the Lakeview Commons, Giustina is holding off on deciding what type of food will be sold. He doesn't want to compete with the concessionaire, but instead complement or have his vendors be completely different. But he also hopes to have a beer garden.

Bids for the food concessionaire closed April 27. It's possible the City Council could make a decision at its May 17 meeting.

For people wanting to be part of Giustina's Live at Lakeview Commons Concert Series, email him at rob@oncourseevents.com.

Giustina is encouraging people arrive by bike. A valet will be operating for storage purposes during the concert.

As for what the city plans to do at Lakeview Commons, the rest rooms and drinking fountain should be in operation any day. Bathrooms will always be a seasonal operation based on demand, and the water will operate when the threat of frozen pipes is eliminated.

On the May 1 council agenda is an item to award the nonmotorized concessionaire to Standup Paddle, which has a shop on Harrison Avenue.

"Whoever gets the contract will have to do their own tenant improvements," Stan Sherer, community services director, told *Lake Tahoe News*. The city will take a percentage of the gross profits, with it topping out at 12 percent.

In addition to the rental of paddleboards, kayaks and canoes will also be available.

Per the original plans when the \$6.5 million Lakeview Commons project was conceived, people will also be able to store their nonmotorized craft at the boathouse for a fee.

Right now garbage cans without lids are scattered about Lakeview Commons. Sherer said those will be converted to bear-

proof containers soon. A bid on the project is on Tuesday's council agenda.

Landscapers will be back out there this week to finish the plantings.

Sherer told *Lake Tahoe News* his intent is to make the area accessible to dogs – legally. Plenty of people take their dogs to the commons and El Dorado Beach, but that is violating the current law.

Something that perplexes Sherer is why in the original plans there was no place to dump ashes from the barbecues.

"It's not just having a facility to empty the briquettes, it's will they use them or will they try to dispose of them someplace else," Sherer said people who are barbecuing. The fear of someplace is it could cause a fire or contaminate Lake Tahoe.

A solution as of last week had not been found. And they are being used. Smoke has been seen wafting from the grounds on the unseasonably warm days.

While the area has been transformed and looks nothing like it once did, all the boulders on the north end mean beachgoers can no longer walk very far. It used to be people could walk to Ski Run Marina and beyond.

A pipe on El Dorado Beach that used to be ghastly, especially as water drained directly into Lake Tahoe, is still there. Only now sand covers part of the upper part of the metal, and boulders and branches cover the lower section. Gunk, well, it still flows into the lake from Highway 50.

On June 20 at 2pm there will be a grand opening – again – of Lakeview Commons. This time Secretary of Natural Resources John Laird is supposed to attend the dedication, as will members of the California Tahoe Conservancy and its board. It

was CTC money that funded the project.

What name it will be dedicated as, well, that remains to be seen.

A beach party will follow at 3pm.

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Tahoe wildlife photographer to give talk

Wildlife photographer Jim Stamates will share some of his images set to music to tell the story of the Rhythm of the Sierra.

The Tahoe Area Sierra Club is sponsoring the May 9 7pm event at the Unity at the Lake Spiritual Center.

An added feature will be “In The Rhythm of Kokanee” filmed at Taylor Creek during the annual spawning and egg harvest.

Unity at the Lake Spiritual Center is located across from the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd.

Sierra wins award for video produced by South Tahoe company

Sierra-at-Tahoe was recognized by Ski Area Management in the Best Video category in the 2011-12 Marketing Awards. Produced by First Track Productions, Sierra received the “Most Heart-Warming Video” award featuring the Burton Star Wars Experience.

In its inaugural year, the Burton Star Wars Experience is a snowboard experience that introduces 3- to 6-year-old kids how to snowboard in an interactive environment.

First Track Productions of South Lake Tahoe captured this and put together a three-minute video that showcased the experience.

El Dorado County Fair releases lineup for summer event

To embrace all things El Dorado County, the theme of the 2012 fair is the Grapest Show On Earth.



The annual event is June 14-17 in Placerville.

Returning for a second year, the El Dorado Day on the Green is all about rock 'n' roll.

The only traveling sea lion show in the U.S. will be at this year's fair.

Swan Brother's Circus has been providing laughs for more than 35 years. Zippy the clown will be in town.

The Wells Fargo stage hosts Susan Rosen, the "Mistress of Mesmerism," who will have the audience "hypnotized" with her memorizing act each day of Fair.

Rawhide Express is the solar powered train sponsored by PG&E.

Break a sweat and get those hips moving during one of the free Zumba dance classes on the Plaza Stage.

The Kitchen Craft Stage offers free cooking lessons all day from the "Official Chef of the Fair" Gary Gilligan.

FFA, 4H, Grange and Independent kids will have all of their animals on display: goats, cattle, sheep, swine, rabbits,

cavies and poultry.

Browse through the multitude of exhibits ranging from quilts, photography, wool, farming science, floriculture, minerals and mining, preserved foods and so many more.

For additional information, times and a complete schedule, visit the website.

Truckee restaurant to display student artwork

Dragonfly Restaurant in Truckee will host the Arts for The Schools' seventh annual Student Art Show on May 10.

The art exhibit kicks off with an opening reception from 4-6pm to view and buy the art pieces crafted by students throughout the region.

Dubbed "Artists in Bloom," the show will feature more than 400 pieces of Tahoe Truckee children's artwork. Art pieces were selected from a variety of elementary school classes throughout the region, including artwork created in the Arts For the Schools Artist-in-Residence program.

This year's show features selected poetry and images of student's paintings on eggs created under the direction of Cathee St. Clair. The art pieces will be on sale and all proceeds benefit Arts For the Schools.

For more information about Arts For the Schools or for sponsorship opportunities, go online.

Dragonfly is located upstairs at 10118 Donner Pass Road, in

the heart of downtown Truckee.

Movie about PCT to be shown in South Lake Tahoe

“Walking the West”, a documentary about the Pacific Crest Trail, will be shown at Lake of the Sky Outfitters in South Lake Tahoe on April 30 at 7pm.

“Wallking the West” is an adventure documentary about a New Zealander and an Irishman who quit their jobs and walk 2,626 miles from Mexico to Canada along one of the longest foot trails in the world, the Pacific Crest Trail. This documentary shows the changes that occur when two urbanites escape civilization, venture into the wilderness and push their bodies and minds to the limits of their endurance.

RSVP to (530) 541.1027.