STMS students deal with more than routine pre-teen angst

By Kathryn Reed

“People in your life are a wing to lift you up or a weight to drag you down.”

Manny Scott said that message in several ways to South Tahoe Middle School students Jan. 14. Scott is one of the Freedom Writers – the gang members depicted in the 2007 movie by the same name.

In two sessions Friday morning he reached all the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders in a raw but compassionate way. He threw soft questions out to start with like who likes certain music groups. They were asked to stand if they liked that artist.



Manny Scott connects with South Tahoe Middle School students. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Then the questions got more personal, more to the core of what life is like for these young people.

Almost all have heard gunshots other than on television. About 80 percent have had their utilities cut off. About two-fifths have been asked to join a gang. Almost all have had someone close to them die. About half have seen their mother be hit or beaten by a man. About a quarter have been physically abused. About 25 percent of the students have a parent who was or is addicted to drugs

“You have a lot more in common than you have differences,” Scott told the group seated on the floor of the multipurpose room.

He wasn’t there to single people out. The exercise demonstrated how people have a lot of issues going on that most people don’t know about it. It’s about understanding they are not alone.

A startling revelation is the number of people students know who have died from violence. The last student standing knows 10 people who have died a violent death. Another knows eight.

This is South Lake Tahoe. These are middle school students.

“We save lives by showing people around you they are loved,” Scott said.

At that moment, with a heavy silence having fallen over the room, Scott has everyone get up and hug someone. Students hugged students, teachers hugged students, the principal hugged teachers and students.

Scott connects with the kids because he’s been there. His stepdad is back in prison. He grew up breaking up fights between him and his mom. They were drinkers. He was in a gang.

What helped turn Scott around was a teacher named Miss G. She started having these inner city kids write in journals. To this day Scott still does, having done so the morning of his talk in South Lake Tahoe.

Hours after Scott spoke to students at South Tahoe Middle School “Freedom Writers” was on MTV.

All of the students at STMS had the opportunity to see the movie before Scott came to campus last week.

“When I help these kids my life makes sense to me,” Hilary Swank as Miss G says in the movie.

STMS teacher Cindy Cowen says essentially the same thing. She has been the catalyst to get speakers like Scott to the school, along with the help of Principal Beth Delacour and a grant from the El Dorado Community Foundation.

“I want things like this more than once a year,” Cowen told *Lake Tahoe News*. “My desire is to change the culture of the school.”

Agassi aces account of his life with ‘Open’

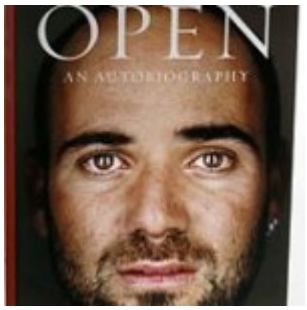
By Kathryn Reed

Apparently Andre Agassi didn’t get the message that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.

His autobiography is all about life in Las Vegas, the hazards of growing up under the tyranny of a father who makes the phrase “Little League parent” seem like a compliment, the struggles of losing ones hair, life on the tennis circuit, and love.

As a tennis fan and player who followed Agassi’s career through the years, reading his book “Open” added a depth to

this champion’s life that I didn’t know about.



I was living in Las Vegas when he played in the 1995 Davis Cup match against Sweden. Reading about what he was going through at that time helped explain the arrogance he exhibited on the court and in the pressroom.

Reading about all the people who wanted to look like him, especially during his longhair days, made me smile. It brought back memories of the guy at my old tennis club who was a dead ringer for Agassi. And Agassi’s comments about Michael Chang rang true based on the little I saw of him at the tennis club we both belonged to.

The book also delves into Agassi’s insights about other players on the tour – notably his rival Pete Sampras.

Unfortunately when the book came out in 2009 most of the reviews latched on to the revelation Agassi had used crystal meth. Yes, it was part of his life. Yes, he wrote about it. But it’s such a small part of the book and his life that it taints the bigger picture.

One must remember that this illegal drug isn’t a performance enhancer – quite the opposite. He doesn’t glorify the use. He just acknowledges the depths of despair his life had spiraled to and what it took to get straight.

What I was left with after reading the nearly 400-page hardback book is how normal Agassi seems after the turmoil he went through to get to the world stage. When he first hooked up with Stefanie (that’s what she prefers to be called) Graf, I thought it odd. But in reading the book it seems so natural and perhaps a bit fated.

Besides enduring a childhood that was filled with more time spent opposing a ball machine than playing with friends,

Agassi dropped out of school. For a man who did not graduate from high school, he has committed himself through his namesake academy to provide an education for those less fortunate.

“Open” is just that – an open account of the life of Andre Agassi until he retired from the tour.

Tennis fans won’t be disappointed.

Tahoe athletes depicted in Oregon photo exhibit

By Colin Whyte, ESPN

Bud Fawcett’s images are such an integral part of snowboarding’s history that we couldn’t believe the photos currently hanging on the walls of the White Rabbit Bakery in Aurora, Ore., are part of his first solo photography show. Seeing such legendary photos in an intimate setting, espresso and doughnut in hand, is the shred equivalent of seeing the Rolling Stones at a smoky bar.

If you’re anywhere within driving distance of the White Rabbit bakery/gallery (about 20 minutes south of Portland), you owe it to yourself to check out this gold in person. The show runs until Jan. 30. To call Fawcett’s best images “classics” might be the biggest understatement possible. Seriously.

Read the whole story

History: Salvaging red barn at Sierra House

Publisher's note: ***This is from the September 1973 Lake Tahoe Historical Society newsletter.***

By Bill Hauck

Recently two afternoons were spent at the Sierra House Elementary School site salvaging portions of the old red barn for the Historical Society.



On Saturday afternoon, August 25th, Henry Newburgh, Mike Magliari, Ed Laine, and I ripped off the exterior siding [of obviously later vintage] and removed the original wide siding boards [up to 24 inches wide] from both sides of the barn. Ed Laine and a friend took many interior photographs also.

On Sunday afternoon, August 26th, Phil Greuner, Henry Newburgh, Merritt Hollingsworth, Dick Hargrove, Brian Hayes, and I sawed off the rafter poles, peeled off the adjacent end siding, and removed the side wall framing from the south side, disassembling it and marking its uprights, braces, etc.

With the exception of the almost 30 foot long top beam, which was left at the school site out of the construction area [along with the two Sierra House sheds donated by Bohannon], the siding and the rest of the framing was taken to Mrs. Hazel Taylor's, where she kindly provided inside storage for it.

Sustainable Tahoe putting together expo in September

The basin-wide Tahoe Expo put on by Sustainable Tahoe will showcase possibilities in sustainability for the Lake Tahoe region, with focus on Mobility, Green Commerce, Health and Fitness, and Conservation – spanning three fun and educational. The event is Sept. 9-11.

The weekend will be packed with a diverse activities for individuals and families. Friday includes panel discussions and workshops for business and community leaders, as well as students. Saturday begins basinwide activities (Art & Culture, Water, Meadow, Urban), Water & Rim trail "hikes," and green building tours. Sunday will spotlight the Tour de Tahoe, various electric vehicle and boat demonstrations, and additional activities around the basin (Forest, Maritime, History, River).

Although activities will take place around the entire Tahoe basin, two main stages are planned at the north and south ends of the lake with space to see what's possible, learn how everything works, and experience it for yourself. A number of topics will be discussed by a variety of industry thought leaders, and demonstration tables will be used to help bring these topics to life.

In an effort to reduce the impact on the environment, we commit to making this a zero-waste event. All materials used will be made from recycled and compostable resources, and recycling will be plentiful. In addition, we'll work with local ski resorts to encourage parking outside of the basin, with full alternative transit support to get you where you

want to go.

The team is currently in the process of scouting speakers, workshops and demonstrations, as well as coordinating activities to span this weekend. Much more information to come as everything unfolds.

Go to the website's contact page, to get involved and for more information.

Nancy Blachly – 1952-2011

South Lake Tahoe's first licensed massage therapist, Nancy Blachly, died Jan. 12 from injuries she had sustained two days earlier while skiing at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

Ms. Blachly was born June 8, 1952. She was 58.

Ms. Blachly spent most weekdays skiing. She would start the day taking the Gunbarrel lift up, doing three runs on the face and then making it to Mott Canyon for the 10am opening.



Nancy Blachly

Ski patrol was called at 10:30am Jan. 10. Her equipment was about 150 feet up the hill. Although a highly skilled skier, Ms. Blachly was not wearing a helmet, according to resort officials.

She was airlifted to Barton Memorial Hospital. Ms. Blachly was kept alive so her organs could be harvested. Health care was a big part of her life.

“She was always studying cutting-edge therapies,” Gay Romeis, a longtime friend said. “She was into different healing modalities.”

Ms. Blachly graduated magna cum laude from the University of Wisconsin with a pre-med focus in human anatomy, physiology and kinesiology. She taught high school for several years. She also taught at Lake Tahoe Community College.

In the 1980s, Ms. Blachly was issued the first massage license by South Lake Tahoe. At that time she operated a business at the Y in the Raley’s Center called Wave Makers.

An Association of Massage Therapists is the company she was running at the time of her death. Ms. Blachly was highly respected in the massage community – as a leader and advocate for therapists.

Besides skiing, Ms. Blachly was an avid recreationist. Some mornings she would go for a run before hitting the slopes. In the summer she would inline skate from her house to Fallen Leaf Lake where she would then take a swim.

“If she had any challenges, she saw them as opportunities,” Romeis said. “Her love of skiing was unreal. She would ski down Mott and make it look like Ridge run.”

Services will be Jan. 16 at 2pm at Embassy Suites, where she had done massage for years.

Ms. Blachly is preceded in death by son Patrick Egan.

She is survived by her mother, Aleta; brothers David and Dennis; and sister Boni, all who live outside of Lake Tahoe.

Ruth Baumann – 1936-2011

Ruth Baumann, matriarch of the Swiss family, died Jan. 12. She was 74.

Mrs. Baumann met her husband, Kurt Baumann, when she applied to be a waitress at the restaurant he owned in the middle of South Lake Tahoe. That was 1959, just after she moved to the area from Switzerland. They had been married for 44 years. He died Jan. 10, 2004.



Kurt Baumann with his brother in 1957 started what is still a family restaurant when they bought Schmidt's Bakery.

Mrs. Baumann was the face of the Swiss Chalet restaurant for years. Eventually the couple bought the entire center on Highway 50. The Swiss Chalet is the oldest restaurant in South Lake Tahoe.

They raised their sons, Peter, Ralph and Mark in South Lake Tahoe. The three trade off on who runs the restaurant. A recording at the restaurant on Jan. 13 said the eatery was closed for the day out of respect for Mrs. Baumann, but would resume normal business on Jan. 14.

Mrs. Baumann was a member of Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe, particularly in the International Goodwill and Understanding committee. The group supported an orphan from Austria who Mrs. Baumann then brought to the United States to meet his benefactors for a short stay.

Services are pending.

Nevada tourism agency trying to brand the state

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

How do you capture the essence of Nevada in a brand?

That’s a task the Nevada Tourism Commission will assign to a brand development vendor when it drafts a request for proposals over the next couple of months.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority has gone though the same process in developing what arguably is the most successful destination branding scheme ever conceived. Love it or hate it, “What happens here, stays here” is uniquely Las Vegas and the ad campaign that accompanied the effort to brand the city as a place to engage in adult freedom is something that people have talked about, mimicked, ripped off and recycled for years.

Although “What happens here, stays here” used humor to project Las Vegas as a fun place, the challenge may be greater for branding Nevada.

The state’s diverse landscape – one of the things we cherish about Nevada and what sets us apart from our 49 sibling states – is difficult to put in a one-size-fits-all box.

To some, Nevada is a vast desert wasteland. To others, it’s a rugged snow-packed mountain wilderness. It’s outdoor adventure and indoor entertainment, gaming palaces and ghost towns. It’s canyons and caves, dry desert lakes and clear mountain

streams. And, it’s for backpackers, RVers, ATVers, PWCers, zip liners, rock climbers and NASCAR driver wannabes.

Read the whole story

Immigration film ‘9500 Liberty’ coming to LTCC

Illegal. Racist. Immigration. Freedom. Profiling.

These words are swirled into the movie “9500 Liberty” that will be shown Jan. 22 at 6pm at Duke Theatre on the Lake Tahoe Community College campus in South Lake Tahoe.

The feature-length film was initially shot in segments that were uploaded to YouTube. It’s about a county in Virginia that passed a restrictive immigration law before Arizona passed its version. The Virginia law has since been overturned.

The movie is in English with Spanish subtitles.

Donations are being accepted on behalf of the college’s HOPE Club, which will use the money for scholarships.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Placer County receives $1

mil. gift for arts

By Auburn Journal

A $1 million donation will help support an arts program aimed to serve Placer County artists, art educators, students and more.

The Susan Cooley-Gilliom Artist Residence and Teaching (ART) Program has been established in memory of the local artist and environmental advocate. Sue D. Cooley, Susan's mother, and the Sky View Foundation, established the program with a donation of $1 million to the Placer Community Foundation.

"The ART Program is a unique and special way that we can honor and remember Susan, while providing permanent support of art education for the region and fellow artists that she cherished," Cooley said.

Beginning June 2011, the ART Program will provide bi-annual artist residencies to established and renowned artists working throughout the West Coast. Through a comprehensive selection process, they will be chosen based upon their proven ability to create and instruct others in their craft. In addition to the residencies, visiting artists will provide public workshops and lectures hosted through PlacerArts in the spring and Roseville Arts' Blue Line Gallery in the fall.

Susan Cooley-Gilliom's artistic talents, well-known to art lovers and fellow artists in the Placer region, developed through a family legacy rich in weaving and painting. A fine arts painter known for her award-winning pastels and watercolors, especially foothill and Sierra landscapes, Susan always combined her art with her love for the natural environment and her concern for its protection, according to Jessica Hubbard, philanthropic services manager for the Placer Community Foundation.

Read the whole story