Acceptance – the dominating theme at South Tahoe schools

By Kathryn Reed

“There is no alternative for being yourself.”

That is the message on the back of South Tahoe High School Ally T-shirts.

Ally isn’t an acronym. It means friend or supporter. It is, though, the name of the gay straight alliance at the high school.



Adam Northam presents Rachel's Challenge at STMS on Nov. 9. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Bridey Heidel has been the adviser for all six years it has been active at STHS. Tuesday night was the first time she and students spoke to the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board of education about the club.

“We are not a tolerance group. We are an acceptance group,” Heidel said.

It was a fitting presentation considering across the parking lot Adam Northam was giving a presentation to approximately 60 people, with a third of them youngsters, about Rachel's Challenge. He had been at South Tahoe Middle School all-day; first for two student assemblies and then working with nearly 80 students on a leadership piece of the program.

Rachel Scott was the first person kill April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Colorado.

The message in her story is students have the power to generate a chain reaction of kindness, which will ideally silence bullying.

In some ways, that is exactly what Heidel has done with Ally. One way she knows she is getting the acceptance message out is no longer are the group's bulletin boards torn down.

It's not just gay teens in the group. It's for anyone who believes in equality and standing up for the rights of all.

Last year Heidel took a group of students to a gay prom at UNR that was geared toward high school and college students.

"It was great to watch kids dance without looking over their shoulder," Heidel said.

She hopes one day a club like Ally is not needed because the acceptance will be that universal.

It's programs like Rachel's Challenge that STMS Principal Beth Delacour says need to keep coming into the schools to deliver the message that bullying isn't acceptable, small gestures like a smile can go a long way, and pre-judging isn't the answer.

After the 9:30 assembly the morning of Nov. 9 many students were in tears. The message was powerful at times – certainly the images of Columbine are gripping. For many of these students it was likely the first time they had seen them. Some

were not born when this tragedy happened.

The message to dare to dream, choose positive influences and utter kind words are all worthy.

Lost, though, in some of Rachel's Challenge, is the message. This is because the delivery gets bogged down in some farfetched coincidences and stories that don't ring true.

As a man devoted to God, Rachel's father, Darrell, first started the nonprofit Columbine Redemption. From there, Rachel's Challenge took off. It's a mega-business.

At least for eighth-grader Samantha Buscher, it was a mega-message that she heard.

"It was really inspirational to me, just knowing this girl gave her life to help change the world," Buscher said.

Tree, menorah lighting in South Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe's annual Community Tree and Menorah Lighting is Dec. 3 from 5-7pm at the visitors center on Highway 50 by the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center.

Festivities include:

· Santa Claus and his elves

· Free sleigh/carriage rides from Borges Sleigh and Carriage Rides compliments of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority

· Music by Derek Tarpey, Lake DJ, and carols sung by Tahoe Schools Choir

· Complimentary hot chocolate, cider and cookies.

· Food and toy drive – please bring donations for Christmas Cheer

· Santa will be available for picture taking – bring your own camera

Additional parking available at South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center on Rufus Allen Boulevard.

ShelterBox relief org speaker at Soroptimist meeting

On Nov. 11 at 8am, Ryder Evans will speak at the Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra meeting about ShelterBox.

ShelterBox is an international relief charity that delivers emergency shelter, warmth and dignity to people affected by disaster worldwide. This organization responds instantly to disasters delivering aid as quickly as possible to the people who need it most.

Evans is on the Douglas County Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue team, which has ties to this international organization.

ShelterBox is helping with the relief from the tsunami in Indonesia.

ShelterBox relies solely on public donations.

The Soroptimis meeting, which includes breakfast and coffee, is at the Lake Tahoe Senior Center at 3051 Lake Tahoe Blvd.,

South Lake Tahoe.

For more info, call (530) 409.2791 or go to www.SITahoeSierra.org.

Nevada has second highest foreign birth rate

By Steve Timko, Reno Gazette-Journal

About one out of every four children born in Nevada recently were to mothers who were not U.S. citizens, the second-highest rate in the nation, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report released Thursday.

The data, collected as part of the Census Bureau's ongoing American Community Survey, did not distinguish between noncitizen mothers who were here legally or illegally.

The American Community Survey sends questionnaires to households in every state every year to get a demographic snapshot. This data was from the 2008 ACS and asks participants if they had children in the prior 12 months. The estimates said 26.3 percent of the children born in Nevada were to mothers who were not U.S. citizens. California ranked first at 29.1 percent.

The figures did not surprise Mary Ann Robinson, coordinator of the Washoe County School District's English Language Learner department.

Read the whole story

USFS to give update on work at Meyers Landfill

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will host a meeting to update the community on the Meyers Landfill site on Nov. 18 at 6pm at the Forest Supervisor's office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

The meeting will include an update on the status of construction of the landfill cap, details on the continued forest closure at the site, and information regarding continued investigations into the extent of the contaminated groundwater plume originating at the site, as well as time for questions.

Contractors are working to winterize the construction site, and work will resume next season. In the meantime, the Forest Service anticipates extending the closure of Garbage Dump Road and the site through the winter due to ongoing safety hazards. this winter, for their own safety."

For more information on the Meyers Landfill site, visit here.

If you have questions, contact Cheva Heck at (530) 543.2608 or check@fs.fed.us.

Borg to bring on the 'Heat'

at SNC talk

Threats. Murder. Revenge. Todd Borg's eighth novel – "Tahoe Heat" featuring his long-standing protagonist private detective Owen McKenna – involves a fatal fall at Lake Tahoe's Cave Rock, encoded piano strings, and a wild mustang named Heat.

Borg's series of mystery thrillers set exclusively around Lake Tahoe will be the featured topic of the next Fireside Chat, hosted by Andy Whyman, Nove. 18 at 7pm in Sierra Nevada College's Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, rooms 139/141.

Stunned by the beauty of the second highest big lake in the world, Borg and his wife moved from Minnesota to Lake Tahoe in 1990. While he had written short stories, reviews, articles, and three novels before moving to the region, the dramatic Tahoe landscape gave Borg the idea for a series of novels with a detective protagonist who lived at Lake Tahoe. The result was Owen McKenna, an ex-cop with a tragic background, who moved from San Francisco to the mountains to study art and earn a slightly more genteel living as a private detective. McKenna works out of a rented office space on Kingsbury Grade on the South Shore, and lives with Spot, his Harlequin Great Dane, in a tiny log cabin (500 square feet) that sits 1,000 feet above the East Shore. All eight of the Owen McKenna Mystery Thrillers are available for check-out at SNC's Prim Library and the Incline Village Library.



Todd Borg

Borg’s work has won numerous awards including the Ben Franklin Award for Best Mystery of the Year and the Bay Area Independent Publishers Association’s Best Thriller of the Year. A prolific lecturer and speaker, Borg also teaches at Lake Tahoe Community College. His three-day writing workshop The Hook, the Twist, and the Cliffhanger is open to any aspiring fiction writer and focuses on the craft of writing entertaining fiction, including character development, the rising plot curve, and critical aspects of writing effective prose such as scene construction, point-of-view, and dialogue.

For more information on the event, contact Shelia Leijon, IVGID Seniors Program Coordinator, at (775) 832.1310, shelia_leijon@ivgid.org, or Debi Noonan, SNC director of Special Events, at (775) 831.1314, ext. 7420, dnoonan@sierranevada.edu.

Great American Smokeout – Nov. 18

The National Great American Smokeout, which asks smokers to give up tobacco for 24 hours in hopes that they will quit for good, is Nov. 18.

Smoking cigarettes remains the No. 1 preventable cause of premature disease and death in the United States, according the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. An estimated 21 percent of Americans and 14 percent of Californians are smokers.

The Great American Smokeout is a national event sponsored by the American Cancer Society, traditionally on the third Thursday in November each year.

Resources include calling 800-NO-BUTTS or going to www.californiasmokershelpline.org. The American Cancer Society also has stop smoking resources on their website at www.cancer.org.

Sierra-at-Tahoe recognized for environmental ed programs

Sierra-at-Tahoe Resort was honored by Clif Bar and the National Ski Areas Association as the recipient of the 2010 Silver Eagle Award for Environmental Education. This is the second time Sierra has won this award.

“Climate change presents a major and imminent challenge to everyone who enjoys the outdoors, especially when snow and winter activities are involved,” Ricardo Balazs, sports marketing experience manager for Clif Bar & Company, said in a press release. “We’re proud to support the ski industry’s efforts to address global warming and hope the Golden Eagle Awards will inspire others to take action as well.”

Established in 1993, the Golden Eagle Awards for Environmental Excellence recognize the environmental achievements of ski areas. The awards honor members of the NSAA, which represents the majority of ski area owners and operators in North America. Clif Bar & Company, which employs wind energy, biodiesel, waste reduction and other initiatives to reduce its own footprint on the planet, is the administrator of the awards program.

The award for Environmental Education was given to Sierra-at-Tahoe Resort to recognize a three-part educational campaign aimed at raising awareness among youth about the amount of

trash people generate and educating youth about how to reduce waste. The message: “You can make a difference, every day, every time, by choosing to responsibly dispose of the waste you create.” In 2009, Sierra reached out to almost 3,000 local students through bottle top collection and on-mountain trash clean-up efforts. The resort also partnered with TransWorld Snowboarding to create a short video titled “Environmental Awakening” that aired nationally to millions of viewers on MTV2.

Other finalists for the category award included Telluride Resort in Colorado and Whistler Blackcomb in Canada.

STMS not tolerating students who bully, want adults to stop

By Kathryn Reed

“Why do you bully each other mentally and verbally if you are telling us not to?”

“If you continue bullying, what kind of message will you be sending to the children of the world?”

“The commercials you have been making are like cyber bullying.”

“Our school is trying really hard to defeat bullying and you are not helping us.”

Those are excerpts from letters sent by South Tahoe Middle School sixth-graders to lawmakers. Teacher Cindy Cowen has

been engaging her students in a discussion about what bullying is so the incidents decrease.

But students don’t understand why adults – especially those who espouse to be leaders – are bullying their opponents and others. They hope their letters will sink in with the politicians to show them that leading by this example is not a great idea and a bit two-faced considering they all seem to say bullying is a bad thing and then they do it.



Beth Delacour

“We are trying to defeat bullying and build compassion and kindness, which can be difficult at this age.”

STMS Principal Beth Delacour

Principal Beth Delacour is trying to change the culture by quashing bullying and in turn hopes it will carryover with the eighth-graders when they enter high school.

“It’s all about relationships. I want to see how far we can take this and see if we can go to the community,” Delacour said. “We are trying to defeat bullying and build compassion and kindness, which can be difficult at this age.”

Bullying comes in many forms. Physical is often the easiest to identify, as are verbal taunts. Sometimes what might seem like innocent teasing is really bullying. Laughing at someone and not letting him have a seat a lunch – more bullying.

Delacour recounts a recent struggle at her school where a boy was in her office crying. It had been a long day. Four incidents, which taken individually might not have seemed like much, were in the end too much to handle without help.

Delacour called in the perpetrators. They listened. Hearing how their actions had a compound effect on a fellow student visibly moved them. They seemed to get what they were doing was bullying and that it was wrong.

What’s good about this example is that it was resolved without the victim doing harm to himself or others. But what worries educators and other youth advocates is what happens to the person – young or old – who doesn’t have someone to talk to, or doesn’t have a way to peacefully change what is going on.

On Nov. 9 South Tahoe Middle School is having two morning assemblies for the entire student body called Rachel’s Challenge. The public is invited that night at 7pm to hear the same message in the multipurpose room.

Rachel Scott was the first person killed at Columbine High School in April 1999. Her father, Darrell, founded Rachel’s Challenge as a way to stop bullying and violence.

Delacour said she was in tears the first time she saw it.

Living as a writer presentation at SNC

Poet and professor of English at Sierra Nevada College, Karen Terrey, will share her thoughts on how one lives as a writer and how she works with other writers to inspire and motivate.

Since spending the summer of 2009 studying poetry in Prague, she finds inspiration for her efforts to help build literary community in Tahoe from the underground writing movement called Samizdat that resisted Communist rule in Prague. She'll also perform a short reading of some of her historical and regional poetry. She encourages the audience to engage with questions and comments.

Terrey teaches creative writing in Truckee through her business Tangled Roots Writing. She facilitates creative writing workshops and one-on one-coaching with project-focused writers to help guide creative process and improve craft. At SNC, she teaches classes in Freshman Composition, American Literature, and Creative Writing. She is also poetry editor for a literary arts journal, Quay, published in print and online twice a year.

Terrey received her bachelor's from University of Vermont in biology and environmental studies and her M.F.A. in creative writing from Goddard College.

Her poetry explores boundaries of neighborhood and relationships between people and place. Some of her poems have been published in Moonshine Ink, Sierra Nevada Review, Autumn Sky, Word Riot, Rhino and Edge. She is the recipient of a Sierra Arts Endowment Grant in 2009 and a John Woods Scholarship to the Prague Summer Program.

To learn more about Terrey’s efforts to build literary community in Lake Tahoe, see her blog at www.karenaterrey.blogspot.com and Tangled Roots Writing on Facebook.

The event is Nov. 13 from 10am-noon, Prim Library, Sierra Nevada College, 999 Tahoe Blvd., Incline Village.

Fee: $3 optional continental breakfast.