

Art worlds collide in 9-day expo



Galumphing

By Robert Schimmel

Does an art festival or weeklong multi-event arts "happening" on the South Shore sound good if not unheard of?

Well, that's what the organizations involved in "Arts Expo Lake Tahoe" believe, not to mention that the community will embrace it and want to expand upon it annually.

The Oct. 9-17 "Arts Expo Lake Tahoe" may appear to have existed for some time simply by the inclusion of and association with two well-established organizations' events, Tahoe Arts Projects' (TAP) "Galumphing" performance at MontBleu and the Tahoe Art League's (TAL) annual "Tahoe Art Expo" at Edgewood.

What kicked off the idea of expanding disparate events came from a vision held and promoted 20 years ago by ArtsVision, a lake-wide arts advocacy and umbrella organization that generated great excitement and hope at the time. That vision was centered on bringing the arts together at Lake Tahoe and to ultimately use this cultural engine to drive a bigger and better event that included as many as possible all around the

lake â€” a huge ArtFest, as it was quietly dubbed then.

I was the president of ArtsVision during its life and efforts to bring along that vision into the quiet shoulder season of fall when tourism wanes yet beauty and energy are still high.

As the current president of the TAL, I have experienced how seldom organizations communicate with each other, and feel that if the larger players on the South Shore can share needs and mutual support then more can be accomplished.

I ran this idea by Peggy Thompson, executive director of TAP, back in March along with the idea that this fall would be the perfect time to test â€œtogethernessâ€” and the expansion of an already existing event (TALâ€™s Art Expo) into a full venue of events over multiple days. Thompson agreed with the potential and we gathered Steve Farnsley (executive director of the Tahoe Tallac Association), Phyllis Shafer (Art Department chair of Lake Tahoe Community College), Alexandra Profant of the Tahoe Foundation, and others to see what would be possible.

Ultimately and finally, after monthly meetings and spontaneous, fortuitous coordination, â€œArts Expo Lake Tahoeâ€” evolved with a minimum of nine events occurring across nine days.

The logic and good news that prompted this effort were: each organization has at its heart the desire to promote the arts in various ways to multiple audiences and needs all the help each can muster, and six or more of the events were in place so that only a modest amount of creating was needed. This was truly an example of making â€œone + one = threeâ€” as the groups joined hands in a collaboration to benefit the community and themselves.

Perhaps for the first time in South Lake Tahoe, TAPâ€™s mission â€œto provide cultural enrichment and diversity for the community through performing arts and education with

particular focus on our youth; TAL's mission "to promote fine arts and art education through free monthly art programs to the public, classes and workshops, art programs in the elementary schools, scholarships for our high school and college students, and support for the visual arts"; and Tallac's goal "to assist the Forest Service in restoring the three estates on the Tallac Historic Site and develop the site as an historic center while sponsoring as well as producing the annual Valhalla Arts & Music Festival on the Heller Estate of the Site"; and LTCC's mandate "to educate and grow the academic abilities of any and all who wish to enter its doors" have all come together to value, promote, and provide a diverse, exciting, and educational exposition of talent to our community and visitors.

And who knows what else is possible? Autumn is a time of change, and with all the wonderful organizations, businesses, casinos, resources and talent in the Lake Tahoe region, perhaps that larger and better "ArtFest" concept will once again come to life and manifest itself in a new cultural and economic opportunity lake-wide.

But as I like to say, "Let's get it started on the South Shore first and set an example."

Deb Jensen, executive director of the El Dorado Arts Council, also played a huge support role in getting this week-plus of activities the needed publicity in hard copy "a beautiful 18x11 poster" it required to give the public something tangible to grasp and remember. Her enthusiasm for the concept fueled everyone, as all our plates were full and it was uncertain how to get this project "over the top", which the poster did.

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