

Incumbents retain LTCC seats

By Susan Wood



The three incumbents on the Lake Tahoe Community College board pulled off a decisive win over a challenger in the quest for three seats in the El Dorado County election Tuesday.

Molly Blann, Roberta Mason and Kerry David, respectively, took 1,926 votes or 28.1 percent, 1,904 or 27.8 percent, and 1,891 or 27.6 percent with all 10 precincts reporting as of 11pm. A little more than a fifth of registered voters turned out for the election punctuated by only local races.

Mary Jane Sanchez, a relative newcomer to town and the college's inner workings, raked in 15.8 percent. Official results are expected to be tabulated in the next few weeks.

The incumbent trio has more than a half century of experience with South Lake Tahoe's academic hub, a fact that resonated with all three when asked what the voters were seeking.

"It looks to me from the results that people were voting for incumbents, and they're happy with what's happening. Of course, we have challenges and that experience helps," Blann said, relaxing quietly with her family at home.

Blann, a real estate agent who has served as the South Shore's original Chamber of Commerce president among other activities, excels at building relationships and pulled no punches on what she planned to do this morning given the favorable news. She had prepared to thank her supporters.

Despite the nod for experience from voters, Mason admitted she was a little surprised at Sanchez's loss when she was out in the community so much.

"It's because I know she was out there campaigning and put a lot of effort into it. I thought she might unseat me. It was interesting to see her style of campaigning," said Mason, while gathered Tuesday night at the home of David. He and wife Wendy won their respective races " she for the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board.

Having served since the board's inception in 1974, Mason was modest, but certain on what lay before the board during "the worst economic state" the community college has faced. State funding is in such a state of flux it's hard to plan for budget cuts because the amount fluctuates in the millions as the Legislature struggles with plunging tax revenue.

Difficult cutbacks have already been made including the closure of food service in the main cafeteria kitchen, leaving students to hit the vending machines, coffee cart, bookstore or go off campus.

It's this kind of creative challenge that has David, a certified public accountant, ready to roll up his sleeves for another term.

"With the economic situation, the strength of experience on the board has been key in this election. (The results) tell me the voters want to see the continuation of the board. We've had to cut courses, but that's just been the reality," he said.

Along with the fiscal constraints the college is dealing with now, David hopes the worst of these troubling financial times is over and wonders if the state figures the college banks on will be accurate from one month to another. He also hopes Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger stands by his commitment to keep higher education strong.

A planning session has been slated by the board for Friday.

Susan Wood is a freelance writer based in South Lake Tahoe.