

LTN: Suicide coverage deserves respect

People say the worst thing anyone can go through is to bury their child.

Parents of a Zephyr Cove Elementary School 11-year-old must do that after their son took his life this week.

News publications have historically shied away from covering suicides. It's personal. It's not usually news. It hits the news meter when it occurs in a public place or the person is well known.

Lake Tahoe News first reported the tragedy by publishing a press release from the Douglas County Sheriff's Department about two deaths investigators were working. We did so because it is unusual for the small South Shore agency to work two unrelated deaths in one night and because of the age of the younger person. At that time it was not known this was a suicide.

We have chosen not to publish the boy's name or do a full story on him out of journalistic integrity and respect for his family and friends.

The *Tahoe Daily Tribune* has criticized us for our original coverage. We stand by what we have done.

We don't believe suicide is preventable. The *Tribune* in its editorial today said it is.

This is wrong. And it is so incredibly callous to chastise parents, friends and teachers "to imply they should have done something more to help this youngster. Their grief is enough to last a lifetime without any publication placing blame and suggesting more should have been done.

The boy was getting help. People knew he was not happy. In the most simplistic of terms, happy, well-adjusted people don't take their own lives.

For a child to even know what suicide is and how to accomplish it is sad in itself. To see no reason to live, especially at 11, is nearly incomprehensible.

We must remember that as humans " even 11-year-olds " we are capable of hurting ourselves and others.

As a community we have a choice how we react to this loss, what we learn from it and how we grow.

A child's death, no matter how or when it happens, is a tragic loss.

Lake Tahoe News offers its condolences to the family and friends of this boy whose life ended far too soon.

Kathryn Reed, publisher *Lake Tahoe News*