

# Kindertown defies critics, keeps adding children

By Kathryn Reed

Slowly, Maria Barrows-Crist is rebuilding her business, Kindertown day care.

With each court appearance, her confidence builds that she will be allowed to stay open indefinitely. Because the state still has not provided El Dorado County Judge Steve Bailey with the documents he has repeatedly requested the onus is now on Barrow-Crist's attorney, Mike McLaughlin, to do so.

This was the direction of the judge at this week's conference hearing in South Lake Tahoe.

The state Department of Social Services wants to shut the center down based on 15 citations. Barrows-Crist takes issue with the allegations, as do many parents.

El Dorado County officials and others in the child services industry met with *Lake Tahoe News* last year. No one would directly speak out why Kindertown should be closed, yet it was clear this was their belief. They all emphasized their goal is what's best for children. But their words and actions are not in sync so their agenda is not clear.

Barrows-Crist admits she is struggling because families don't know what to do since she is still embroiled in a legal battle. The state wanted to close her down last year, but outcry from the community and intervention from Bailey prevented that from happening.

"I'll be on an enrollment campaign next week," she told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Her general day care is filling up. She has 20 openings in the

state preschool program.

She hit a low of 35 children and is sitting at 67 this week. At one point Kindertown had 120 kids.

Barrows-Crist is worried the money she gets from the state Department of Education will go to El Dorado County's program because her future is still cloudy.