

Ed Foundation providing 'extras' to S. Tahoe students

By Kathryn Reed

Excited energy fills the rooms. Youngsters are eager to get outside and start pedaling.

These 22 Bijou Community School students are willingly extending their school day. They are part of the weekly Bike Club.

Other classrooms are also abuzz after school each week as teachers and parents volunteer their time to lead one of the 10 clubs. Ballet and cross country skiing will be added in December.



Jackson Trew, 5, has his helmet fitted by Pete Fink. Photos/Kathryn Reed

"One teacher is doing a computer class. There were so many who wanted in she's doing it every Tuesday instead of every other," explained Principal Karen Tinlin.

These clubs – which range from sports to rocketry to cooking – are in their second year. Participation keeps growing – with

half of the student body in at least one club. The offers change, too, to keep things fresh and relevant.

Supplemental dollars have long been the source of keeping schools filled with the extras, that generations ago were considered the basics.

One of the key funding sources for students in Lake Tahoe Unified School District is the Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation. This nonprofit volunteer-run foundation is all about providing cash with few strings attached.

The Ed Foundation is paying for these after-school programs.

“We want to generate something that won’t otherwise be able to be done because of the current economics in the school district and No Child Left Behind’s focus on test scores,” said Chris Champion, president of the Ed Foundation.

But a check is not just written. Each school must apply for the money, explaining in detail where it will go and how it will benefit students.

For the past few years the Ed Foundation has been working with the school sites on enrichment programs like the after school clubs at Bijou. Before that the Foundation was responsible for spending thousands of dollars to keep class-size reduction in lower grades.

“Well, LTEdF is wonderful. Do I need to say more? Also, this year, Dr. Greg Bergner, a LTEdF member, is doing our Rocketry Club,” said Kathy Haven, an active Bijou parent. “He approached us after seeing my presentation for the foundation. So, now LTEdF is giving us financial backing and a volunteer to boot.”

Although the clubs are designed to be fun, education is still part of the mix. Before anyone goes riding around the South Tahoe neighborhood where Bijou is located, parent volunteer

and bike guru Pete Fink makes sure helmets are fitted correctly, brakes are in working order and students know the rules of the road.

This is Hannah Lucas' second year in the bike club. The 8-year-old has learned the importance of checking tires for flats before heading out.

The Foundation gets the bulk of its money through the annual Food Fest. The Oct. 15 event is casual, centered on eating and drinking with friends. Membership is another form of income. Donations are always accepted.

Other things the Foundation has funded are the Mad Science program out of Sacramento doing presentations at all the elementary schools, money for music/choir groups, and mini-writing sessions for eighth-graders.

"We are taking a more broad-based approach to providing enrichment for all of the kids to increase their curiosity, to increase their ability to dream what they want to do with their lives," Campion said.

Food Fest details:

Website

Date: Oct. 15

Hours: 6:30-10pm

Location: Harveys Convention Center, Stateline

Cost: \$35 in advance, \$40 at the door

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)