

S. Tahoe students make case intervention works for them

By Kathryn Reed

Positive adult intervention can put young people on a course of success. Four students who are part of the A Team – a group of South Tahoe and Mt. Tallac high school students – delivered that message.

“Many of us grow up too fast,” Alexandra Salinas told Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra at the group’s March 17 meeting. “It’s hard because we’re asked to take on a lot of responsibility.”



Alexandra Salinas on March 17 tells SITS about the A Team. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The A Team has created to form a bond between students who otherwise may have dissed one another, who could be in rival gangs, who may never have spoken to each other. It sprouted from the gang issues that were going on in the South Shore a few years ago.

It gives them a family in the sense of being there emotionally

for one another that many of them have never experienced. It has given them hope for a future filled with optimism.

Salinas presented the PowerPoint that had been prepared by fellow student Alberto Caballero. Joining them were students Luis Enrique Perez and Ricky Molina, and adult coordinators Amy Jackson and Jean Beemer.

The A Team got its name from the three original collaborators who started it – Jackson, Aaron Barnett and Adrian Escobedo. Their names start with A.

About 14 students are part of the group.

“Not one girl is pregnant, not one girlfriend is pregnant, not one is in jail,” Beemer said. “Every one of them is a productive member of Tahoe. Each is a strong, loving kid.”

Salinas has earned her dental certificate at the high school and now wants to become a dentist. She credits the A Team for giving her that drive and bringing out her ambition.

Molina said being introduced to sports through the A Team channeled his energy into something positive. He’s hoping to go to college.

Perez used to show up for school about 1pm. The A Team helped him realize an education is important. He’s not sure what he wants to do in the future. Last year he participated in Generation Green with the U.S. Forest Service and this week he interviewed with UPS.

Caballero is considering joining a branch of the military.

Beemer admitted it’s hard for some young adults to leave Lake Tahoe because their families need the income they bring in from whatever job they have now.

One of the outcomes of the A Team is instead of students resolving issues through fights, they are seeking resolution

through trusted adults. They are being proactive instead of reactive.

If funding weren't an issue, about 100 students could be in this program.

"With losing so much staff, I'm not sure how we continue. It's one of those things we might lose," Jackson said in reference to the A Team.

The group she and Beemer are working with now is the second generation of A Teamers, with the third generation having meetings once a month and wanting more time together.

But the budget for Lake Tahoe Unified School District doesn't have the extras for programs like this – for the adults, for a room to meet, for a little bit of food to entice participation.

"I'm so glad for this program, but so sad it's about money and not people," Wendy David said. She is a member of the Soroptimist and on the LTUSD board.

Jackson admits with this being a preventive program it's hard to have concrete measurements in regards to its success. Though, the comments made Thursday by four students seemed to convince the women listening that the A Team is working.