

# Opinion: Viking Stadium turning into the community's gridiron

By Angie Keil and Lizzy Latenser

Lake Tahoe Unified School District is excited to announce the latest donors to the South Tahoe High School Viking Stadium Renovation Project. With Phase I under way, Heavenly Mountain Resort and the South Tahoe Alliance of Resorts (formerly the Lake Tahoe Gaming Alliance) have announced they intend to match community donations for the Friday Night Lights drive up to \$20,000.

Heavenly and STAR each intend to contribute \$10,000 to the stadium construction and are challenging other community members to get their donations in by Aug. 15 to contribute to the donation match.



Viking Stadium is on schedule to be ready for the 2011 season.

Photo/Steve Morales

“These generous donations are an example of how local organizations are making a difference in the revitalization of

community facilities and spirit,” Superintendent Jim Tarwater said.

At a ground-breaking ceremony at South Tahoe High School this week, football players, cheerleaders, coaches, faculty, administrators, and board members applauded the initiative of both organizations and other community members.

“We want to see our students thrive in Lake Tahoe and know how excited the community is to help renovate the stadium at South Tahoe High School,” Pete Sonntag, general manager of Heavenly Mountain Resort, said. “In an effort to challenge the community and contribute to the fundraising goal, we are partnering with the South Tahoe Alliance of Resorts to match all cash community donations up to \$20,000. We want this matching gift to be a strong gesture of support from us to every student, athlete, cheerleader, parent, and community supporter in Lake Tahoe.”

Last year, the South Lake Tahoe community overwhelmingly embraced the Friday Night Lights concept when almost a thousand spectators turned out for two football games that were played under rented portable lights. Using \$1.1 million in developer fees that are specifically set aside for school construction, LTUSD is now renovating the almost half-century-old stadium with an artificial turf field, permanent stadium lighting, a concession stand and restrooms. LTUSD is actively seeking grants and donations to help cover the approximately \$340,000 cost for the permanent lighting and artificial turf through its Friday Night Lights drive.

“The new lights are a big part of this great community enhancement project that will provide a quality facility for our residents to enjoy for years to come,” Mike Bradford, CEO of Lakeside Inn and Casino and member of South Tahoe Alliance of Resorts, said. “Not only will this be an incredible facility for the students but it will also attract a wide variety of sporting events that bring visitors to Tahoe with

the end result being a positive economic impact to our city.”

The deadline to purchase a commemorative brick has been extended to July 8. Donations from the brick sale and other contributions have yielded \$65,000 and a Tire-derived Product Grant of \$92,000 has been awarded by California.

The Gooding Family Foundation and Tony Gooding have contributed \$30,000 to the project, while Stephen Bannar has donated \$5,000.

For more information on how to donate, contact Angie Keil at (530) 541.2850, ext. 225 or go online.

*Angie Keil works for LTUSD and Lizzy Latenser works for Heavenly.*