

Opinion: 'Miracle' at STHS opens to round of applause

By Robert Schimmel

Was this a "miracle" at 6,300 feet? After all, no crash landing, no one bailed out and appearances are that continued success will follow. Can this really happen? Absolutely, and if you haven't heard or read about it by now, then allow me to give the increasingly popular and lyrical acronym call: TADA!

This is music to the ears of everyone I've spoken to regarding the Tahoe Arts and Design Academy at South Tahoe High School whose grand opening Aug. 26 was clearly not the result of a miracle, though Wendy David, president of LTUSD board, may have required one given the ponderous scissors she had for "cutting" the ribbon. Well done.



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Let's start from the beginning of the evening, 5pm, when refreshments were served to lots of parents, students, LTUSD folks, representatives from various agencies and nonprofit organizations, well-wishers, and other interested parties, like me, who were there to learn more, soak up the glamour and witness the unveiling and hopeful triumph of this visionary project. I have not been closely involved and wondered if this was going to turn out to be just another well-meant project that cost a bunch to start but somehow got derailed or had to

settle for less. Well, from the people I chatted with during the evening and based on the tour of the facilities, nothing could be further from the truth.

The basic financial facts I gained while seated comfortably in the beautiful new theater, with lighting and stage options to die for, are that this entire TADA complex cost \$9 million of which more than \$4.5 million came from state grants, and what I believe were some tireless efforts by Ivone Larson, STHS principal. The balance came from the all-important Measure G (November 2008).

Wow! Now that is a miracle these days, and perhaps that's the key – these days. According to Steve Morales, the TADA project manager and LTUSD facilities director, this huge undertaking began as a viable vision and concept more than seven years ago and benefited from some great planning as well as fortuitous economic timing plus smaller successes along the way that actually began with developing relationships and strategies as far back as 1994. He also acknowledged the very positive LTUSD board and incredible amount of work required from an equally incredible group of talented and committed staff, architects, engineers, and others.

During the initial festivities I finally met Bill Roby, the director of the El Dorado County Community Foundation, who has been so instrumental in granting funds to numerous arts and other groups in Tahoe with the help of its Lake Tahoe cabinet members. He treated me to the welcome news of EDCCF's good year and continued growth that, in my opinion, should bode well for more involvement and help here in Tahoe for appropriately targeted grants and funding.

As I wound my way through the facilities mesmerized by the Hollywood technologies, a few "wait and watch" thoughts crossed my mind. This is a bit of a honeymoon phase now with implementation coming right up and results down the road, so this community and those on the Board must stay vigilant re

all the skills our kids need to maximize this awesome facility. While emulating "a field of dreams" can be a risk, let's hope enough vision was expended on preparing the groundwork for success inside TADA as is evident on its surface. We certainly have many talented teachers, like Bob Grant (music), Liz Niven (theater), Lyn Twitchell (fine art), on that side of the equation, but I am not familiar with those who represent what seems to me to be the emphasis on digital media arts and production management. However, what makes this such a great community enriching effort in the broadest sense is the availability of these facilities to everyone. This certainly takes a lot of the waiting out of it.

As a final note and closing kudo, "thank you!" to the Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation and its president, Nancy Ralston, for sponsoring this informative and fun grand opening (of my eyes and many others) to the possibilities of clear, committed vision and infinite, future hopes of our kids and students. This has clearly been a miraculous effort, but no miracle.

Congratulations!

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