

Winter businesses need snow so season can go full throttle

By Kathryn Reed

When visitors come to the South Shore, especially for activities that involve snow, there will be plenty of things for them to do. A rundown on all things winter was the topic of this month's South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association meeting.

Lodging guests can often take advantage of discounted rates for lift tickets, snowmobiling, rentals and boat cruises. Sometimes it comes part of a package deal with a night's stay, other times the front desk sells the lower priced tickets.



Lake Tahoe is ready for winter business. All that's missing is snow.

Photo/LTN file

These incentives are nothing new in the hospitality business. It's all about providing the guest with the best experience, the most fun and ideally at an affordable rate.

Deals are also given to frontline staff so they may experience

the different activities in the area. The rationale is the best salesperson is someone who actually knows the product. If someone hasn't skied one of the resorts, how can they authentically answer a guest's question?

Representatives from the three South Shore resorts gave a spiel about what's new and the same for this season, as did other outdoor vendors.

Kirkwood's Powder Express bus starts service Dec. 26; taking people to the resort for \$15/day. If booked online in advance, the price drops to \$10.

The resort will keep operating on a limited basis on weekends until enough snow accumulates to open more terrain on more days.

Heavenly's rep said lower Stagecoach should open soon. Ante Up terrain park reopened last week with 25 features.

A shuttle between Heavenly and Northstar costs \$15.

Starting Dec. 17 the Tamarack Lodge will have an après ski party from 3:30-6pm with music and happy hour specials.

Sierra-at-Tahoe is waiting for Mother Nature to start doing her snow dance. With temps hitting 59 degrees at the resort last week, it's still hiking season many places in the mountains.

The shuttle taking skiers and boarders to Sierra is free.

Heavenly Village is celebrating 13 days of holiday fun starting Dec. 19 and culminating Dec. 31 with a lighted (more so than last year) gondola drop at 9pm (the New York New Year) and what is being touted as a substantially better fireworks display compared to 2010.

Tony Lyle with Aramark talked about Santa being on board the Tahoe Queen between now and Christmas Eve.

The Queen will cruise New Year's Eve to celebrate the West Coast New Year, while the M.S. Dixie II will party on East Coast time.

The Queen's ski shuttle between Ski Run Marina and the pier at the Hyatt starts Jan. 17 and will run Tuesdays and Thursdays through April 5. While the Queen is in Incline, a 90-minute cruise will be offered that goes by the CalNeva, Thunderbird Lodge and other locales.

The Queen will also have après ski cruises every Wednesday starting at 6pm from Jan. 4-April 4 for \$19.

Dwight and Diana Borges have added an hour sleigh ride to their offerings. In the past a 30-minute tour was all that was available from the open field near MontBleu.

Two new sleighs allow groups of about 50 people to go out at once.

Before the snow falls the sleigh with wheels is taking people on excursions and the horse carriages are at Stateline.

While the emphasis of the meeting was for winter businesses to let lodging entities know what's going on, all of these things are available to locals, too.

In other action:

- Some lodging board officer positions changed. The full board includes: president, Jim Blossey, Motel 6; vice president, Rich Bodine, Inn by the Lake; treasurer/secretary, Jerry Bindel, Aston Lakeland Village, representative 1-80 units, Douglas Williams, Cedar Pines; representative 80-plus units, Dell Dellinger, Forest Suites; property management/time share, Tom Davis, Tahoe Keys; at-large rep, Pat Ronan, Tahoe Lakeshore Lodge; associate rep, Darcy Nealis, Vail/Heavenly. The redevelopment seat is open, though Mike de Laet, resort sales manager for Kirkwood, wants it.

- The board agreed to give \$1,000 to Christmas Cheer – which is feeding 780 families a month instead of the “usual” 300.