

# TAP – 25 years of bringing performing arts to students

By Kathryn Reed

Performing arts is more like a disappearing act for many small communities – especially for the schools in those towns.

Not so on the South Shore.



With an annual budget of \$100,000, Tahoe Arts Project is able to bring three to four shows a year to more than 5,000 children from Alpine County to Lake Tahoe Unified to Douglas County.

Peggy Thompson, executive director of the nonprofit, has been with the organization for nearly 20 of the 25 years it has been around.

Asked how TAP has been successful for a quarter century, she told *Lake Tahoe News*, “I think a lot of it is people realize the importance of providing these programs to children who otherwise would not be able to experience any type of live performing arts.”

Usually it's new groups that come to the schools, but in honor of this being the silver anniversary, Thompson and her board decided to bring back three favorites. The Standards – an a capella of five brothers – were in town in September; the comedic-juggling Gizmo Guys played in January; and Manding Jata – music and dance of West Africa – will be here next week.

Besides the performance these professionals put on, they all come with an educational component. For example, The Standards

for the younger grade levels talked about nutrition, exercise and health, while the middle and high school students heard an anti-bullying message.

In addition to the week of school assemblies, each act puts on a show for the public. This year MontBleu in Stateline has donated its show room for those performances.

Each year the Missoula Children's Theater comes in the fall and summer. This allows youngsters who have never acted a chance to try the craft.

Thompson says the most difficult part is negotiating a contract because TAP has such a limited budget.

Revenue for the nonprofit comes from various fundraisers including the July fine arts festival, service clubs and donations from the public. Grants used to be a larger component of the budget, but those are drying up.

It was Harriet Goldman who founded TAP in 1987. She had moved to Tahoe from the Bay Area with her two kids and was appalled to find the schools had no performing arts, Thompson said. With volunteers and the support of Lake Tahoe Unified, the program started in a couple schools and grew from there.

In some ways things have not changed. The schools could not bring this caliber of performing arts on their own.

"Through the programming committee and the board we work hard in the selection process. We bring in a variety," Thompson said. Talks are under way now with performers who will come in the 2012-13 school year.

"In the next 25 years or before I leave I would like to see a performing arts center. I think we could do more if we had a space," Thompson said.

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**Info to know:**

- TAP is online, with a new website coming soon.
- Manding Jata public show is March 23, 7pm at MontBleu. Tickets are \$12 for adults, youth and seniors \$8. Call (530) 542.3632 or buy them at the door.