

Bona Fide proves people still want to read good books

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Instead of finding people who wanted to trade blood pressure for salmon, Kim Wyatt found people who wanted to tell their stories.

“I believe in the power of stories changing lives,” Wyatt said.



That belief led her from a career in nursing to a life as a writer and editor, and now to being a book publisher. With her latest endeavor, she is able to tell even more stories.

As sole owner of Bona Fide Books in Meyers, this book publisher is putting into print the stories of locals and those living beyond the Lake Tahoe Basin.

On Aug. 8 she told a bit of her own story to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe. (For those who missed her talk at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe, she will be at the Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra meeting Aug. 23 at 7:30am, South Lake Tahoe Senior Center.)

Wyatt told the group her love of literature and desire to promote community helped lead her to start Bona Fide.

Art vs. commerce was the subject of conversations she had with friends and colleagues prior to launching Bona Fide in 2009. It’s a topic creative types struggle with – rewarding work is not always the most profitable. At that time she decided to pursue her dreams even if the paychecks became less secure.

While her books are popular, the profit margin for publishers can be slim. Amazon takes 55 percent of the cut. Bookstores are few and far between, which means finding other retailers who will sell her wares.

“Permanent Vacation” came out last year. It’s all about people who have lived and worked in national parks in the West.

“I did an anthology because I didn’t want to screw up anyone’s career,” Wyatt said.

“Tahoe Blues” is another collection of stories, but this time they are not all non-fiction. Sixty essays fill the book – all about Tahoe. Life in Tahoe is such a popular topic that she got a call this month from someone inquiring about purchasing 350 copies for people attending an event. This reflects another unconventional way to get her books into people’s hands.

Bona Fide also has a poetry contest each year in honor of Wyatt’s friend and Lake Tahoe poet Melissa Lanitis Gregory who died in February 2009 at the age of 47. (Submissions for the third book will be accepted through Aug. 31.)

The goal is to publish three to five books a year. In the works is one about the Tahoe Rim Trail; with proceeds going to the association that oversees the 165-mile trail around Lake Tahoe. (Submissions are open until Dec. 1 for this collection.)

But it’s not just about Wyatt and her books. Bona Fide HQ is the place for artist receptions, workshops and other events. It is where kids can read to dogs through the Buddy Program. And it’s where college interns launch their careers.

In five years, Wyatt plans to have the Tahoe Center for Writers, which in part will be a national residency program, launched.

More information about Bona Fide Books may be found online.