

Cancer League lends help to those in need on South Shore

Publisher's note: October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. People are affected by cancer in all sorts of ways and communities do various things to shine a spotlight on various cancers. This is the third of four stories about cancer.

By Kathryn Reed

A cancer diagnosis is life changing – no matter the ultimate outcome.



Not everyone has the financial means or support group to handle it without the help of strangers.

That's where the South Lake Tahoe Cancer League steps in. This nonprofit run by volunteers and an eight-member board has been around since the early 1980s. The group helps people on the South Shore – going to Glenbrook, up to the El Dorado County line past Emerald Bay, and into Christmas Valley.

“It started because at one time it was just the American Cancer Society here. Local people decided we were not seeing any benefit from the money so they decided to break away and form the South Lake Tahoe Cancer League, with the idea that we would help local people and not just the city,” explained board President Jonnie Crawford.

People undergoing treatment for cancer – chemo, radiation or surgery – may apply for a grant from the organization. Their doctor must verify they are undergoing treatment, but no one has to show any financial paperwork to receive a grant.

“(Last week) I approved a grant for a person who goes to the

VA. He lives in a trailer and absolutely has no income," Crawford said. "It's so sad. A lot of times these people are not visible."

Up to \$400 is available every other month for cancer patients. The money can be used however they want. There are no strings attached to money or need to show receipts. It can go for medication, gas, food or other bills. To date for this calendar year the local Cancer League has given out \$33,000 worth of grants.

Besides cash, rides are also available. Volunteers drive patients as far as Reno and Truckee for medical care. Drivers are reimbursed for the miles driven based on what the state sets as the rate per mile. For September, the group wrote checks totaling \$2,815.

"Some of the people who need rides ... they are desperate," Crawford said.

Through the years, the number of people seeking grants and those needing rides have increased, according to Crawford.

Money to support the Cancer League comes from a variety of sources. But the biggest fundraiser of the year is coming up. It's the Sees Candy sales.

Each year the storefront has donated the space for free. The group is returning to the Raley's center at the Y by Starbucks. The doors open shortly before Thanksgiving.

One-pound boxes of various chocolates are available.

"We get quite a few merchants who buy candy for their offices," Crawford said.

People have been seen making multiple trips to their vehicle with all the boxes they've bought.

The Moose Lodge puts on the Longest Day of Golf event, which

benefits the Cancer League.

This was the first year Sierra Athletic Club put on a walk with the beneficiary being the Cancer League. More than \$2,000 was raised that day.

Last year \$6,000 from the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority via the celebrity golf tournament was secured. The Cancer League has sent in a request for funds from this year's event, too.

For more information about making a donation or to become a volunteer, call (530) 573.1703. Donations may also be sent to: South Lake Tahoe Cancer League, P.O. Box 17962, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151. Memberships are also available at \$20 year. Not all volunteers are members, and being a member does not mean one has to volunteer.