

# Resort executives: Market Lake Tahoe as one region

By Katherine E. Hill

KINGS BEACH – Working together to promote Tahoe as a region was the message at the annual North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce member lunch.

“We need to have one message for the entire region,” said Julie Maurer, vice president of marketing for Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski resorts.

Maurer was one of the speakers at last week’s lunch attended by business owners in the North Tahoe region about efforts to market the area to regional, national and international winter tourists.



Squaw Valley is putting \$24 million into the resort for this season. Photo/Provided

Maurer called on everyone to work together to market Tahoe’s big mountain snow to tourists.

“We need to do this as an entire community,” she said.

The recent snow atop Heavenly Ski Resort, (before this latest storm) which was heavily publicized, was a boon to the entire Tahoe region, she said.

“It really helped, in terms of our phones ringing to book lodging,” Maurer shared.

Maurer outlined a three-point plan to recover from the 2011-12 season and to build on Tahoe’s reputation for big mountain snow – remind visitors of the region’s snow, which averages more than 400 inches annually; diversify the market to international customers; and offer past guests incentives for booking lodging and tickets early. She also said the capital investments in local resorts, despite the recession, is another marketing strategy.

“In North Tahoe, we have one of the most powerful messages,” Maurer said. “There is more capital being spent despite a poor winter.”

Maurer cited the \$70 million, five-year Renaissance at Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows that started during the winter of 2011-12, which saw dismal snowfall throughout the region. Despite the winter, KSL, which operates Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows, invested \$14 million in improvements at Squaw Valley on and off the mountain, and is spending another \$24 million this year. Improvements for the 2012-13 season, which begins Nov. 21, include two new lifts at High Camp, expanded snowmaking, new learn-to-ski areas, remodeling the Olympic Plaza Bar, and improved terrain parks at Squaw Valley.

Maurer also said KSL would continue to offer access to Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows on a single ticket or pass for the upcoming season with a free shuttle operating between the resorts.

That message in capital investment and regional marketing has

echoed by Davy Ratchford, director of marketing for Northstar, which is operated by Vail Resorts.

Vail invested \$30 million in improvements at Northstar during summer 2012, with Ratchford noting that about \$1 billion has been invested at Northstar in the last 10 years from the development of the village at the base of the resort to the mid-mountain Ritz-Carlton to expanded terrain and new lifts.

During the 2011-12 season, Northstar unveiled the Zephyr Lodge at mid-mountain, expanded terrain at Sawtooth Ridge (with cat tours coming this season), to the new Promised Land Express. For 2012-13 season, which starts Nov. 16, Ratchford says the resort will open a new concept restaurant in the village along with a location of the popular Truckee eatery Taco's Jalisco. As well, there will be a Ripperoo's Riglet Park for ages 3 and older and the resort is expanding its popular EpicMix Photo program with an EpicMix Racing component at all Vail Resorts. Guests may post their best times on runs and compare it to times set by Lindsey Vonn. Those with the best times at the end of the season will have the chance to race Vonn.

The resort also will celebrate its 40th anniversary with a Birthday Bash on Dec. 22 with Shawn White at Northstar for the festivities.

#### **North Shore news:**

- The TNT-TMA will unveil a pilot ski shuttle program later this season offering a one-stop shuttle access to every ski resort in the North Tahoe-Truckee region.
- Iron Man will debut its highest altitude race in North Tahoe in 2013 as part of a five-year commitment to hold the race in the region.
- A bid to host the Amgen Tour in 2013 is being considered, with a decision expected in November.

