

South Lake Tahoe taking its message to the people

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is embracing that government is supposed to be of the people, by the people and for the people.

“We are increasing the information we get out to the public,” explained Tracy Franklin, public information officer for South Lake Tahoe.



Ultimately this should mean a more informed community.

The effort started in 2011 with the redesign of the city's website. The one before was not user-friendly and it was near impossible to find anything.

Now people can sign up online to receive a variety of notifications. (This feature eliminates anyone from ever being able to say they didn't know about a city-sponsored meeting.)

Facebook and Twitter are other ways South Tahoe is getting out its message.

But it's not just the typical, predictable government press releases that are being sent electronically. South Lake Tahoe is beginning to tell its story, what is going on within its borders – and a bit beyond, instead of just relying on others to be the messenger.

In April, the inaugural monthly newsletter was released. For the first three months a print version was distributed, though

now it's only available electronically. One day it may come out twice a month.

With people getting information in various ways, the city is doing a mix of email blasts, buying ads and sending traditional press releases. The latter is in hopes media will pick up the information as a story – so then there is no cost to the city.

“We do want to do more videos and not just as a commercial, but when we have events,” Franklin said. “The idea behind the video is it reminds folks of the different activities they can participate in on the South Shore.”

The city has partnered with Lake Tahoe TV, which is part of Outside TV, to create some of the videos. Various spots are being developed that then get picked up in the Bay Area, where much of the basin's drive-up market resides. Lake Tahoe TV will take footage from three cameras that will be set up (one at the airport, another at Lakeview Commons and a yet-to-be determined spot) to be able to feed to its viewers.

This is one of Lake Tahoe TV's videos:

Residents are also getting more involved – which in turn makes them more informed. The Citizens Academy started this year, and will resume in the spring. Neighborhood meetings are ongoing. A volunteer corps has been created. Information about these functions of government have been provided in the past by *Lake Tahoe News*, but are also items people would be aware of if they signed up for alerts directly from the city.

Staffing limits what the city can do in terms of events, but partnerships could make more of them a reality. The air show and lifestyle festival are examples of partnership events.

These and other events are popular with locals, but also give tourists something to do. Franklin would like to see an event every weekend on the South Shore.

With an eye on boosting the city's coffers via room taxes, one reason Live at Lakeview was on Thursdays was to try to lure out-of-towners to Tahoe for a long weekend.

"At the city, our public information officer's efforts are to promote community events that promote our community pride, character and the unique place we are lucky enough to call home," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. "As we work to achieve those goals, the community will in turn be the best promoters of the community because a more informed community, a closer-connected community, and more caring community, demonstrates a welcoming spirit to tourists who travel here to visit where we live and leave with a longing to return."