

SHES secretary takes her name off attendance roll

By Kathryn Reed

Oftentimes the first person anyone sees on a school campus is the person who knows the most, has all the answers and can be guaranteed to have a smile no matter the chaos going on all around her.

That is the case with Cindy Farmer.

As secretary at Sierra House Elementary School, she is the keeper of all the information. She knows students by name. She has helped create a home away from home.

But when students return in January from the winter break they will have to learn a new name. Farmer is one of 17 classified employees in Lake Tahoe Unified School District who will retire as of Dec. 31. Friday is their last day of school.



Cindy Farmer

“When I first started I woke up every morning and couldn’t wait to get to work. And I still love coming every day,” Farmer said. “I will miss it. It will be very emotional for me when I leave.”

But at 62 she knows it is time to call it quits, spend more time with her biological family, and enjoy all the reasons she and her husband, Jim, call Lake Tahoe home.

Farmer will have more time to tend to her immaculate yard and garden, as well as hike some more.

During her time at the South Lake Tahoe school she has worked for four principals – three men and one woman.

“You have to get a feel for their personality. One was very organized, one messy, one brand new. They were all different,” Farmer said of her bosses. “You have a different relationship with each one. Some you can tease with more, some are more serious. They have all been so good to me.”

Ryan Galles is one she laughs with nearly every day.

“She makes the job look easy and it is not an easy job,” Principal Galles told *Lake Tahoe News*. “She never puts anybody off when they have something that needs taking care of.”

With her last day being Dec. 21, he joked that it would be the end of his world.

“She started out as a colleague and we ended up as incredible friends,” Galles said of Farmer, even though he is close to her kids’ ages. “We’ve had a really strong relationship. It’s so important for a secretary and principal to work closely.”

Farmer started at the school in 1984 – eight years after it opened – as a volunteer in the classroom. She did that for 13 years before becoming the school secretary.

She thought she would miss being in the classroom with kids, but then realized as school secretary she gets to see the entire student body.

Paige Cefalu met Farmer about 20 years ago. Cefalu taught at the school and Farmer was her aid.

“I made her promise me she would not leave before my kids left,” Cefalu said. By that time Farmer was working in the front office.

“I subbed for her for one week. It was the hardest job ... between being secretary, the nurse, dealing with teachers, the principal, phone calls,” Cefalu said. “She definitely does not get paid enough and she does it with a smile on her face.”

Collectively, the retiring employees have given LTUSD 411 years of service. **Retirees are:**

- Ken Gerrard, LTESMS, senior custodian, 15 years
- Birgit Lukins, STHS, senior attendance assistant, 21 years
- Steve Dorman, maintenance, craftsworker, electrician, 18 years
- Cathy Crabtree, STMS, cafeteria, 25 years
- Sandra Bobman, Tahoe Valley, library assistant, 35 years
- Andy Balwing, STHS, custodian, 35 years
- Jerry Buckley, bus driver, 18 years
- Sandy Hood, Sierra House, instructional assistant, 26 years
- Hillary Dembroff, occupational therapist, 15 years
- Cheryl Walters, STMS, instructional assistant, 33 years
- Holly Weber, Sierra House, cafeteria supervisor, 28 years
- Romeo Alaoen, STHS, custodial supervisor, 36 years
- Wayne Blaylock, STHS, custodian, 26 years
- Pam Giordano, STHS, cafeteria assistant, 22 years
- Kathy Humphreys, EC, administrative assistant, 20 years
- Jerry Lufrano, Al Tahoe/EC, custodian, 26 years.

