

STHS grad juggling life's dreams in LA



Wherever Chris Smith is in the world – even at Everest base camp in November 2011 – he juggles. Photos/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Some people send postcards, others text a picture. But those modes of communicating one's adventures are ordinary, especially if you are Chris Smith.

The South Tahoe High School grad – who was in town last weekend for his 10-year reunion – has had some sort of camera in his hands or strapped to him for years. And since he was 12 he has been juggling almost anything that he picks up.

While he was in Iceland this year he decided to use a GoPro camera with a wide-angle lens to film his juggling exploits in that country. It was a way to share with family and friends

what he was seeing.

A lot more people than he expected have joined in on the fun. Nearly 700,000 people on YouTube have viewed Juggling Around Iceland. This got the attention of producers at NBC's "Today Show".

They tracked Smith down in Hawaii, where he was wrapping up the Blue Man Group tour. He put together a similar video for the morning show from Hawaii to Studio 1A in New York – which includes some footage of Lake Tahoe.

The "Today Show" segment aired July 29.

The start and the future

Smith was 18 when his dad, Phil Smith, and St. Theresa Catholic School student Michael Bank Jr., 14, died off the Mendocino coast. It was that tragedy that led him to write the screenplay "Shadow in the Trees". The movie is fiction, but there are truths in it about what he and his family went through following the Jan. 11, 2004, drownings.

Netflix and iTunes picked up the movie, which he finished before he graduated from UCLA in 2007.

This was the third year the proceeds from the movie have been used as a scholarship for a STHS graduate who has overcome adversity and who is pursuing a degree in film.

Hollywood film director Stephen Herek, who helped Smith with the final edit, is still a mentor to him.

Writing-directing-acting – he wants to do all three, even though he knows it's more common to specialize.



South Tahoe High School grad Chris Smith lives in Los Angeles where he is pursuing his dreams of being an actor-writer-director.

“I could do any one of those things and feel like I am happy and successful,” Smith told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But, he added, it’s the juggler in him that makes him want to have more than one career “ball” going at a time.

Smith has applied for a director fellowship through Universal NBC that he will find out about in September.

He takes off for Copenhagen next week where he’ll spend three weeks. Part of the adventure is to visit the country he was born in – even though he grew up in South Lake Tahoe – and visit with his mom’s side of the family, while also wrapping up an action-adventure-comedy script.

Smith has an agent and manager for the writing side of his career.

He considers the year with the Blue Man Group – which included

10 months in 51 cities – as a significant segment of his acting career.

Directing is Smith's long-term goal.

But what is most important to the 28-year-old is that whatever he is doing, he is storytelling.