

# Opinion: It took a community to build LTCC

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

*– Nelson Mandela*

**By Kindred Murillo**

When I read the above quote, it evokes emotion that is difficult for me to put into words because I have such a passion for educating our youth and providing life-long learning to our community. Since arriving in South Lake Tahoe three years ago, I have come to understand just how much this community also values education. That is why I feel like I belong here.

As Lake Tahoe Community College celebrates 40 years of serving the communities of the South Shore, I want to take time to reflect on what propelled the college to this place. As we “Honor the Past ... and Ascend into the Future,” it is clear that our community supported and made LTCC what it is today, right from its very beginning. For the efforts of those leaders who fought to bring access to higher education to South Lake Tahoe, to the more than 87,000 students who have taken classes, graduated, transferred to four-year institutions, and to the many generous individuals and businesses who have donated tirelessly to our causes, in particular scholarships for students in need – a heartfelt thank you.



Kindred  
Murillo

To build an entire college from the ground up it truly takes a vision of what is possible and determination to make that vision become a reality. It happened here because of dedicated, sincere, and tenacious people who had a vision of bringing higher education to South Lake Tahoe. In the 1960s this group, led by individuals such as Roberta Mason, Tony Magliari and Gene Bellisario, among others, raised community awareness, took on California legislation, and fought to bring higher education to our community. These efforts led to the formation of a local college to provide higher education, arts, culture, and many other services to our small, rural community. It also led to an infusion of state funding that provided facilities, programs, and services that continue to benefit this community. What followed was the opening of the original campus in the old Gerkins Lodge on Highway 50, where every classroom had a fireplace and a bathroom: one of the perks to starting a college in a converted motel. The college's current and permanent home on Al Tahoe Boulevard opened in 1988 under the leadership of Guy Lease, who, along with James Duke and the first board of trustees, left a footprint in this community that has forever changed South Lake Tahoe.

Community colleges are only as strong as the community that surrounds them. We depend on our local community members to attend the classes, programs, and access the services we provide. Thank you for attending our local art show openings, our theater performances, and for trusting us to educate your

children and help them achieve their educational goals. Our community college is a great option for students wanting to earn their associates degree and transfer to four-year schools, with more students transferring from LTCC to the UC and CSU systems than other community colleges our size. It is also the best local option for those seeking career and technical education.

You as a community have taken advantage of these options, and have benefited from them. Even though more than 50 percent of students who graduate from South Tahoe High School and go on to college come to LTCC, our goal is to increase that number, and increase the percentage of local high school graduates who access higher education. Simply put, I believe in LTCC because I believe everyone deserves the opportunity to improve their quality of life through education.

We are grateful to our foundation board members, which includes many residents of our community whose commitment to education rivals my own. These professionals, business owners, retired community members, faculty, and staff raise money to support scholarships and programs that support student success at LTCC. I thank them, our board of trustees, our committed faculty, staff, and administration, and especially you, our community members, for your continued commitment and for championing our cause to deliver quality, affordable education to anyone who seeks it.

Please join with us this year in celebrating 40 years of excellence in education at Lake Tahoe Community College. We are one community, one college.

*Kindred Murillo is president of Lake Tahoe Community College.*