

Letter: Watching a community care

To the community,

This is part of an email that I sent my son Aug. 1. We hear so much now days about people that don't care, are apathetic, and just don't want to get involved. That's not the case in South Lake Tahoe. The people that I witnessed today were amazing. They did care, weren't apathetic, and jumped right in, literally, to help a person in dire need.

I was in the water so I don't know where they were running from to help.

I am proud to live in South Lake Tahoe, and I do feel safe here if I ever needed rescuing.

August 1, 2014

Today is the 14th anniversary of my moving here to Meyers so I'm going kayaking to celebrate. As I'm loading up, there are some people in front of the house across the street crying. I go over and ask what's up. The sweet lady Marilyn that has been battling cancer for the past 6 years died this morning. Very sad. Tom was married to her for 45 years. I can't imagine the grief that he and his family must feel. She used to run a day care from her house. All of the families that could leave their kids with someone that they could really trust. She will be sorely missed. I thought about them throughout the day and the kindness that they showed me by inviting me over for dinner this last Thanksgiving. I could tell that it was not easy for her but she was a very strong person. They are such nice caring people.

So I finally make it to the Lake. The little island at the Upper Truckee river mouth is now part of the shore. People

were riding their bikes out there. Some were walking way out beyond where I was paddling. Very low lake.

Saw A ton of birds and ducks.

So it's evening now and I'm coming back to Timber Cove pier and the waves were pretty big and several came in the boat to be with me. This time I brought my sponge. They were mostly coming from the north so I was broad sided all the way back. As I came up to go through the pier I had to work hard not to crash into it. I noticed two girls walking on the pier just a little ahead of me towards the beach. I got through ok and turned to head in when I noticed one of the girls ripping her shirt off and had a swim suit underneath. She flew down the stairs ahead of me and started wading through the water as fast as she could go. I had no idea what she was doing.

She stops about 20 feet ahead of me and reaches down into the water and pulls up a limp girl, face down from under the water. I thought that she had found a dead body, then I realized that it was the girl that she was walking with. She lifted her head out of the water and held her by her under arms face down for a few seconds and then gently turned her over and held her face out of the water. Just then another guy races down the stairs and wades over to help and is joined by two other guys a few seconds later. The rescuing girl says that she is breathing and talking and leaves her with the other three guys while she retrieves something from the water and tells the drowning girl that she found it. Then I hear them say that she can't move. Another girl from the pier is yelling to put her in a C-spine position and not to let her bend. Now all four of them are holding her from head to toe keeping her straight. They really struggled because of all the big waves coming in. They held her facing the beach so the waves weren't broad siding her. The guy holding her head was between her and the waves. Other people on the pier were running around and showed up with a paddleboard and lowered it down to the water. They get her on it and slowly started

moving her to the beach. The paramedics were already there waiting for them to bring her in. Now they take over and a few minutes later they rush her off to Barton. I was amazed at how all of these people responded so quickly and knowing just what to do.

I talked to the rescuing girl afterwards to see how the girl was and she said that she could raise both hands over her head when the paramedics asked her to but they fell down right away. She also had a grip in both hands, but very weak. They thought that she might be slowly recovering already. I pray that she will recover fully. She told me that the wind blew \$30 out of the girls hand and she dove in head first to retrieve it. The water was maybe 3 1/2 feet deep and very muddy. She said that she is a professional lifeguard and went after her right away. She said that one of the rescuing guys was an EMT. I told her that she just saved her life and that the response and professionalism were excellent. I said that I'm glad that they knew how to handle the situation because I know very little about medical emergencies. I did stay close, but out of their way, in case there was something they could use me for. I told her again, " You just saved that girls life." She thanked me for that and went on her way.

So that was my anniversary day paddle.

Mitch Forster, Meyers