

LTCC names library after founder, trustee

By Diane Lewis

It took the considerable effort of a number of community members, educators and parents to bring Lake Tahoe Community College to life back in 1974. But from the college's very beginnings to its present-day campus on Al Tahoe, no single person has contributed more to the creation, success and growth of LTCC as longtime board of trustee member Roberta Mason.

To honor her five decades of hard work on behalf of the college and its students, the board of trustees voted in favor of renaming the LTCC library in her honor. It will now be called the Roberta L. Mason Library.

"There is no one single individual that deserves more recognition for the formation of Lake Tahoe Community College," LTCC President Kindred Murillo said. "Roberta is truly the mother of LTCC, and naming the library for her is just a small token of the deep appreciation the faculty, staff, students, and community have for her for her years of dedication. Roberta is the most amazing woman I have ever had the honor of working with."



Lake Tahoe Community College's library is being named after Roberta Mason.
Photo/Provided

Mason was one of a small group of citizens who began laying the groundwork for a college in South Lake Tahoe back in 1964. That's when the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board first appointed a citizens study committee to explore the feasibility of operating a junior college. Friends with an interest in having a college in town reached out to the levelheaded and hard working Mason, who became the committee's chairwoman.

She and El Dorado County Assistant Superintendent of Schools Hazel Hoak were primarily responsible for getting a community college off the ground – a feat that was finally accomplished on March 5, 1974, when voters approved the formation of the Lake Tahoe Community College District by a 66 percent vote.

"You could rename the college Roberta Mason University, and that would be perfectly appropriate," Hoak says. "She absolutely deserves all the recognition and praise in the world for making Lake Tahoe Community College happen."

On the same day the new college district was born, voters also selected a four-member board of trustees to supervise the new college district: Mason, Will Cluff, Donald Swanson, and Fritz

Wenck. Mason has served as a trustee ever since, right alongside Wenck.

Staff and faculty at LTCC are quick to point out just how involved and supportive Mason has been over the years. If there is a lecture or concert or art exhibit opening or a theatrical presentation happening on LTCC's campus, then Mason is pretty much guaranteed to be in attendance.

Library Director Lisa Foley says, "Roberta has honored this library with her presence quite frequently for years, to sit by the fireplace and catch up on news in the Sacramento Bee, or to attend our local author and writers' series events. You've got to admit, the Roberta Mason Library has a catchy ring to it."

Mason was born and raised in Sacramento. She earned an associate of arts degree from Sacramento Junior College, and a bachelor's in science in chemistry from UC Berkeley. She worked for Dow Chemical in Pittsburg for about five years after graduating, then met her husband, married, and started a family.

They moved to South Lake Tahoe in 1957 when her husband's architectural work brought him to the area to prepare for the upcoming Squaw Olympics in 1960.

She has served on a multitude of education-related committees and councils, worked at the El Dorado County Library for a few years, and is also a member of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe and the American Association of University Women.

Mason has two sons who live in town, one teaches at South Tahoe High School. One of Mason's granddaughters just started teaching kindergarten at Bijou Community School.

"I am deeply honored to have the college's library named after me," Mason said. "It means a great deal to me, especially

because the library is not just for our students, but for our entire community. Anyone can come in and get a library card and enjoy what the library has to offer. It's really gratifying to be associated with that."

After 40 years of service as a board of trustee member, Mason will officially retire at the board's last meeting of the year on Dec. 9.

Diane Lewis is LTCC's marketing and communications officer.