

# Sierra House to be growing veggies this fall



Excavation work begins at Sierra House Elementary where two growing domes will be erected. Photo/Rebecca Bryson

**By Kathryn Reed**

Grading began this weekend at Sierra House Elementary School on what will be two growing domes by the end of November.

A cadre of parents determined to make this a reality has never wavered in their desire to bring this to fruition. With the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency signing off on the necessary permits, all that is left is final approval from the state architect's office. Steve Morales, facilities manager for Lake Tahoe Unified School District, said this could come any day.

Holes for the two 18-foot diameter domes will be dug this week, with the foundation then going in. The foundation will be built higher than what is normal for a structure because inside will be dirt. This will allow for some insulation.

Between the domes will be a 25-foot by 25-foot outdoor

learning area.

The domes are likely to go up in mid-November.

“Erection of the two domes will take place in probably less than eight days. They are a kit. The dome company sends erection crews out with supervisors,” Morales told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Then it will be up to the parents to outfit the interiors how they want.

Rebecca Bryson, a parent who has been instrumental in making the dome a reality, said parents will likely spend Thanksgiving week getting the interior of the domes situated how they like. Volunteers will do the teaching, including master gardeners.

To start with Bryson expects lettuce, kale and other winter crops to be grown.

The parents have raised nearly \$118,000 for the project. The district has incurred expenses mostly just in terms of personnel.



Ravinder Saini gives pomegranate seeds to

her daughter, Arya.

Photo/Provided

Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe was the single biggest donor at \$25,000. The remainder of that cash will be given to the parents group on Wednesday at the service club's weekly meeting.

The dome in Truckee requires about a \$500 operation and maintenance fund each year. The South Shore parents are using that figure as a barometer for what it will need to put aside for O&M costs; with the realization annual fundraisers may be necessary to keep the domes operational.

Nutrition, healthy eating and teaching students where food comes from before it reaches the grocery store are all components of the growing dome. It's also a chance for kids to play in the dirt, see veggies grow from seed into something edible, and to learn about other aspects of gardening. They will also get to eat what they grow.

"We will be able to supplement school lunches," Bryson told *Lake Tahoe News*. "McDuff's was one of the early sponsors. They would like to make pizzas with kids using ingredients from the dome."

Some lessons are already being taught. This fall students throughout the district were introduced to pomegranates through a joint project with Barton Health, UC Cooperative Extension and Raley's.

Bryson said it's possible art students from Lake Tahoe Community College will create a Let it Grow mural at the elementary site by the domes.