

Artistic talent not a criteria at Paint and Sip



Theodore Scott and Morgan Garrity brought 10 friends together for a birthday celebration at Paint and Sip this month. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Painting within the lines is not required. Colors – it's OK to be bold and original. Having fun – that's the ultimate goal.

"My favorite part is there is so much creativity," Shalynn Swails tells *Lake Tahoe News*.

She gives the same direction to everyone, but no two paintings are alike.

On this particular night a private party has taken over Lake Tahoe Paint and Sip Studio at the Ski Run Marina in South Lake Tahoe.

These types of businesses have been around for several years, but are now becoming the rage. The South Shore entity opened in August.



Matt Kauffmann says drawing the straight line for the horizon on the Emerald Bay painting is the hardest part for people.

“We have visited here many times over the years. Every time we left we said ‘what can we do to live here?’,” Frank Slipher said. “We have a friend who opened a studio in a small town in New York about the size of South Lake Tahoe. We visited, got the fever and thought this is where we are going to try.”

He and his wife, Jill, are making it work. So far it’s a split between locals and tourists picking up a brush, but he foresees this being mostly a locals’ hangout. Slipher said people get addicted to it.

Walking in, blank 16-inch-by-20-inch canvases sit on easels. Multiple paintbrushes and a water glass are to the side. Aprons are on the stools.

With the first glass of beer or wine being included in the price, it helps ease tensions of budding artists.

“Usually after the second glass of wine folks don’t care and it becomes less intimidating,” Slipher said.



Shalynn Swails gets paint ready for people.

This isn't an art class. It's not a competition. No one is being graded. And even those who have problems drawing stick figures are encouraged to come paint.

"We say our business is about fun art, not fine art," Slipher told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The artists have a finished painting to show the rookies what the end product should look like. Then there is a blank canvas. Step-by-step the artist shows the clients what to do, how different size brushes are important, that if the brush is wet, the paint will run, and how sometimes it's OK to mix colors.

"We encourage people to come experiment with different colors and techniques – to not paint within the lines, so to speak," Matt Kauffmann told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Kauffmann is one of the three artists who works at Paint and Sip.

While scenes of Lake Tahoe are popular, Van Gogh's *Starry Night* is another favorite. Sip and Paint has a calendar on its website listing what the upcoming painting will be. For private parties, they may request something in particular or submit their own.

Theodore Scott Jr. wanted a Day of the Dead skull for his 34 birthday last week. He and 11 others from South Lake Tahoe sketched out what they were going to draw and then Swails, one of the artists, led them through ways to paint their creations.

Ashley Ratonì had done some research before arriving Dec. 17. She wanted a rose on top of her skull, so she copied a rendering on her phone to the canvas.

For Lizzy Kirkpatrick she started off by creating a multicolored background before outlining the skull.



Individuality is encouraged.

Scott's girlfriend, Morgan Garrity, was introduced to Paint and Sip at a fundraiser this fall at Hard Rock Café. Then she and two friends did a session at the studio. She said Scott was a bit jealous of all the fun she was having, so that's how the birthday bash came about.

"I like getting together with friends and doing something different," Garrity told *Lake Tahoe News* of why she is a repeat Paint and Sipper.

Emerald Bay was the subject her first time, an owl the second.

Garrity isn't sure what she is going to do with her artwork, but they may turn into gifts.

A quiet fills the room as the painters work on their creations. Swails gives advice. Some ask for individual help. Others order another round.

It's an interactive party. Each session lasts between 2 and 2½ hours. It depends on the speed of the participants and difficulty of the painting.

Sip and Paint last month took over an adjoining suite in the center.

"The main reason we expanded to the second studio is we wanted to have the capability to accommodate children," Slipher said. "We couldn't do it with the liquor license so we are in the process of building a secluded area just for kids."

Sessions are at 7pm Tuesday-Saturday, and at 2pm Saturday-Sunday, or by appointment. Drop-ins are OK if space allows. One Monday a month Sip and Paint opens the doors to nonprofits as a fundraiser. The nonprofit sells the tickets and Sip and Paint donates half back to the group.

More info is online.