

# Tahoe first responders heat up Rotary event



Tahoe Douglas firefighters were out in force March 13 supporting their colleague; from left are, Nathan Johnson, Chris Lucas, Bill Romanowitz, Ben Pratt, Nick Robidart, Juan Serrano, Scott Vandover and Chad Baker.

Photos/Denise Haerr

**By Kathryn Reed**

STATELINE – Service above self is the philosophy of Rotarians worldwide. Tahoe Douglas Rotary took that mantra a step further on March 13 by honoring those who embody that philosophy on a daily basis.

This was the first year the South Shore Rotary club honored first responders during the annual St. Patrick's Day fundraiser in what was called the Community Hero Awards.

"We wanted to add more meaning to the night," Rotarian Erik Watada told *Lake Tahoe News*. "A lot of people are familiar with Rotary, but are not sure what they do. We wanted to draw

a better connection to what we do.”

In doing so, the club was able to sell out the event at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe for the first time in its 47-year history.

Leaders within the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Douglas County Sheriff’s Department, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, Lake Valley Fire Protection District, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, and El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department selected one person from their department to honor. Videos of each of the recipients and their bosses were shown to the crowd during the dinner. The only disappointing aspect of the night was the disrespect shown by some attendees who talked during the entire presentation. Each honoree had \$1,000 donated to a charity.



Rotarian Todd Poth, from left, with honoree Sgt. Greg Almos and El Dorado County Sheriff John D’Agostini.

**The outstanding honorees are:**

- “Capt. Ralph Jones was selected because he has proven to be a highly professional, dedicated, and devoted firefighter and bomb technician. Throughout his career he has focused on serving the residents and visitors of our community.” – Tahoe Douglas Fire Chief Ben Sharit.

Charity recipient: Northern Nevada Children’s Cancer

Foundation.

- “Our community is safer thanks to the hard work and leadership of Sgt. Ron Elges.” – Douglas County Sheriff Ron Pierini.

Charity: Douglas County Sheriff’s Advisory.

- “Al (Martinez) was selected by his peers based upon his outstanding efforts with public education. He is a caring employee who wants to educate the public in all facets of fire and life safety.” – South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston.

Charity: H.E.R.O. Scholarship.

- “Michael (Anderson) exemplifies the fire district’s mission, vision and values in his performance as a firefighter/paramedic. He is well known for his positive, can-do attitude.” – Lake Valley Fire Chief Gareth Harris.

Charity: Live Violence Free.

- “Officer Ross Molesworth’s commitment to this community as a police officer, volunteer, and kids’ coach is commendable. He has demonstrated the ability to take actions that are beneficial to all in our community.” – South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler.

Charities: South Tahoe National Little League and South Lake Tahoe SWAT.

- “Deputy Greg Almos demonstrates a sincere commitment to serving the residents of our community. He devotes great attention to how to make the South Lake Tahoe Basin safer and more enjoyable.” – El Dorado County Sheriff John D’Agostini.

Charity: El Dorado Search and Rescue Council.

Besides adding the first responder honoree component to the night, the Rotary club also became the first nonprofit on the

South Shore to have its silent auction be paperless. To participate people had to use their smart phone or a computer to bid on items. This allowed people who didn't attend to bid on items and for bids to be made before the event.

It also meant not having to hover over a table and elbowing one's competitor to get to the sheet. When someone was outbid on an item that person received a text and could then enter a higher bid.

Before the festivities began the Rotary club had more than \$30,000 pledged in the silent auction.

This format also sped up the process for checking out at the end of the evening.

The total proceeds are still being calculated. Money raised is then returned to the community through various projects and scholarships.

Watada also said rotary is looking at possibly expanding first responder recipients in future years.