

Work force issues worry South Shore chamber



B Gorman, CEO of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, outlines the goals on Feb. 25. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Refining their mission to better be able to adapt to the changing work force, while fostering economic vitality are goals of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce.

At the annual membership breakfast on Feb. 25, CEO B Gorman outlined for the nearly 50 people gathered at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel what has happened in the last year at the South Shore chamber as well what is planned going forward.

Gorman touched on how baby boomers were joiners – from high school, to college and as professionals. Millennials aren't the same. To get them involved in the business community is going to require a new way of looking at things.

Communication and technology need to be constantly re-evaluated, especially when it comes to businesses reaching customers. More targeted messages instead of a single delivery is what's needed, Gorman said.

Demographic changes will necessitate the need for "strategies of inclusion."

A major difference with younger generations, Gorman said, is they are choosing the place to live and the job is second.

But she also noted a number of local employers have jobs that go unfilled for months. It's about not having a work force with the necessary skills, according to Gorman.

What wasn't addressed was whether the vacancies pay a high enough wage to live in the basin.

In mid-March the chamber is doing a two-day business walk where merchants will be asked a series of open-ended questions to gauge what they would like from employees. The goal is to project out 10 years what businesses will need.

That data will be given to the Tahoe Prosperity Center to incorporate into a study it is doing. Lake Tahoe Community College is part of the project. At the end of the day the college wants to be providing the education component so the future work force has the skills employers are seeking.

The hope is the data will be coalesced by early fall.

All of this ties into the chamber having re-established its goals into four main areas:

- Advance leadership: Attract and retain effective business and community leaders. Leadership Lake Tahoe will be a key component of this.

- Governance: Drive policy and governance to create an environment where Tahoe businesses thrive.

- Economic vitality: Provide opportunities for sustainable and enhanced experiences for residents and visitors.

- Community: Foster a prosperous community as a highly desirable place to live, work and play.

—

Other items to note:

- Sample the Sierra is moving to Sept. 17. A second restaurant week will be tied into the farm to fork event.

- The annual tourism conference is April 26.

- When asked what the chamber's view is on taking the loop road to a vote, Gorman said, "I highly doubt we'll see it on the ballot. I don't think it will be necessary for the chamber to take a position."

- The chamber has more than 650 members; 81 are new in the last year; there is a retention rate of 88.6 percent.

- A nationwide search is under way to replace Gorman. She will be leaving mid-year to start her own business.