

Collaborative effort under way to produce higher quality work force in Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Some Lake Tahoe employers aren't satisfied with the applicant pool, which is why a group of people has come together to address that problem.

The Lake Tahoe Adult Education Consortium was initiated by Lake Tahoe Community College and Lake Tahoe Unified School District a couple years ago, and has morphed into a broader working group of more than two dozen organizations with a mission to create the resources to build a work force that will cater to the needs of local employers.

One of the subcommittees is Hospitality, Tourism, Recreation and Retail – HTRR. Those are the four main employment areas on the South Shore.

“They are looking at what the training needs are of this industry sector and then will work to determine what combination of resources can best address those needs,” B Gorman, CEO of Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The concept is to leverage and refine existing resources to meet needs that are purportedly not currently being met.”

Lake Tahoe Community College has hired a director of adult education to coordinate the specialized curriculum. Classes won't be the normal quarter-long classes. Many may not involve credits. Some could be taught at the workplace.

“We will do some work force English, a lot with customer service, soft skills like timeliness, work ethic,

communication, team work, can they write a coherent sentence, can they speak well. Then we will do technical training,” Virginia Berry, LTCC dean of Career Tech Education, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We hear from employers they will teach technical skills, but they need someone to show up on a powder day.”

Classes will be aimed at showing people the relationship between those soft skills and being able to move up the ladder. Berry called it “wage progression.” The training isn’t just intended to get the first job, but to give them the skills that could get the person promoted.

Michael Ward with HighBar Global Consulting has been facilitating the meetings with the larger group. He shared with members that in 2015 the hourly wages needed in South Lake Tahoe to sustain an individual or family are:

- 1 adult: \$9.95
- 1 adult, 1 child: \$20.73
- 1 adult, 2 kids: \$24.34
- 1 adult, 3 kids: \$30.98
- 2 adults: \$15.10
- 2 adults, 1 kid: \$18.81
- 2 adults, 2 kids: \$20.17
- 2 adults, 3 kids: \$24.99.

The goal is to have classes launched no later than this fall.

Managers will have a set of classes, too.

“I believe this will do more for the South Lake Tahoe area than anything the college has done in a long time – getting adult education up and running to train the adult work force,” LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. “To me,

it's a game changer for South Lake Tahoe."

The consortium initially was awarded a grant from the state to start the planning process. Another grant – \$750,000 for each of the next three years – was secured from the state to implement the program. Alpine County received \$75,000, which is being wrapped into the larger grant and is allowing those residents to participate.

Seventy-one groups in the state were awarded the funding that is to be spent on high school diplomas, English learners, basic skills, adult workforce needs, career technical education, pre-apprenticeship, or adults with disabilities.

"Lake Tahoe Community College is building adult education programs to support community and workforce development through education. Certificates and degrees designed for fast-tracked career advancement and job readiness are being developed in collaboration with local hospitality, tourism, recreation and retail employers as well as community service organizations," Berry said. "These grant funded programs will offer free and low-cost courses to address the needs of a diverse population of adult learners with LTCC as the hub of programs being offered on campus and at offsite locations with regional partners."

While there are various adult ed classes throughout the community, the college will now serve as the hub. This is intended to better get people to where they need to go and to develop the classes that are lacking. Non-credit classes mean undocumented residents will be able to take them.

The Restaurant Industry Group has been brought in to look at the college's culinary arts program to see what can be changed so those obtaining their certificate have the skills to start work. There has been criticism too many culinary classes are geared toward the home cook and not the potential kitchen worker.

At South Tahoe High School the Get Focused, Stay Focused initiative was launched this school year. This is to get freshman to start thinking about a 10-year plan for their lives and how to get there. It has been met with a lukewarm response from parents and students.

Still, the goal is get people better prepared at an earlier age.

“Here on the South Shore when we did our member survey last autumn 27.5 percent of respondents stated that workforce was their No. 1 concern at their business. That said, I rarely speak to a business where this isn’t a part of the dialogue,” Gorman said.

Business walks on the South Shore occurred Tuesday and Wednesday, with the North Shore ones taking place next month. People are being asked what they need to be successful for the next decade.

That information will be used by this group, as well as incorporated into a larger action plan that the Tahoe Prosperity Center expects to release in the fall.