

# STHS teacher elected to state union board

By Kathryn Reed

The classroom will never be far from Mike Patterson no matter the physical distance. That is because as a member of the California Teachers Association board he intends to put students at the forefront.

Patterson, who started teaching auto shop at South Tahoe High School in 1988, begins a three-year tenure on the CTA board June 26.



Mike Patterson

“I’m going to be the first career tech education teacher on the CTA board in a very long time,” Patterson told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I’m a firm believer that for the last 20 years in the state of California we have been dismantling the career tech programs. It is a huge disservice to the students of California, and the economy and the businesses in California because we are not training students for good paying careers.”

He had high praise for STHS, where so much emphasis is placed on CTE. But this is an anomaly.

Patterson intends to work with the governor and lawmakers to make career tech ed a priority throughout the state.

It was on Sunday that Patterson found out the state board

position was his. That was the last day people could apply for the position. He was the only one to do so, which is not uncommon.

CTA has 17 districts, with Patterson's including at least part of 23 of the 58 California counties going from Tuolumne to the Oregon border, all east of the coast. Each district has about 14,000 members.

Technically he will remain an employee of Lake Tahoe Unified School District. CTA reimburses the district the cost of his salary and benefits. This could be for nine years if he were to be elected to two more terms, which would be the maximum allowed. He is the first LTUSD employee to be on the state CTA board.

Patterson's route to this statewide position has been an evolution, having started in 1991 when he was elected vice president of the local teachers union. That same year he became president of the chapter.

"I've always been a strong believer that school districts are better when there are strong advocates looking out for teachers, students and the community. That was the driving force for getting involved in 1991," Patterson said. "I've always been interested in our political process. In the early '90s I started a political action committee for our association to elect school board members over the years."

What got him involved at the higher level about 17 years ago was frustration with the state council. There is one elected state council rep for about every 450 teachers. The representative for South Tahoe Educators Association got reassigned and staff at the state level weren't responsive enough. That led Patterson to getting on the council.

"About 700 of us get together and we argue and debate and vote and decide what policy CTA as a statewide organization wants to have," Patterson said.

He served for nine years, went off a term and is now completing another six years on the council.

Seven years ago he was elected to CTA's statewide political action committee, and has been the president the last four years.

The new job will involve even more travel. While there will be days Patterson will be able to work from his home in Meyers, much of his will be on the road. District offices are in Sacramento, Chico, Redding and Yuba City. CTA headquarters are in Burlingame.

"I will be out working with local chapters that need help. They could need help because they are having disagreements with the school board, or superintendent or not able to get a bargaining agreement, or it could be an internal issue where members aren't seeing eye-to-eye," Patterson said. "I don't think there will be an average day."