

Cocktail contest brings awareness to cancer

By Kathryn Reed

If only it were as easy to concoct a cure for cancer, as it is to mix a cocktail to raise funds for the expansion of Barton Health's **cancer wellness program**.

The cancer program is free for people living in the South Shore area; funding comes from donations. The goal is to expand services to include things like massage, exercise, psychotherapy, and nutrition classes. The idea is to recognize the various needs a patient has during his or her cancer journey.

Cocktails for a Cause is Barton Foundation's annual fundraiser; each year – this being the seventh – there is a different beneficiary.

Bartenders from seven South Shore establishments on Sept. 21 came up with a libation featuring Tahoe Blue Vodka. A different spin this year was tying the drink to cancer. Many of the bartenders have a personal connection to the cancer they chose to represent.

A panel of five judges did a blind tasting. They were critiquing originality, use of Tahoe Blue Vodka, taste, presentation and how well the bartender tied it to their cause. Judges were this reporter, Meghan Burke, Mike Peron, Howie Nave and Troy Matthews.



LewMarNels is the 2016 winner of Barton's Cocktail for a Cause contest. Photo/Molly Coolidge

Taking top honors was LewMarNels with Krista's Cure. The South Lake Tahoe restaurant embraced brain cancer in honor of local Krista Carson who is battling the disease. Bartenders for the night were Gary Gramprrie and James Olson.

The drink was not the most attractive, but that's what happens when it is grey to go with the theme. For judges Peron and Nave this drink topped their list. The banana in the drink made it like a smoothie with vodka, they said.

The blue ribbon made out of a cucumber as garnish on the English cucumber cocktail from Azul Latin Kitchen made it stand out with the theme and presentation. Bartender Hannah Fridholm came in second with her creation that was representing colon cancer awareness.

Third place honors went to Whitney Gielow from the Chart House who came up with a drink honoring melanoma. Some judges thought it tasted a bit like mulled wine. It was one of the

least sweet drinks, almost with a dry finish.

The winning cocktail will be featured at the Barton Foundation's gala in December, which is now tied to the Festival of Trees and Lights.

The most congenial bartender of the night award went to Jacob Craig from Cold Water Brewery. This honor was based on his \$313 in tips – the most of all the bartenders. Brewmaster Ryan Parker was at the event. Their cause was esophageal cancer in honor of Parker's wife, Rose, who was diagnosed with this cancer six weeks ago.

Other bars participating were Heavenly, Riva and Boathouse.