

Women's fund embracing the power of one



**TAHOE WOMEN'S
COMMUNITY FUND**

Giving Together for our Community

Annual membership in the Tahoe Women's Community Fund starts at \$100. For for info, call 530.622.5621 or go online.

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – One person cannot do as much good as a group of like-minded individuals, but one person can make a difference.

The power of one. That was the theme of the Tahoe Women's Community Fund gala last week at Harveys.

"We talk about the word collective. Our collective power is why we are here," Wendy David told the 170 people in the room. While it was mostly women at the dinner, a few men were in attendance.

David along with Kathy Haven are the co-chairs of the South Shore-based group that was founded in 2015. Their concept is "giving together for our community." It's not a traditional service club. The group raises money, gives it out and has an annual dinner. Email is how they get things done.

Three membership levels are possible, with part of the money going to an endowment.

The areas of need the 200 members identified include:

- Children and youth
- Poverty and housing
- Education and literacy
- Mental health and wellness
- Women's issues
- Environment and community
- No focus.

The plan is to give out grants each year; \$22,000 was given in 2016.



As principal of South Tahoe High School, Ivone Larson oversaw a transformation of the school into a state-of-the-art institution. Photo/LTN file

Educator Ivone Larson, who has lived in South Lake Tahoe since 1980, was the keynote speaker Oct. 12. She came to the United States just before her 7th birthday, not knowing a word of English. It became her fourth language. The family had to leave Brazil for political reasons.

In her classroom in Hollywood she was put in the back of the room facing the wall because she didn't speak the language. She would go home and cry. She began to hate everyone and everything.

She figured it out and by 16 was a full-time student at UCLA. Then she transferred to UC Irvine, where the class sizes were smaller and more to her liking. Her areas of study were criminal justice and mental health.

Larson, like so many others, came to Tahoe thinking it was a visit and ended up making it her home.

She worked for the El Dorado County Probation Department, went back to school, and then started teaching. She rose through Lake Tahoe Unified School District to where she eventually retired as the assistant superintendent a couple years ago.

How did she achieve all of her successes? "One person believed in me," she said. "At each and every turn there was someone to motivate me. The power of one person helped guide my life's trajectory."

It hasn't always been easy. Acceptance to change helped, as well as a willingness to learn and to try again. It meant figuring out how to blend work and home. And to this day Larson continues to grow and adapt. She said it's about making small changes – progress, not perfection.

"How will you use your power of one to make a difference today and every day?" Larson asked as she concluded her talk to a standing ovation.