

Attic volunteers to be replaced with paid staff

By Kathryn Reed

Devastated. That is how some volunteers with Barton Auxiliary feel after being told they can no longer donate their time at the Attic Thrift Shop or Barton Memorial Hospital's gift shop.

The new rule takes effect Jan. 1.

Auxiliary members learned at their Nov. 21 meeting that paid staff would be taking over their volunteer positions at the thrift and gift stores. They can apply for those jobs. But these people weren't looking for a paid job and the constraints that come with it. They want to give back to the community. Many are older, retirees.

Barton Health CEO Clint Purvance delivered the news in person.

According to the synopsis in the group's monthly newsletter that came out this week, the reason for the change is "due to state and federal laws that prohibit volunteers from working in a commercial retail environment."

During the 10-months the health conglomerate was without a human resources director consultants were brought in to look at various aspects of the organization.

"It was discovered we may be viewed as not in compliance," Purvance told *Lake Tahoe News*. This is in regards to the use of volunteers.



For the first time since the Attic opened in 1961, paid employees will operate it starting in 2017. Photo/LTN

Sandy Killian, Barton auxiliary president, initially deferred comment to Barton's human resources director. Then Barton PR sent out a statement in her name that said, "Yes, we are a bit sad, but are committed to making a positive impact on Barton's patients, families, and visitors."

However, with other auxiliary members she is not being as conciliatory.

One member told *Lake Tahoe News*, "It's sad that this has happened. Volunteers have been and still are the heart of Barton."

The auxiliary primarily makes its money through the thrift shop. The group also has an annual holiday fair each November, operates the hospital gift shop and sells the popular seasonal cheeseballs.

Most of the money is earmarked for a special project at the hospital that the group agrees to. The auxiliary has given more than \$6 million to the hospital.

Each year scholarships are also doled out. This year \$19,500 went to 14 students in the Lake Tahoe and Carson Valley areas.

The South Lake Tahoe thrift store opened in 1961. Through the years it has raised millions of dollars. In the early days the auxiliary was responsible for paying the doctors at Barton Memorial Hospital.

In 2010, the auxiliary turned 50. There were 89 volunteers that year who "gave" 29,393 hours to the hospital. This saved the health care system \$600,000.

"The net revenue generated from both locations will continue to fund the auxiliary's student scholarships and an annual project, such as acquiring a 3-D Breast Tomosynthesis mammography machine, to benefit the health and wellbeing of our community," Mindi Befu, spokeswoman for Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The auxiliary members will be absorbed into other volunteer jobs if they so desire.

Other jobs involving auxiliary members include: 14 members work at the hospital's front desk and guide patients and their families throughout the hospital; approximately 10 volunteer at the Skilled Nursing Facility as field trip and activity assistants; on-going programs include blood drives, wellness lab draws, the comfort cart, and liaisons for physician offices; special events include the Festival of Trees & Lights, Holiday Faire, Cocktails for a Cause, Mom's Morning Out, Tiki Golf Tournament, and sports physicals at the high schools.

"We truly consider each member important and will continue to find new and exciting ways they can be more involved in improving the health and wellbeing of our community," Befu said. "In no way is this a reflection on the efforts of the volunteers as they have done an outstanding job."

One way the public may benefit from the change is that it is well known volunteers take first crack at all donations, so there might be better items on the Attic's floor to buy now that auxiliary members won't have first dibs.