

Second act for LTCC theater up to board

By Kathryn Reed

The drama surrounding the future of Lake Tahoe Community College's theater department is like an improv production where the ending is anyone's guess.

Another scene was staged with week at the board meeting with the task force presenting its recommendations. However, two-fifths of the board was gone – members Kerry David and Jeff Cowen were absent.

Ultimately, it will be up to the five electeds to write the final act.

In October, it came to light that the administration was going down the road of eliminating the department because of lack of enrollment and finances. **A month later** the public came out to say not so fast and expressed how important the theater is to the community.

From there a community task force was formed with two goals – delve into the for-credit program and look into how best to serve the community outside the college.

On June 27, Michael Ward, who facilitated the six two-hour meetings of the task force, along with members of the committee talked about their recommendations. It was a rather full house for an LTCC board meeting, mostly with theater supporters filling the seats.

In the wake of this turmoil the nonprofit Tahoe Arts Alliance has formed. It could be a production partner with the college.

For credit suggestions:

- Retain the program for two years to work on increasing enrollment.
- Merge theater with speech-communications.
- Develop dual enrollment program with South Tahoe High School.
- Create a summer theater program like the Spanish ISSI.
- Diversify offerings.
- Increase marketing.

Community partnership ideas:

- A four-partnership approach with separate entities for production, promotion, LTCC as facilities manager, and a future resident company.
- Establish a production calendar so other entities are using the theater.
- Work with South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County for marketing and financial support.
- Evolve into a repertory or conservatory model.

After the presentation, college President Jeff DeFranco told *Lake Tahoe News*, "For now we are narrowing the offerings and they will culminate with a spring production."

Talks are under way with Valhalla for that arts organization to put on a play at LTCC in the fall. There is also a TedX event planned for September.

"We need to make sure the theater doesn't sit empty for 11 months. We need to make this great asset available to the community," DeFranco said.