

# SLT warm room proving to be a good neighbor

By Kathryn Reed

All the angst about the warm room in South Lake Tahoe opening on Rufus Allen Boulevard was for naught.

The seasonal overnight shelter, now in its third year, is just another business in the neighborhood. Even though some **residents last month balked** at the idea of having “these people” be so close, the fears have not come to fruition.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District’s board received an update about the facility at its meeting last week. Bus stops and facilities are nearby. Plus, the local Boys & Girls Club chapter is at the old Al Tahoe school site, still owned by the district.

Jude Wood, who runs the after school program, told the board there have been no issues with warm room guests. In fact, she expressed how she would rather explain to her children and those she cares for that the person walking down the street is someone the community is trying to help, instead of seeing someone sleeping on the lawn at St. Theresa’s and telling the child the community had turned its back on that person.

This year the warm room is operating in a building owned by the city of South Lake Tahoe that most recently housed Unity at the Lake church.

The district has been part of the solution by putting in better security at the Al Tahoe building so warm room clientele can’t just wonder in.

Rachel Yaker and Annie Davidson with Tahoe Homeless Coalition made a formal presentation to the board, outlining the

proactive measures undertaken to make sure everyone feels secure. In large part it has to do with the hours – when people can arrive and leave. Security has been hired as well.

This week Tahoe Homeless Coalition volunteers will be training employees at the recreation center and ice rink about how to handle this clientele.

These people were already in the area. The library is a common place for people to hang out during the day if they don't have a home to go to.

The fact that Bread & Broth has been in operation for 29 years down at the street at the Catholic Church without a problem for the neighborhood says a lot. It's not unusual for those diners to queue up an hour before the doors open.

The fact that no one spoke against the warm room at the Jan. 16 meeting, or simply brought up a concern speaks volumes for how well the facility has addressed the apprehension of the naysayers from just a month ago.

While the warm room advocates would like to find a permanent facility, funds have not allowed that happen. Plus, it's a seasonal operation, so that can be an issue with securing the same rental year-in and year-out.