

Edgewood drives Soroptimist out of golf tourney

By Kathryn Reed

Edgewood Companies this week proved it has abandoned its roots as a family cattle company that grew into an integral component of the South Shore community and is now just another corporate entity that looks more at the bottom line than the front line.

The company officially severed a 28-year relationship with Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe because it wants a bigger share of the food and beverage take at the American Century Championship golf tournament.

SISLT has been affiliated with the celebrity golf tournament since the inaugural event in 1990. In that time the nonprofit service club went from operating one food tent to four. In 2017, the organization put in more than 2,500 volunteer hours at the golf tournament.

The time and hours involved keeps growing because the tournament is growing. With a record crowd of nearly 50,000, it means that there are that many more people who want to eat and drink.

Back when the tournament started Edgewood Companies was known as Park Cattle Co. **In 2013**, the Park family split its assets. Those who retained the rights to Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course brought in professional managers and the family presence was lost.

There was another management shakeup late last year with the departure of longtime General Manager Bobby King and Patrick Rhamey, who oversaw the real estate sector. Corinna Osborne, who had been director of hotel operations for Edgewood, is now

the general manager.

She is who has been corresponding with Soroptimist representatives. She did not return *Lake Tahoe News*' phone calls.

Osborne asked club members to meet with her and John McLaughlin, Edgewood Tahoe president/CEO, in early February.

"We got the feeling at the meeting they had no idea what we do," SISLT President Pam Barrett told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The new management doesn't seem to respect our efforts of the past to continue the relationship."

That was the lone in-person meeting. Discussions have been by email since then.

The prior general manager at Edgewood had a hands off approach with Soroptimist. According to Barrett, the club had no problem with the relationship. They met with Edgewood folks before the tournament, knew the hours to staff the food booths, turned in the money each night to Edgewood, and returned the next day – the next year.

Edgewood supplied the food. It started with hot dogs, and last year included salads, sandwiches and burritos, wine, beer and non-alcoholic drinks.

For their efforts, SISLT received a portion of the proceeds. Usually it was just less than half of the take. Last year the group received about \$50,000.

The club and Edgewood split the cost of the equipment. Every year SISLT has paid to store these items, which it only uses at the golf tournament.

Osborne wrote to SISLT members, "As far as supplies and equipment that you have purchased, stored, etc... Edgewood has no record of such a scenario."

Barrett said since then the club has been told it can keep the stuff.

Edgewood offered to pay the club the equivalent of \$10/hour for each person who worked this coming year. Club members would be doing so alongside Edgewood employees and possibly other nonprofit volunteers. (Nevada's minimum wage is \$8.25/hour, California's is \$11/hour.) This would amount to less than half of what the group made last year.

"That's a pretty measly offer," Barrett said. "They call what we get a donation. We don't think of it as a donation because we worked for it."

Lake Tahoe News was provided a statement through Weidinger Public Relations from Edgewood.

"Reflective of our long held tradition of community involvement, we are looking to benefit Tahoe-based organizations in an impactful and immediate way," CEO McLaughlin said. "In reviewing tournament food and beverage procedures the executive committee agreed the previous arrangement with Soroptimists [stet] required a more transparent process to guarantee funds are distributed annually and invested in a manner that benefits our community immediately. To that end, we're talking to other local organizations about their involvement. Soroptimists [stet] have done a wonderful job over the years, we sincerely appreciate their involvement and hope the monies raised through their efforts with the event have helped many."

Because there was no actual direct dialogue between *LTN* and Edgewood, clarifying questions could not be asked.

In response to McLaughlin's statement, Barrett said, "I don't exactly see how he can say the donations are not transparent. I think his problem is that he doesn't think Edgewood got enough credit in the media. He says the money was a donation from Edgewood. We say we worked for that money. The reason

there was not a lot of publicity is that Bobby King never asked us for any publicity.”

Barrett said Edgewood starting this year wanted to dictate how the club disbursed its money from the golf tournament. The group said no way.

Soroptimist groups worldwide are about enhancing the lives of women and children. That is reflected locally with how grants funds are allocated.

What Edgewood’s issue is with how SISLT used its money is unknown.

Going forward the company wants to involve more nonprofits, at least at the tournament.

Osborne said to SISLT, “The tents will not be designated to any organization. These will be designated as ‘Edgewood Charitable’ tents. This is currently in development. Once we have selected the charities, we will have appropriate signage and messaging representing the organizations.”

Edgewood as the host of the golf tournament has control over all the food and beverage operations.

It’s hard to know who Edgewood will partner with since it has cut ties with other groups.

The other South Shore Soroptimist group – Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra – had become a partner in its sister club’s service at the golf tournament.

In SITS’s weekly email sent March 15 the comment in respect to the Edgewood news was, “They seem to be putting profits over the people of this community.”

Edgewood has told Live Violence Free it cannot have its annual gala there this year. The Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club is also not welcome back to Edgewood for its fundraiser.