

STHS kids make a statement in nationwide march



South Tahoe High students express why they were marching March 14. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

We march because ...

- *Things need to change.*
- *Too many lives have been lost.*
- *I march for those who are afraid to.*
- *Mental health matters.*
- *We march because this is happening to us. We are the ones who have to go to school and be scared.*

That's what South Tahoe High Schools had to say about why they left their classrooms at 10am on March 14. They marched to the front of the school where three students and a teacher shared their thoughts about guns, safety, mental health and the need for adults to do more. Then everyone assembled in the gym where they could write why they were there, offer condolences to the family and friends of the Florida school shooting, register to vote, express how they want their campus to be safer, or meet with a counselor.

Student marches were happening through the country on Wednesday as a way to mark the one-month anniversary of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Fla. It was to show solidarity, a chance for students to say enough, to point fingers at the adults who are not protecting them, and say gun violence matters.

For 17 seconds the hundreds who gathered at STHS stood in silence to remember the 17 people who were gun downed in February.



STHS student Daniella Valdivia honors the 17 who died at a Florida school in February. Photo/Kathryn Reed

While some say this won't happen in Tahoe, that is being naïve. Bad things happen everywhere.

It was in Columbine, Colo., that the country first seemed to be truly awakened to gun violence at school. That was April 19, 1999, when 15 people were killed.

But years before Columbine there was the Cleveland Elementary School shooting in Stockton. On Jan. 17, 1989, Patrick Edward Purdy took three minutes to kill five children, wounding one teacher and 19 students. He had once lived in South Lake Tahoe. So, the South Shore already has a connection to a deadly school shooting.

"I'm not against guns; I'm against gun violence," Daniella Valdivia told her peers. She advocated for students to be

kinder, to talk to those who are “wall flowers.” She said saying hello can change the world in so many ways.

Student Cole Proctor said, “We have so little regard for mental health. Instead of trying to solve that problem, we want to box them in. We see them as killers instead of kids who have problems.”

He would like better mental health programs on camps.

For Tevan Martorana he believes this is his generation’s moment to make a difference. He is going to fight until every student feels safe at school.

“If we want to make change, we need to recognize the humanity in all of the other people around you,” teacher Barbara Bedwell said.



Hundreds of South Tahoe High students march in unison on March 14. Photo/Kathryn Reed

For senior Jessie Brown what she has noticed in the last month since the Florida massacre is teachers at STHS are talking more – about security, what can be done.

She carried a sign promoting building bridges, not fences. This was in reference to the school district’s proposal to put

a fence around STHS.

That, Brown said, would only isolate people more and create a sense of fear, not protection.

It wasn't just students who were at the march. Kelly Shanahan showed up with doughnuts for the kids and a sign that said, "Thank you students for leading the way. #Enough."

"We have failed them as adults. I'm here with them 100 percent," Shanahan said.