

Letter: Group effort to pull off Drug Store Project

To the community,

If you had walked onto the Lake Tahoe Community campus on April 3, you would have never guessed that there were 325 sixth-grade youth and 220 agency and volunteer workers throughout the corridors, all learning information on how and why to keep themselves safe from drugs.

“Choices, what are yours?” was the theme of our efforts in keeping our youth drug free. With the country’s attitudes and norms about drug use changing, times are even more difficult for our kids. Attitude changes in marijuana use is very confusing and many of us struggle to get our youth to understand the dangers that could lie ahead for them. Many of our kids have people they love who use various drugs at home. With that the propensity that they will use is of great concern.

The adolescent brain and body are developing, and this development doesn’t stop until into one’s 20s. I don’t think anyone out there doesn’t want their child to reach their full potential intellectually or emotionally, but it could happen for your child if they do choose to use. Experimentation with gateway drugs; alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana could lead to other drug use and even death. Several of us who believe in this event have first- hand experience with this.

With the conclusion of our 15th annual Drug Store Project want to thank the many agencies, service clubs, businesses, and volunteers who provided this program for our youth.

Teaching our youth about the dangers of all drugs; marijuana, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, over-the-counter as well as prescriptive medications, gets more challenging each year as

states provide new legislation and products are packaged to entice our minors. This year our 320 sixth-grade students had the assistance of over 200 volunteers to send a clear message that they are valued. The agencies and groups who provided this program strongly believe that a difference can be made for our kids. Collectively we believe that if youth are provided knowledge about the effects drugs have on the body, the mind, family and social life, productivity, and overall life experiences, many more will choose not to experiment and not to participate in drug use. If we can collectively put off the "age of onset" to experimentation, then we can see a difference for our youth. Less drug use means less demand. Less demand is less costly in lives and in all facets of the economy.

We're especially proud of the South Tahoe High School Friday Night Live members, themselves past participants in the program when younger, who took their day to emphasize to the younger youth that drugs do not need to be a part of their lives. They can "choose" to stay healthy and safe. We also continue to have the assistance of our California National Guard assigned to the Joint Task Force Domestic Support – Counter Drug and Naval Air Station-Fallon military personnel.

Tahoe Youth & Family Services is the agency under which our program is based. It takes money and people to make this event happen for our youth. The Drug Store Project continues to be supported completely through donations, grants, and in-kind donations from businesses.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to the following entities: Barton Health, California Conservation Corps, California Highway Patrol, CALSTAR, Cal Tahoe JPA, Camelot Party Rentals, Douglas County Search & Rescue, El Dorado Community Foundation, El Dorado County District Attorney, El Dorado County Mental Health, El Dorado County Probation Department, El Dorado County Public Defender, El Dorado County Search & Rescue – Tahoe Team, El Dorado Sheriff's Office, El Dorado

County Superior Court, Harrah's Foundation, Harrah's HEROS, Joint Task Force Domestic Support-CD, Kindred Hospice, Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe, Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Lake Valley Firefighter's Association, Lake Valley Fire Protection District,

Naval Air Station Fallon, Nevada Funeral Services, Pro Leisure, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe, Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra, South Lake Tahoe Police Officer's Association, South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition,

South Tahoe High School Friday Night Live, South Tahoe Middle School, Tahoe Optimist Club, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Tahoe-Douglas Rotary Club, Tahoe Turning Point, Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Zephyr Cove Elementary, and Community Volunteers.

We hope that children and their parents openly discuss the dangers of all drugs on a regular basis. Get educated together and know what is happening in your community. We invite every parent of a child who experienced the program to take the time to complete the **parent survey online**. Your input will help our program for future years.

Gratefully,

Lisa Huard, Drug Store Project coordinator