

“Education Matters”

The month of May blooms more than flowers from April’s showers, ideas of how to improve the quality of education in our community blossom within forums provided by Education Matters. A group of people who care about the future of education decided that every person holding an opinion needs the opportunity to share it with others.

Education Matters exists because of its sponsors: Excellence in Education, Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation, Lahontan Community Foundation, and the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District. Their mission is to gather information from the community that will make a positive difference in our schools.

My first experience with Education Matters happened on Monday, May 8, 2006. I walk through the halls of Alder Creek Middle School to find a group of smiling women. They ask me to sign-in, create a nametag, and find myself a seat. I feel a little nervous, not knowing what to expect. A familiar face asks me to join her table, so I sit and await the beginning of what becomes an amazing thought provoking experience.

Ten tables decorated with water bottles, fresh apples, candy, colored markers and paper make the cafetorium inviting and welcoming. Educators, parents, school district board members, our superintendent, community members, administrators, and even a few students find themselves in groups at each table. A power-point presentation prepares to begin while everyone settles in for an evening of discussing education.

As a large group of about sixty people, we learn:

- *outlines of where our district stands within both the state and nation.
- *basic facts about our district and local schools
- *community educational assets
- *about government funding
- *trends in population, determinants, standardized metrics, wellness, graduation and beyond

Before splitting off into smaller groups of approximately six people, we are asked a very important question that becomes the framework for the evening: “What are the most important elements of a quality education?”

My group contained the perfect balance: a teacher, an administrator, a few parents, a board member, and myself. As individuals, we brainstorm our answers to the question of the evening, and then collaborate within our small group.

Each smaller group shares their top five choices with the entire forum. Every single person in the room is given the opportunity to voice their opinion in addition to voting for the top five topics presented by each group.

Enthusiasm and passion filled the atmosphere of the room. I literally felt like I was booming during my drive home. The positive and powerful energy of the evening remains within me.

Go to a forum. Get involved. This is a real life opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others and our community. You do not have to be a parent, teacher, administrator, or student to attend. You just have to care about education

For more information on how to get involved, contact Laura Abby Brown (exed@ttcf.net) 530-550-7984 or Phebe Bell (phebe@ttcf.net) 530-587-1776.

Future forums:

Thursday, May 18, Kings Beach Elementary School (Spanish translation services offered) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 23, Donner Trail Elementary School, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 25, Truckee High School, including Sierra High and Coldstream Alternative, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

MONDAY JUNE 5, TOWN HALL MEETING, BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB IN KINGS BEACH, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Past forums:

Thursday, May 4, North Tahoe High School

Monday, May 8, Alder Creek Middle School

Tuesday, May 9, Glenshire Elementary School

Wednesday, May 10, Tahoe Lake Elementary School

Monday, May 15, Truckee Elementary School

Tuesday, May 16, North Tahoe Middle School

Wednesday, May 17, Forest Charter School