



**Mail**

PO Box 5310  
Stateline, NV 89449-5310

**Location**

128 Market Street  
Stateline, NV 89449

**Contact**

Phone: 775-588-4547  
Fax: 775-588-4527  
www.trpa.org

# NEWS RELEASE

**Contact: Kristi Boosman, Partnerships and Communications Officer, (775) 589-5230**

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## **TRPA RECOGNIZES LAKE SPIRIT AWARD WINNERS**

**Lake Tahoe, Stateline, NV** – Eight individuals who display strong personal commitment to protecting and restoring Lake Tahoe were recognized today by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) during the third annual Lake Spirit Awards ceremony at the Agency’s Governing Board meeting in Stateline.

The Lake Spirit Awards honor real people making real progress at restoring Lake Tahoe. Four award winners (two from the North Shore and two from the South), were honored and four others received honorable mention for going above and beyond the call of duty to protect the beauty and clarity of Lake Tahoe and the Basin environment.

“They represent the essence of what it takes for a community to become true stewards of our incredibly fragile ecosystem,” TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta said in announcing the awards. “They are unsung heroes who share a quiet commitment to protecting our beautiful Basin.”

Awards were given in two categories, exemplary citizen and exemplary agency representative or environmental scientist. The individuals and categories of recognition were as follows:

### **Exemplary Citizens**

- Tom Carter, North Shore, for spending his summers diving from his paddleboard to retrieve lost tires and debris from the bottom of Lake Tahoe.
- Jeff Poulin, South Shore, for collecting as many as 20 bags of litter a day from alongside bike trails and roads at Lake Tahoe.

### **Exemplary Agency Representative or Environmental Scientist**

- Cindy Gustafson, North Shore, Tahoe City Public Utility District, for her years-long commitment to the north shore lake community, particularly in her perseverance to construct bike trails and sidewalks in and around Tahoe City and

for her leadership in creating and chairing the non-profit environmental foundation, the Tahoe Fund.

- Kathy Strain, South Shore, Lake Tahoe Community College, for being an inspirational and accomplished environmental science educator who also helped secure a \$1 million grant to create the “Summit to Sand” environmental education program to promote environmental stewardship in the Tahoe Basin, California’s Central Valley, and the coast.

### **Citizens Honorably Mentioned**

- Dylan Eichenberg, North Shore, for his boundless energy and enthusiasm as a 23-year-old volunteer cleaning up graffiti on rocks along the lakeshore, picking up trash along the beaches, and pulling aquatic invasive weeds to protect Lake Tahoe.
- Tom Wendell (posthumous), South Shore, for his years of working to encourage sustainability and being a passionate, outspoken advocate for improving recreation and non-motorized transportation at Lake Tahoe.

### **Agency Representatives/Scientists Honorably Mentioned**

- Missy Mohler, North Shore, Sierra Watershed Education Partnership (SWEP), for her work in the Truckee-Tahoe School District to improve student’s understanding of their watershed environment and for creating and maintaining many effective programs including the popular Trashion Fashion Shows where students design and make designer-quality clothes out of recycled materials.
- Dan Shaw, South Shore, California State Parks, for his efforts battling Eurasian watermilfoil in Emerald Bay where 95 percent of the infestation was eradicated and agencies gained knowledge that will assist in the ongoing efforts to combat aquatic invasive plants that threaten the lake's clarity and recreational enjoyment.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency cooperatively leads the effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region now and in the future. For additional information, call Kristi Boosman at (775) 589-5230 or email to [kboosman@trpa.org](mailto:kboosman@trpa.org).

### **Additional Background Lake Spirit Award Winners**

#### **Tom Carter**

- Tom Carter enjoys nothing more than the calm waters of Lake Tahoe in the summer just after the sun comes up. It is the best time of day for the 61-year-old stand-up paddle

boarder to get out on the water, until one morning something caught his eye. A tire lying on the bottom of the Lake, which Tom immediately dove in to recover.

- Ever since his first retrieval, Tom has made it his personal mission to remove as many tires from the Lake as possible.
- Over the last two summers Tom has collected 40 tires from the bottom of the lake.
- On average, he dives between 20 and 30 feet, with nothing more than a lung full of air and he is not finished yet.
- Chanel 2 News in Reno this summer aired a video of Tom diving for tires that is online.
- As for what happens to his trophy tires, Tom has teamed up with Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal to recycle them.

### **Jeff Poulin**

- Jeff is a newcomer to Lake Tahoe, having moved here a little over a year ago because of the Basin's natural beauty, but he was distressed to see so much litter along the roads of his new home.
- He wanted to help and began picking up the litter, first by foot and later by bike. Anyone who travels through the Y up to Meyers or along Pioneer trail has probably seen this humble, unsung hero quietly picking up trash and making a difference in S. Lake.
- At the beginning of the summer, Jeff put in 10 miles per day on foot picking up trash. He would collect 20 bags/day of garbage, and then Clean Tahoe would pick the trash up in a vehicle to take to South Tahoe Refuse.
- By mid-summer, Jeff transitioned to picking up trash on his bike. He has a bike trailer that he fills with tools and trash bags. He averages 20 miles per day picking up trash from his bike.

### **Cindy Gustafson, Tahoe City Public Utility District**

- Cindy has worked tirelessly to improve the outdoor recreational amenities along the North and West Shores while also focusing on major environmental improvements.
- Over a twenty-year period, she pursued the magnificent mile-long section of bike trail along the lake front of Tahoe City called the Lakeside Trail (or "Miracle Mile"), opening up the shoreline to walkers and bikers for the first time and connecting 19 miles of existing bike facilities throughout the area.
- She worked hard to bring sidewalks to Tahoe City to make it a more pedestrian-friendly experience for visitors and residents, and today she continues to pursue new improvements that will get people out of their cars and into the extraordinary environment of Tahoe.

- As the founding Board Chair of the Tahoe Fund, Cindy led a group of leaders to create the region's first nonprofit dedicated to raising private funding for environmental improvement projects.
- Through her leadership and tireless efforts, she grew an idea into a thriving organization in just a few short years.

### **Kathy Strain, Lake Tahoe Community College**

- Kathy is considered one of the most inspirational, effective, and accomplished environmental science educators in the Tahoe Basin.
- Whether she is teaching her college students about Lake Tahoe's fragile watershed or organizing nature outings and science activities for her children's schools, Kathy tirelessly educates the Tahoe community about critical environmental issues.
- Kathy demonstrated extraordinary leadership in helping to secure a \$1 million "Summit to Sand" environmental education grant for the Lake Tahoe Unified School District to further efforts to promote environmental stewardship in the Tahoe Basin, California's Central Valley, and the coast.
- Kathy worked collaboratively with the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and other college representatives to execute the Summit to Sand program successfully.
- Kathy uses interactive techniques and extensive field work in her teaching methods to grow students' knowledge and appreciation of the Tahoe environment.
- Over her 15-plus-year career at the Lake Tahoe Community College, she has inspired thousands of students to be better environmental stewards and continues to raise awareness of protecting Lake Tahoe.

### **HONORABLE MENTIONS**

#### **Dylan Eichenberg**

- Dylan is a 23-year-old native from Tahoe City who graduated from UC Berkeley and returned to his roots to work on his passion of protecting Lake Tahoe.
- If you do any environmental volunteering in the Basin, you have likely met him already.
- He battles Crohns Disease and still has boundless energy and enthusiasm to fight the good fight for Tahoe whether that is cleaning up graffiti on rocks along the lakeshore, picking up trash along the beaches or pulling milfoil to keep it from entering Lake Tahoe.

#### **Tom Wendell, In Memorium**

- Tom spent many years of his life encouraging sustainability at Lake Tahoe. He passed away in early August.

- Tom was passionately outspoken on the need for improving recreation and non-motorized transportation in the Basin, in particular safer bicycling opportunities, and was a founding member of the bicycle advocacy group Tahoe Region Advocates for Cycling (TRAC).

#### **Missy Mohler, Sierra Watershed Education Partnership (SWEP)**

- Students in the Tahoe/Truckee region have a better understanding of their watershed environment thanks, in part, to the important work of Missy Mohler and SWEP.
- There are nine SWEP programs for the current school year, impacting all students of the Truckee Tahoe School District from grades K-12, including Wonders of Watersheds, Re-vegetation and Forest Health Field Day, Trout in the Classroom, Winter Discovery Program, and the popular, Trashion Fashion Shows where students design and make designer-quality clothes out of recycled materials.

#### **Dan Shaw, California State Parks**

- Dan has truly made a positive difference for the Lake Tahoe environment with his efforts battling Eurasian watermilfoil in Emerald Bay.
- Because of his and other agency partners (including TRPA) more than 95 percent of the infestation was eradicated.
- His project is a great success for Lake Tahoe and the knowledge gained from it will greatly help all of the basin agencies' efforts to combat aquatic invasive plants that threaten the lake's clarity and recreational enjoyment.

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