The Donner Project Update!

One year ago, the Sierra State Parks Foundation kicked off The Donner Project $1.8 million fundraising campaign to restore the deteriorating Pioneer Monument, to create beautiful and reflective landscaping around the monument, and to construct an outdoor education pavilion. With our partner, The Native Sons of the Golden West, we have raised almost $200,000! Plus, it looks very promising that California State Parks will be pledging over $450,000 towards our goal from Proposition 68 funds. With those funds in place, we are just about halfway there.

Thank you to all of our generous contributors thus far! The Donor Wall, located in the foyer of the Donner Visitor Center, is updated with the most recent 2018/2019 contributors.

To host a “Donner Party” at the Visitor Center and to learn more about how you can help us reach our fundraising goal, call Heidi Doyle at 530-583-9911.

Vikingsholm Forever Endowment Campaign ... Celebrating 90 Years!

In honor of the 90th anniversary of Vikingsholm Castle, the Sierra State Parks Foundation is pleased to announce the establishment of an endowment for the exclusive use of the restoration and maintenance of Vikingsholm at Emerald Bay State Park.

Vikingsholm, at the head of Emerald Bay, is a unique blend of nature’s spectacular beauty and humankind’s architectural ingenuity. This magnificent castle, built as a summer home in 1929, draws visitors from around the globe; in 2018, over 23,500 toured this State and National landmark.

The need for funding to operate and maintain Vikingsholm since it became a part of the California State Parks System in 1954 continues to be a challenge. State resources are inadequate to meet the ongoing needs and the Sierra State Parks Foundation has been stepping in to keep the historic house museum open and maintained. Over the past 20 years, over $500,000 of private funds have been invested in this effort, but like all old homes, the needs increase each year and State resources continue to dwindle.

2019 provides the opportunity to establish an endowment fund to ensure that funds will available for continued restoration and maintenance. We are asking 90 donors to make a $1,000 contribution to seed this account. These funds will be placed in a restricted account and invested wisely to enable an annual return for Vikingsholm. Our long range goal is a fund that will return $100,000 annually. Become a Vikingsholm Champion and invest today!

The Donner Project committee members proudly show off donations received to date.
Summer has arrived at Lake Tahoe and I could not be more excited! The warm summer months bring long hikes in the forest, quiet moments to appreciate busy wildlife, brisk swims, and leisurely paddles in the Lake, and lots of time enjoying family in our beautiful California State Parks. I bet that I am not the only one looking to utilize the eight signature state parks we are blessed to have at Lake Tahoe and Truckee. It is predicted that park visitation will top the historic 2018 levels. So why is it that parks are struggling to keep financially afloat? Should organizations, such as the Sierra State Parks Foundation, continue to push hard for both public funds and donations to pay for programs, deferred maintenance and improvements? Do parks really matter in today's world?

Yes, parks do matter!

• **Parks are important for our mental and physical health.**
  Several studies have confirmed that separation from nature is detrimental to human development, health and wellbeing, and that regular contact with nature is required for good mental health.

• **Parks are important for our community health.**
  The California recreation economy represents a $87 billion industry providing over 700,000 jobs and billions in local and state revenues.

• **Parks are important for ecosystem function and resilience to climate change.**
  Parks act as carbon sinks reducing harmful carbon pollution that is driving climate change; they protect people and infrastructure from increasingly severe storms, sea-level rise, heat waves and droughts.

• **Parks are important for treatment of technology overload.**
  We are more connected than ever, and this leaves us less time for meditation, self-reflection and solitude. Sometimes, it’s just good to get away and evaluate our lives, where we want to be, what’s important to us etc. without the constant distraction

The Sierra State Parks Foundation believes that our Lake Tahoe-Donner area California State Parks are unique treasures worth preserving because of their value to ourselves, our families and society. I can’t imagine a world without the benefits that parks bring. In fact, if you look at the list above…. parks are essential to our existence. A little too dramatic? I do not think so.

Join me in wearing our Parks Matter button this summer. Pick one up at our office or at any of our events this summer.

I invite you to continue to be our partner in creating a sustainable future for our parks. Help us to create donor opportunities, volunteer at our events or as a docent, join me in Sacramento to advocate, or consider a position on our Board of Directors. Show the world that parks matter to you by becoming involved and donating. Together, we can do great things for today and our future.

Yours in parks, Heidi Doyle, Executive Director
Dr. Helen Smith is Honored...

with the 2019 Tahoe Regional Planning Agency “Spirit of the Lake” award.

The following is the nomination submitted by SSPF Executive Director Heidi Doyle:

Helen Henry Smith is a woman of vision and tenacity. Her monumental efforts toward preserving one of Lake Tahoe’s iconic cultural treasures are to be modeled and celebrated. Mrs. Smith’s work shows how one person can make an impactful difference. She turned her childhood memories into advocacy and a legacy for future generations.

If Lake Tahoe is the Jewel of the Sierra, Emerald Bay is the crown jewel. Vikingsholm, the stunning summer home on the shore of the bay is surely the queen. Constructed in 1929 for Lora Josephine Knight, Vikingsholm harmoniously blends with its majestic setting. The elaborate stone and timber construction was inspired by Knight’s Scandinavian travels and Sweden’s 12th century churches. Knight was deliberate in the design to complement the stunning beauty of Emerald Bay and insure minimal land disturbances.

Helen Smith’s passion for Vikingsholm came through her unique perspective. Her parents and Lora Knight were friends. Mrs. Knight invited Mr. and Mrs. Henry to visit her new home which led to young Helen spending her first 14 summers as a guest. As an only child, she fondly remembers walks and conversations with “Aunt Lora”, and distinctly recalls the building details that makes Vikingsholm so special. In 1953, the house and property were acquired by California State Parks with all of the original furnishings intact. The State began disassembling outbuildings and plans were underway to tear down the main house.

It was during this period that Smith reconnected with Vikingsholm and petitioned State Parks to allow her to offer tours. At that time, women employees worked solely in administrative jobs; Smith’s request to serve the public in a front-line position was bold and courageous. She moved her family seasonally to the caretaker’s apartment in June 1954 and renewed her association with Vikingsholm, returning each summer to give tours of her beloved castle. Her return marked the beginning of Smith’s changed relationship with her childhood getaway, from guest to advocate. 65 years later, Smith’s passion is as strong as ever. Early on, she became concerned about the lack of State funding and resources to care for the property. Frustrated with the rapid deterioration of the grand home, Smith formed the Vikingsholm Project Council to raise revenue for restoration. Through her leadership, over $2,000,000 has been acquired for restoration and repair. On almost a day-to-day basis, Smith was involved in the actual work, coordinating between State Parks’ staff and outside resources. Although she is no longer able to spend the entire summer at Vikingsholm, Smith visits every year and remains steadfast to its preservation and future.

“Vikingsholm is my passion and I appreciate the efforts of the Sierra State Parks Foundation in carrying on the work that is needed.”

As Vikingsholm turns 90 this year, the outlook for state funding for maintenance and restoration remains bleak. In response, Sierra State Parks Foundation (SSPF) is marking this occasion with the establishment of the Vikingsholm Forever Endowment Fund. The Foundation is committed to the legacy work of Helen Henry Smith. With income generated from SSPF-provided tours and events, this non-profit partner of California State Parks takes the lead in the daily maintenance and restoration of Vikingsholm, ensuring that it will continue to welcome visitors, and remain viable and safe for many years to come. SSPF will continue to work hand-in-hand with Helen Henry Smith, preserving and interpreting Vikingsholm for the inspiration and enjoyment of all who seek out the beauty of Emerald Bay.

Please join us on August 24th as we celebrate Vikingsholm and honor Dr. Helen Smith.

LOVE THAT GREEN! Take advantage of our eco-friendly green membership plan! Our Green Program allows donors to purchase their memberships using an automated monthly payment plan. This system is convenient, efficient and affordable for anyone interested in joining the Sierra State Parks Foundation. Please visit our website at SierraStateParks.org for more information on the Green Membership Plan and Go Green today!
We thank the many individuals, businesses and organizations that have contributed from 3/15/18 to 4/15/19. Your contributions have enabled us to achieve our goals.
We are excited to announce... 

JUNIOR LIFEGUARD PROGRAM

The new Junior Lifeguard Program is coming to Kings Beach State Recreation Area this summer! This program emphasizes teamwork, leadership, and water safety while introducing young people to safe aquatic recreation opportunities. The program is designed to provide quality water safety education while improving young people's physical conditioning, their understanding and respect for the environment, and respect for themselves, their parents, and their peers. Students of all abilities and skill levels may participate. The Sierra State Parks Foundation is thrilled that we can bring this program to North Lake Tahoe!

Three, two-week sessions are being offered in 2019: June 17-28, July 8-19 and July 22-August 2. The Foundation is proud to offer 10 scholarship opportunities for the 2019 season! Scholarships will be given on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, call Lifeguard Jacqueline Miranda at 530-550-6161, or visit the website at parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21702.

A BIG thanks to our donors and the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation Queen of Hearts Fund for making these scholarship opportunities possible.

SSPF 2019 Priority Projects

Sugar Pine Point State Park
1. Obtain funding for winter snow trail grooming ($8,000)
2. Complete the Mansion porch garden restoration ($10,000)

3. Return the Mercury speed boat to Lake Tahoe ($15,000)
4. Replace Mansion porch furniture ($2,000)

Emerald Bay State Park
1. Complete wood restoration work on Vikingsholm exterior ($35,000)
2. Vikingsholm courtyard garden landscaping ($25,000)
3. Vikingsholm lakeside garden rehabilitation ($5,000)
4. Vikingsholm furnishings repairs ($20,000)

To learn more about the work of the Sierra State Parks Foundation or to make a donation, call Executive Director Heidi Doyle. She will be happy to share our vision.

Featured New Product:

MARY THE FAMILY DEER

“Bill” Soll Dehwurst and her two sisters grew up in the Caretakers Cottage on the I.W. Hellman Estate at what is now Sugar Pine Point State Park. Bill’s father Henry was the caretaker of the property until it sold to the State in 1965. One of her favorite memories is that of their domesticated pet deer, Mary. Bill always knew that Mary was nearby because of the bell she had around her neck. As shared with us during a visit with Bill at her home in Incline Village, “on cold winter nights, the family would let Mary inside their cabin to stay warm and entertain the children.”

A plush toy “Mary” with her bell is sold exclusively at The Nature Center Store at Sugar Pine Point State Park and the SSPF on-line store for $12.95.

Photos -- Top center: The garden at Hellman-Ehrman Mansion awaiting spring planting; Center right: Mary the deer with caretakers; Bottom left: SSPF board of directors present check to Sierra District Superintendent (acting) Matt Green; Bottom far right: Plush toy Mary the Deer.
The Value of Volunteerism

BY DENISE TRAN, SSPF VOLUNTEER & EVENT COORDINATOR

I was first introduced to the concept of volunteerism at my public charter high school; it was a prerequisite to complete 100 hours with local non-profit organizations. Over the span of four years and with the help of a volunteering club (Key Club), I connected with all walks of life through humane societies, senior centers, Kiwanis Club, the homeless shelter, and the city. By the end of it, I graduated having completed 200 hours because I truly enjoyed being able to give back to my community having originally believed I had nothing I could give. It became tradition to clean the bunnies’ cages every first weekend, decorate the city’s annual Halloween “Spooktacular” Carnival, and make care packages and Thanksgiving dinner for the homeless – and soon, service became one of my core values. This positive experience eventually led me to Tahoe as an AmeriCorps member and SSPF as the Event and Volunteer Coordinator!

When posed with the question of “What is the value of volunteering,” it was challenging trying to quantify that. According to Independent Sector’s “value of volunteer time” article, one estimated dollar value of volunteer time for the nation is $24.69 per hour, $29.95 per hour for California’s average. This estimate helps acknowledge the millions of volunteers who donate their time, effort, and skills to making a difference. But as impressive as that number was, it did not sit right with me. The value of volunteering runs much deeper, much more fulfilling, and much more important in contributing to a healthy and vibrant community than money can ever measure.

People volunteer for various reasons: to gain experience, build confidence, network, learn new skills, get involved with the community, and contribute to a cause. Usually, volunteers do it because it makes them feel good. This is the intrinsic value of serving. It is not about the money, and that is why I believe we can measure volunteerism by adding up hours, not dollars. In addition, by using a monetary method, it infers that if work is not paid for, then it is not valuable; it reduces volunteerism to hours worked instead of contributions made.

Volunteers are the backbone of many organizations, especially non-profits. Sierra State Parks Foundation relies heavily on our volunteers to successfully execute all of our events. Last year, the Foundation’s volunteers logged in over 1,800 hours! It is with these large and small acts of service, given freely, that makes me proud to work with SSPF, its incredible team of volunteers, and our community.

We should not use a dollar value to quantify the value of volunteering. It is impossible to accurately put a monetary value on ordinary people doing extraordinary things. The value of volunteerism is priceless!

Volunteer Spotlight....

ROB WESTON

SSPF Vice-President Rob Weston has made it his mission to bring groomed snow trails back to Sugar Pine Point State Park. Because of his passion for the sport and our parks, he has worked relentlessly to put together the complicated puzzle to make this happen. Through his tenacity, hard work and ability to put together a team of private citizens and government officials, Rob Weston has given winter visitors to Lake Tahoe the opportunity to experience the restorative nature of our forests and sport. It is through this experience, that visitors connect with the power of the Lake Tahoe environment and will support all efforts to keep it healthy and sustainable.

The world is familiar with the 1960 Winter Olympics held primarily at Squaw Valley USA, yet far too few are aware that the Olympic Nordic events took place just a few miles south in Tahoma, on Lake Tahoe’s West Shore. Since the 1960 Winter Games ended, the Olympic Nordic trails, which run from what is now Homewood, south into today’s Sugar Pine Point State Park, have been more or less forgotten. Over the years, Mother Nature took over and the facility faded into oblivion amongst the trees and surrounding series of developments. The trails were barely mentioned until 1999 when the vision to restore the trails was conceived by a local resident and historian, David Antonucci. California State Park Rangers began grooming the discovered trails in the General Creek drainage beginning around 1985 using equipment from the 1960 Olympics. Due to budget and staffing constraints, California State Parks stopped grooming in 2009 has been unable to provide the machinery or staffing to groom these historic trails.

Since 2010, the grooming of the trails at Sugar Pine Point State Park has been accomplished through the coordination of Rob Weston under the Sierra State Parks Foundation. It hasn’t been easy. Through the
years, Rob has coordinated the purchase of a groomer, the multiple repairs of a groomer, the lease of the groomer by the Sierra State Parks Foundation. During the winter snow season, Rob and volunteer extraordinaire Ray O’Brien spend the three hours, twice weekly, to make sure the trails are ready for our visitors to enjoy. In addition, Rob has worked tirelessly with our State Park partners and our lessor, Remote Access, to mitigate any maintenance issues that always seem to pop up when dealing with heavy equipment and our unpredictable snow conditions.

Under an agreement with State Parks and the Sierra State Parks Foundation a total of 15 kilometers (approximately 25 percent) of the 1960 Olympic Nordic Trails are groomed for recreational Nordic skiing, snow shoeing, fat-tire biking and walking in the snow at no cost to the public. Thank you, Rob for bringing the joy of snow sport to our park visitors.

Did you know… an $8,000 annual investment is required to keep this program going? Consider a 100% tax-deductible donation today to keep our grooming program in 2020!

Congratulations … to our own Brian Herlihy for being awarded Employee of the Year, and our board president Lolly Kupec for being awarded Volunteer of the Year at the annual North Lake Tahoe Resort Association Community Awards dinner in April.

SAVE THE DATE!
Annual Volunteer Appreciation BBQ & Awards
August 11th • 4:30pm-7pm
Sugar Pine Point State Park group picnic area, Bring a side dish or dessert to share.

SUMMER 2019 DON’T MISS EVENTS

Thru Sept 30 • 10:30am-3:30pm Daily
Historic House Tours
Ehrman Mansion at Sugar Pine Point State Park and Vikingsholm Castle at Emerald Bay State Park. Tickets at SierraStateParks.org.

June 15, July 20, Aug 17, Sept 21, Oct 19, Nov 16 • Saturdays • 5pm-6:30pm
Sierra Speaker Series
Donner Memorial State Park Visitor Center.
A free evening with suggested $5 donation.
Wine available for purchase. Free parking after 5 pm. Check website for topic schedule.

June 22 • Saturday • 5pm-7:30pm • Trivia Night at Vikingsholm Castle, with Todd Borg
Drive down to Emerald Bay, private tour of the Castle, wine and hors d’oeuvres and trivia. Murder mystery author Todd Borg will award signed copies of his books. $50 ($45 SSFP members). Reservations required.

July 6-7 • Saturday-Sunday • 8am-Noon Annual Pancake Breakfast
Meeks Bay Fire Station, Hwy 89
51st annual all-you-can-eat hearty breakfast supporting Sierra State Parks Foundation and Meeks Bay Fire District. This West Shore tradition includes raffle, fire engines, info booths. $10 adults; $8 children.

July 16, Aug 13 • Tuesdays • 7pm-9pm
Full Moon Kayak Tour
Sugar Pine Point State Park
Tours explore the natural and cultural history of the Hellman-Ehrman estate and Lake Tahoe. 12 years or older. Includes park entrance, kayak rentals, life jackets, and guided kayak tour. $40. Reservations required.

July 24 • Wednesday • 5pm-7:30pm
Conversations with History: Living at Vikingsholm • Emerald Bay State Park
Drive your car to Vikingsholm, a “behind the scenes” tour of the castle, wine reception in the courtyard. Dr. Helen Smith will lead informal conversation about summers as a guest of Lora Knight. Receive a signed copy of Smith’s book, “Vikingsholm.” $65 ($60 SSFP members). Reservations required.

July 27 • Saturday • 11am-4pm
3rd Annual Tales & Trails Festival
Sugar Pine Point State Park
Learn about the natural and cultural history of Lake Tahoe with guided walks, hands-on educational booths, live entertainment, and more! Food vendors. Free. Parking $10. Free shuttle from campground parking lot to venue.

Aug 2 • Friday • 4:30pm-8pm
BIG BLUEgrass Benefit Concert
Sugar Pine Point State Park
Live bluegrass on the lawn overlooking “Big Blue”. Food vendors. Beer and wine available for purchase (no outside food or drinks). Bring low back chairs, flashlight, warm clothing. $20 pre-sale; $25 at the door. Parking $10. Check website for line-up and tickets!

Aug 24 • Saturday • 5pm-8pm
Vikingsholm 90th Celebration
Vikingsholm, Emerald Bay State Park
Highlight of this summer – celebrate the 90th birthday of Vikingsholm! Drive down to the castle, take a tour, catered reception with fine wine, followed by a special presentation featuring Helen Smith. Cake and a bubbly toast! $90. Reservations required.

Oct 5 • Saturday • 4pm-6pm
6th annual “A Liar’s Cruise” On the Tahoe Gal, Tahoe City
Signature Sierra State Parks Foundation fundraiser. An evening of tall tales, never-ending hors d’oeuvres and bottomless bubbly. Cruise the fabulous West Shore to Sugar Pine Point and back! Live auction of treasures and experiences. $75 ($70 SSFP members). Reservations required.
The Sierra State Parks Foundation believes the Lake Tahoe and Donner California State Parks are unique treasures worthy of its support. The Foundation provides unique programming, volunteers and staff, and critical funding to these valuable cultural, historic and natural resources. Because of its work our parks will continue to be places of education and inspiration today and for generations to come. Join your friends and neighbors and contribute to the Sierra State Parks Foundation, and in turn you will be supporting our Lake Tahoe - Donner California State Parks.

“You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give.”
WINSTON CHURCHILL