Centennial Celebration & Rededication of the Pioneer Monument

June 9, 2018 • Donner Memorial State Park, Truckee, California

Erected to honor the emigrants who passed through Truckee enroute to new opportunities in the West, the Pioneer Monument has stood majestically at Donner Memorial State Park for over 99 years. At its dedication on June 6, 1918, thousands of people including three Donner Party survivors gathered to honor the hardy souls who traversed the Sierra.

June 9, 2018 will mark the rededication of the monument with a Centennial Celebration and the restoration of this iconic statue. The ceremony will be followed by family activities and an evening fundraising gala sponsored by Sierra State Parks Foundation.

In order to save this famous landmark, the Foundation is partnering with California State Parks and Native Sons of the Golden West to launch a major fundraising campaign, The Donner Project.

With your help, we will raise the estimated $1.2 million for an outdoor education pavilion, the surrounding sustainable landscaping, and restoration of the monument including both the brass figures and the stone pedestal.

Stay tuned as details of the plans unfold at SierraStateParks.org or call 530-583-9911 for more information.

Engineers survey the Pioneer Monument to assess its structural integrity and to evaluate necessary repairs and reconstruction needs.
Walking in Our Parks Changes the Brain ...

The shorter days of winter are upon us bringing both joy and anxiety. We are eagerly anticipating the first significant snow to cover our parks with white trails for long quiet walks. There is also anxiety that comes with more time inside artificial environments, that keeps our bodies comfortable but minds confined.

A new study was released in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* confirming that time spent in nature is strongly associated with increased brain relaxation and decreased stress levels. The study also concludes that unconnected time spent in nature allows our brains to wander and explore, thus lifting our mood.

The Sierra State Parks Foundation has spent this past summer creating exceptional experiences in our parks by funding projects that improved trails, provided wayside signage, restored historic landmarks, created learning experiences for both school children and the public, and laid the groundwork to move forward with many more initiatives in 2018. In fact, because of the support of donors like you, SSPF was able to provide over $600,000 of support to our Lake Tahoe-Donner California State Parks in 2017. Thank you!

Despite our progress, there is a lot more to do. We invite you review highlights of our 2017 accomplishments on the next page and some of the project initiatives we are seeking to fund this coming year. Please visit our website, [SierraStateParks.org](http://SierraStateParks.org), to review a complete list.

Join us in support of our projects with your donation or membership. Dollar by dollar, member by member, we are improving the health of our local State Parks, creating the spaces we all need to improve our brain health!

Take the time to enjoy the uncrowded trails and vistas our parks have to offer this winter. Stroll the unbroken shoreline at Kings Beach State Recreation Area, stride the Nordic trails at Sugar Pine Point State Park, and amble though the forests of Donner Memorial State Park. While we do not know which aspect of the natural environment causes the fullest psychological benefits, we do know that you can experience them by exploring the Sierra State Parks. And, because of donors like you, our parks will continue to be places of inspiration and magic for generations to come.

See you on the trails... Heidi Doyle, Executive Director

PS: A special thank you to our outgoing president Jerry Blackwill for fours years or exemplary service and dedication to the Foundation.
This impressive list of accomplishments is only a portion of what was made possible with your generous contributions in 2017...

HISTORIC MANSION TOURS CONDUCTED AND VISITOR CENTERS OPERATED BY SSPF:
- 26,774 people experienced historic mansion tours
- 2,513 school children were provided guided tours and programs
- Over 100,000 visitors had a more enriched park experience visiting Visitor Centers at Emerald Bay, DL Bliss, Sugar Pine Point and Donner Memorial State Parks

EMERALD BAY STATE PARK (VIKINGSHOLM CASTLE)
- Completed the design and fabrication of eight interpretive panels
- Completed Historic Landscape Report – implementation began with removal of invasive species
- Installed fire and intrusion alarm systems for all historic buildings
- Commissioned engineering assessment of the South Turret repairs
- Restored the sod roof and deteriorating foyer and threshold of the Castle
- Commissioned the development of Underwater Interpretive Trail to open in September 2018
- Supported research of the underwater archeological features in Emerald Bay
- Funded rodent and insect eradication for the historic buildings
- Commissioned the replacement of the historic curtains in the Chieftain’s Room
- Funded State Park staff to provide seasonal interpretive programming

DL BLISS STATE PARK
- SSPF-funded Lake Tahoe seasonal interpretive positions provided 65 programs to 1472 visitors
- SSPF-funded State Park “Bear Educator” position responsible for educating visitors about our Tahoe bears, thus reducing the number of interactions

SUGAR PINE POINT STATE PARK (PINE LODGE MANSION)
- Provided funding for staff and materials for landscape improvements in the Historic Zone
- Completed repairs to the South Boathouse including completion of the rail repairs and facilitation of the return of the vessel Mercury in 2018
- Produced a free self-guided tour brochure for the Historic Zone
- Installed fire and intrusion alarm systems at Pine Lodge and three other buildings
- Operated the winter trail grooming program to maintain 17km of Olympic Snow Trails

DONNER MEMORIAL STATE PARK
- Commissioned an updated assessment of the Pioneer Monument and entered into a collaborative agreement with Native Sons of the Golden West for The Donner Project which includes monument restoration, surrounding landscaping and an outdoor education pavilion. Site plan development begun.
- Began organization of the Pioneer Monument Centennial Celebration June 9, 2018
- Produced Educator’s Guide to the Donner Visitor Center

WASHOE MEADOWS STATE PARK
- Sponsored interpretive programming

KINGS BEACH STATE RECREATION AREA
- Worked with State Parks on the development of a General Plan
- Supported implementation and planning for a Junior Lifeguard Program to begin 2018
- Distributed free Park Passes to community members in Kings Beach

FOR ALL OF OUR PARKS
- Launched a new dynamic website and on-line store
- Greatly increased social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and with E-Newsletters
- Implemented plans to launch a new STATE PARK APP on Earth Day 2018!

Photos from top: SSPF supported Park Restoration Specialist Benjamin Eppers (R) with Mike Bryam restoring the foyer support system at Vikingsholm; ED Heidi Doyle and Gaye Thomas with PBS “Rob on the Road” who did two pieces this summer featuring Emerald Bay and Vikingsholm with emphasis on the work of SSPF in maintaining this special place; Helen Smith with SSPF staff members Nancy Arnold, Marsha Ward-Hudson and Susan Berry Kezich at Vikingsholm; The rails waiting for installation at the South Boathouse at Sugar Pine.
How we spend your money...

The Sierra State Parks Foundation was awarded a four star platinum rating by GuideStar, the international non-profit rating organization. SSPF judiciously spends donations and its earned income to be able to provide the maximum amount of financial support to our regional state parks.

LOVE THAT GREEN!  Take advantage of our eco-friendly green membership plan! Our Green Program allows people 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!

Meet the Staff...

Michele McDonald, SSPF’S Grant Manager  SSPF Grants Manager, Michele McDonald, posing with one of the beautiful hand-knit caps created by Christine Wheeler for sale at the Donner Visitor Center Store. Michele has been with the Foundation for eleven years starting as Administrative Manager. She has been an integral part of our growth and an important team member. Thank you, Michele!

Meet the SSPF seasonal employees summer 2017. What a great team!
Acknowledgements...
The Sierra State Parks Foundation acknowledges the many individuals, businesses and organizations that have contributed in 2017. Your contributions have made the difference in enabling us to achieve our goals in support of the Sierra State Parks in the Lake Tahoe - Donner region.

$50-$10,000
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Truckee Tahoe Airport District
Thomas Wynn Foundation
Wiesner Family Grantmaking Fund
West Shore Association
Wild West Communications Group
Thank you for your volunteer service!

Our volunteers have been an important part of the impact SSPF has made in 2017 in supporting our Lake Tahoe-Donner State Parks. Because of their dedication and energy we provided unique programming and experiences to visitors from all over the globe. Our volunteers lead hikes, guide us through a solar eclipse, pour wine at our fundraisers, work in the Visitor Centers, and serve as docents in our historic sites. For information on how you can get involved, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Denise Tran, dtran@SierraStateParks.org.

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Catherine Welt
Roger Welt
Rob Weston
Christie Wheeler
Anaka Williams

Volunteers at the Donner Hoedown at Donner Memorial State Park: Keeping our Pioneer Heritage Alive

Meet a Ranger – Nikki A. Combs
State Park Interpreter II, Donner Memorial State Park

I’m Nikki Combs and I’m the lead park employee for the new Visitor Center. I oversee all interpretation and education for the park and help the visitors have the best experience possible by welcoming them, answering their questions, and directing them to trails and exhibits. When I’m not in the Visitor Center, I’m conducting outreach programs or giving community talks. As the volunteer coordinator and supervisor of the summertime seasonal employees, I provide training and scheduling for these wonderful folks. We always find time to have fun conversations about history!

I love working with school groups and I take the requests for...
A Transformation Process

In 2012 the California State Park Stewardship Act was signed into law as a response to concerns for the future of California State Parks. As a result, an independent assessment of the 280 parks was conducted which identified solutions to solidify the future of the California State Parks, how to better serve California’s diverse population, and create a more inviting and relevant state park system. A Transformation Team was formed in 2015 to lead the parks department through a two-year process. SSPF is very proud that Executive Director Heidi Doyle was asked to participate as a valued and experienced advisor to this important advocacy team.

The team developed an action plan that focused on four strategic support areas which resulted in 60 individual initiatives involving enhanced protection of cultural and natural resources, improvement of park management systems, maintaining quality operations, and making the parks more relevant to park visitors. Many of the initiatives developed are now projects being implemented by California State Parks. Some of the concrete results:

- The budget allocation process has been streamlined so that park administrators can manage their facilities and programs more effectively, and have a better grasp of the full cost of operating their parks.
- Park management positions are now open to a wider and more diverse talent pool from outside the agency.
- A Leadership Program has been established to better prepare park staff leaders for potential challenges related to park and recreation management.
- A Partnership Office has been created to better serve the needs of organizations such as SSPF to work with government partners more efficiently and collaboratively.

These collective tools and the dedication to them are important as the State Park system moves forward. “The collaborative nature of this undertaking which involved over 400 subject matter experts in 11 teams represent a monumental positive change for California State Parks and the public our parks serve,” said Heidi Doyle speaking of the Transformation Team. “It was an honor to serve and represent the interests and values of our members.”

For more information about the Final Transformation Report, visit parks.ca.gov/transformation.

...educate, interpret, restore & preserve.
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.

Great Gift-Giving Ideas for any Occasion – unique, different and support our parks!

Visit Donner Memorial State Park Visitor Center Gift Shop in the winter, and the gift stores at Sugar Pine and Emerald Bay State Parks in the summer months for unique gifts for any occasion for kids and adults alike.

Give a membership to Sierra State Parks Foundation and do your part to support the Foundation which in turn supports our Parks.

You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give.

WINSTON CHURCHILL