

The Path to Peace

How Tahoe SAFE
Alliance works toward
**a future without
domestic violence**



If you or someone you
know is in crisis,
Tahoe SAFE Alliance can help
800-736-1060
WWW.TAHOESAFEALLIANCE.ORG

Tahoe SAFE Alliance Executive Director Karen Carey, who retires in November, and Client Services and Prevention Director Paul Bancroft, who will replace Karen as Executive Director, work to end domestic violence in the region.
PHOTO BY ERIC MARKS



“Even though where we live looks like a postcard, domestic violence exists here and is an issue.”

Paul Bancroft
Client Services and Prevention Director, Tahoe SAFE Alliance

Creating a SAFE SPACE

Tahoe SAFE Alliance works to stop violence at its source

BY ANNA QUINLAN

The first step in stopping domestic violence is to have meaningful conversations about it. The nonprofit Tahoe SAFE (Stopping Abuse for Everyone) Alliance has been prompting these conversations and addressing the needs of victims of domestic violence for more than 30 years. The organization is on a mission to end the incidences and trauma of domestic violence, sexual violence and child abuse in North Lake Tahoe and Truckee. They believe that a community-wide approach is the best solution.

“It starts with just talking about it,” says Paul Bancroft, Client Services and Prevention Director at Tahoe SAFE Alliance. “Even though where we live looks like a postcard, domestic violence exists here and is an issue. We’re working to engage the community at large and have a broader dialogue, including the involvement of schools.”

Karen Carey, Executive Director of Tahoe SAFE Alliance, agrees that early education is crucial.

“If we’re going to truly end domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse, it starts with children,” she says. “Our Prevention Program educates kids about healthy relationships and red flags.”

That program serves students in kindergarten through 12th grade and is operated by five staff members. Carey says it shows the nonprofit’s commitment to early prevention and community mobilization.

Tahoe SAFE Alliance also offers self-defense classes, workplace sexual harassment prevention training, youth empowerment classes for children who have witnessed domestic violence, immigration relief for immigrant victims, and support groups for victims of domestic violence.

To ensure that all of these programs and services operate effectively, Tahoe SAFE Alliance has mapped out detailed process maps that outline points of entry, pathways to change and eventual exit points for community members.

The process maps rely on the Theory of Change principle — a broader organizational tool for documenting goals and identifying obstacles that allows for better assessment of success.

The nonprofit has seen countless anecdotal successes, like helping an undocumented mother who was badly beaten get help for herself and her small children. She utilized Tahoe SAFE Alliance’s services, including its shelter, received immigration assistance and took English classes. Today, she owns a small business and her children are thriving.

In addition to the plethora of services that Tahoe SAFE Alliance offers to the community, the nonprofit also partners with other agencies and organizations in both California and Nevada.

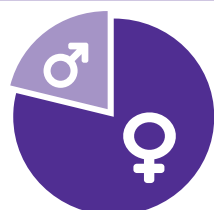
“Collaboration is critical to the work we do,” Bancroft says, who’s had children approach him in the grocery store to tell him what an impact the prevention presentations have had on them.

“It’s going to take all of us working together,” Carey says.

By the numbers: The impact of Tahoe SAFE Alliance

From 2014 to 2015 in North Lake Tahoe/Truckee:

827
people
received assistance



79% were female
21% were male

443
had been victims of domestic violence

60
had been victims of sexual assault

111 people
volunteered over
8,300
hours

92
women, men and children received emergency shelter and housing services

85
adults and children received over
650
counseling sessions



Teens Want a VIOLENCE- FREE FUTURE

Stopping domestic abuse
starts with youth

BY NATASHA
VON KAENEL

The best way to eradicate violence is to stop it before it can ever happen. That is the goal of Tahoe SAFE Alliance's Prevention and Education programs, held at almost every school in the North Lake Tahoe and Truckee region. Each year Tahoe SAFE Alliance staff and volunteers engage with students of all ages about different types of violent and abusive behavior and teach them ways to stay safe.

Jessenia Ureña, Co-facilitator of the Teen Peace Project at Truckee High School, still remembers when Tahoe SAFE Alliance first came to her middle school to talk about personal safety and self-defense techniques. They told her to make eye contact with an attacker, and say, 'No!' While she has never had to use the techniques, she says, "It was a very empowering class and reminded me to not feel intimidated."

Tahoe SAFE Alliance offers age-appropriate lessons for students when they are the most capable of comprehending the material. While teens like Jessenia learn specific self-defense techniques, younger students learn to recognize and avoid dangerous situations and how to go to trusted adults for help.

When Jessenia was a sophomore at Truckee High School she joined the Teen Peace Project, a school club that is facilitated by Tahoe SAFE Alliance staff and volunteers to increase awareness around violence prevention. The

project organizes events both at their school and throughout the community. During a prevention event on Mother's Day, youth and adults painted together and learned about building healthy parental relationships. Teen Peace Project is also organizing a clothing swap and a number of educational movie nights.

When Jessenia graduated from high school, she stayed on as a Co-facilitator of the Teen Peace Project and made sure her younger sister, Ariana, also joined. Ariana, a freshman at Truckee High School, is equally passionate about preventing violence as her sister. Ariana hopes that the group will continue to grow while she is in high school, because she says raising awareness is the key to stopping domestic and sexual violence.

"People just having awareness makes a difference," she says.

"Parents need to tell their kids how to prevent it, and how to not be the person who commits the act. Then we can stop it at the base of the problem."

Hopefully, Jessenia, Ariana and their peers will continue to inspire the community to join the cause and work toward a violence-free future.

**"We can stop
it at the
base of the
problem."**

Ariana Ureña
Teen Peace Project member



Sisters Ariana and Jessenia Ureña work to prevent violence in their community through the Teen Peace Project, facilitated by Tahoe SAFE Alliance.
PHOTO BY ERIC MARKS

Focus on prevention

Teaching children to recognize early signs of abuse and violence is one of the most effective ways to prevent unhealthy behavior in their peers, families and in themselves.

Tahoe SAFE Alliance provides annual **Violence Prevention Education** in the classrooms to students of all ages in the North Lake Tahoe and Truckee regions. The material is age-appropriate and covers topics like bullying, healthy relationships and bystander intervention.

In addition, Tahoe SAFE Alliance leads **Youth Empowerment and Leadership groups** encouraging participating students to become active leaders in their schools and communities, dedicated to stopping violence in all its forms.



Support from donors and volunteers is crucial to continue providing these services.

Healing, WITH HELP

BY ANNA QUINLAN

Survivors of abuse find peace at Tahoe SAFE Alliance



Michele Reynolds holds a photo of her late son, who was murdered at age 17 by Reynolds' ex-husband. She gets help through art therapy at Tahoe SAFE Alliance. PHOTO ERIC MARKS

Shortly after her divorce, Michele Reynolds began receiving death threats from her ex-husband, causing her to fear for her life and the lives of her two children. A friend from Sacramento was familiar with Tahoe SAFE Alliance and suggested that Reynolds reach out to them for help. Looking back on the pain and loss her ex would cause, she's so glad that she connected with the nonprofit.

Several family members and friends initially accused Reynolds of overreacting to the threats and suggested that she simply ignore them.

"The people at Tahoe SAFE Alliance were some of the only people that actually believed that something was really wrong," she says. "I was comforted by the fact that I wasn't crazy. They could see that [he] was a real maniac. It was very validating."

"I know that I'm supported in what I'm doing. ... They've helped me feel alive."

Michele Reynolds
Tahoe SAFE Alliance community member

Reynolds, her son and daughter had begun to receive counseling through Tahoe SAFE Alliance when her ex-husband tracked them down and murdered their 17-year-old son in 1990. The organization immediately connected her with a doctor specializing in grief counseling and provided legal assistance so that Reynolds was supported throughout her ex-husband's trial and incarceration.

"[Tahoe SAFE Alliance] was really instrumental in keeping him incarcerated," Reynolds says. "He was up for parole, and they connected me with the parole board so I could present all of the threatening letters he was sending from jail."

After her son's tragic death, Reynolds says it was hard to reach out for therapy.

"At first I was just too depressed to do much," she remembers. Eventually, though, she got involved in a weekly support group, where she was comforted by people from all walks of life who could relate.

"You wouldn't believe the people that showed up," she says. "Doctors, lawyers ... everyone. And we did such amazing work."

Reynolds also utilized the organization's art therapy services — an additional avenue for her to work through her pain.

"It brought me so much healing to sit down and do a collage about how I want my life to look without violence," she says. "Tahoe SAFE Alliance has been such a supportive agency for me to walk this path with," she says. "I know that I'm supported in what I'm doing. Instead of deadened by pain or numbed by the feeling of being chased by a monster, they've helped me feel alive."

Giving survivors help when they need it

For survivors of domestic violence, child abuse and/or sexual assault, Tahoe SAFE Alliance provides a wide range of direct services, including crisis intervention, counseling, legal advocacy and case management.

Tahoe SAFE Alliance accompanies survivors to court and offers legal consultation, including assisting with protective and restraining orders. And when Tahoe SAFE Alliance knows of other

resources that can help, they work to connect community members to outside organizations.

In 2015, they made over 1,000 referrals helping community members gain access to food, shelter, unemployment and legal assistance, outside counseling, preventive health services and more. Several of these organizations are partnered with Tahoe SAFE Alliance and operate both out of the Kings Beach Community House and the Donald

W. Reynolds Community Non-Profit Center in Incline Village. Both locations are one-stop shop for direct services. Under one roof, community members are easily guided through the services for which they qualify.



All of Tahoe SAFE Alliance's services are free. Generous donations and help from volunteers ensure that survivors continue to get the help they need and deserve.

A Promising TOMORROW

Children's programs heal
emotional wounds

BY EDGAR
SANCHEZ

After surviving the darkness of domestic violence at the hands of her partner, Isobel Contreras* fled to a bright, peaceful refuge. She left the Southern California home where she had been repeatedly beaten in front of her children, one of them an infant.

"I wanted to be far from the place where this problem occurred, because it reminded me too much of what I went through," says Contreras, now 35. "I wanted to live in peace."

In late 2009, her abusive partner was deported to Mexico. She and their children — Amy*, now 10, and Samuel*, now 7 — moved north, to sun-dappled Truckee.

For years, all three carried emotional scars. Contreras suffered from depression and low self-esteem; the siblings resented their father.

In early 2015, Contreras and her kids stepped into the sparkling Tahoe SAFE Alliance office in Truckee. She was greeted by a Spanish-speaking staff, which was particularly helpful since Contreras does not speak English. The family found a welcoming atmosphere at the nonprofit, receiving free therapeutic counseling and other services. Within days, Contreras and her children began individual counseling, which is ongoing.

"When Isobel initially came to us, we provided her with education regarding the effects of domestic violence witnessed by children," says Penny Morris, Manager of Tahoe SAFE Alliance's Children's Program.

"The brother and sister have done some family therapy with each other that has allowed them to talk to each other a little better," Morris says. The children also participate in Tahoe SAFE Alliance-sponsored field trips like hikes in Lake Tahoe.

Contreras has seen a marked difference in her children's behavior since commencing therapy.

**"I don't have
the words to
thank Tahoe
SAFE Alliance
for all it has
done for us."**

Isobel Contreras*
*Mother who received services from
Tahoe SAFE Alliance*

"Samuel is the one who's suffered a little more," Contreras said. "As a little boy, he was violent. He argued a lot with his sister ... He doesn't argue as much anymore."

Amy became introverted after witnessing her father abuse her mother.

"Amy was very timid, very quiet. She didn't want to make friends with anyone," Contreras says. "Now, she has befriended some of the little girls at her school."

The effects of the children's trauma are receding. So is their mother's pain.

"I don't have the words to thank Tahoe SAFE Alliance for all it has done for us," Contreras says. "My goal is to support my children in their studies ... and see them become good people," she says.

**Name has been changed.*



Isobel Contreras* and her children, Amy and Samuel, have received counseling and services through Tahoe SAFE Alliance. That support has helped the three of them overcome the impact abuse has had on their family.
PHOTO BY ERIC MARKS

Supporting our children

Overwhelming national and international research suggests that children who witness domestic violence often have the same symptoms as children experiencing physical abuse.

The long-lasting impact of witnessing domestic violence can cause children to suffer from the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, which include anxiety, hyper-vigilance, insomnia, depression, bed-wetting, poor concentration and aggression. Most alarmingly, the effects of witnessing domestic violence has been shown to disrupt and delay normal brain development.

Tahoe SAFE Alliance offers a range of services for children, including **individual counseling, a weekly support group and education programs** for both parents and children. In partnership with several community-based mental health service providers, they are able to

provide counseling in Spanish and other languages, if needed.

In addition, Tahoe SAFE Alliance provides **crucial advocacy and accompaniment services** for children and their parents, helping community members maneuver within the medical, legal, mental health or educational systems.

They also run the **Youth Empowerment Project** at various schools in the area, designed to improve self-esteem and mitigate the negative effects of peer pressure. For the snow lovers, in partnership with Northstar at Tahoe, they provide children with **free ski/snowboard lift tickets, lessons and rentals.**



These children's programs would not be possible without the work of volunteers and generous donations from community members and corporate partners.

A Place to Call HOME

Tahoe SAFE Alliance offers a refuge for abuse victims and survivors

BY ANNA QUINLAN

Diana Wilson* was married for 30 years, building her home and her family of three children together with her husband in Truckee.

"On the outside, we looked so normal," says the now 58-year-old.

In reality, however, she spent the second half of her marriage growing increasingly concerned about her husband's substance abuse and his unpredictable and controlling treatment of her, as well as her own relationship with alcohol, which she used to mask her distress.

"He was a really good dad and provider for the first 10 years or so," she says of her ex-husband. "Then the alcohol and drugs got worse and worse."

Wilson says that it took her years to identify her husband's behavior as abusive. Years into her marriage, she walked past Tahoe SAFE Alliance and, intrigued by the sign, stepped inside to pick up a brochure. As she read through the warning signs and red flags about domestic abuse, she finally realized that she was in an abusive relationship.

"My biggest fear was supporting my kids on my own," she says. Another 15 years passed before she left.

An unexpected intervention pushed Wilson to finally reach out for help. Her husband, who was intoxicated at the time, was on the phone with an insurance agent and began outlining his plan to get a gun and kill his wife. The insurance agent called the Truckee Police Department who in turn called Wilson and asked her if she was safe in her home. It was the first time she had thought about it in such simple terms.

"No," she admitted for the first time, "I don't think I am safe here."

Shortly thereafter she called Tahoe SAFE Alliance and explained her situation. She immediately moved into the Mountain Rose Safe House as part of the agency's residential program.

"I was blown away that I was finally in such a

safe environment," Wilson says. "It was perfect. I was able to access my [Alcoholics Anonymous] meetings and the store. It was exactly what I needed."

Wilson is now sober and lives on her own in Truckee.

"I just wish I would have called Tahoe SAFE Alliance 10 years sooner," she says. "I wish I would have known that things could actually get better."

"I was blown away that I was finally in such a safe environment."

Diana Wilson*
Former resident of the Tahoe SAFE Alliance residential program

**Name and photo have been changed to protect her identity.*



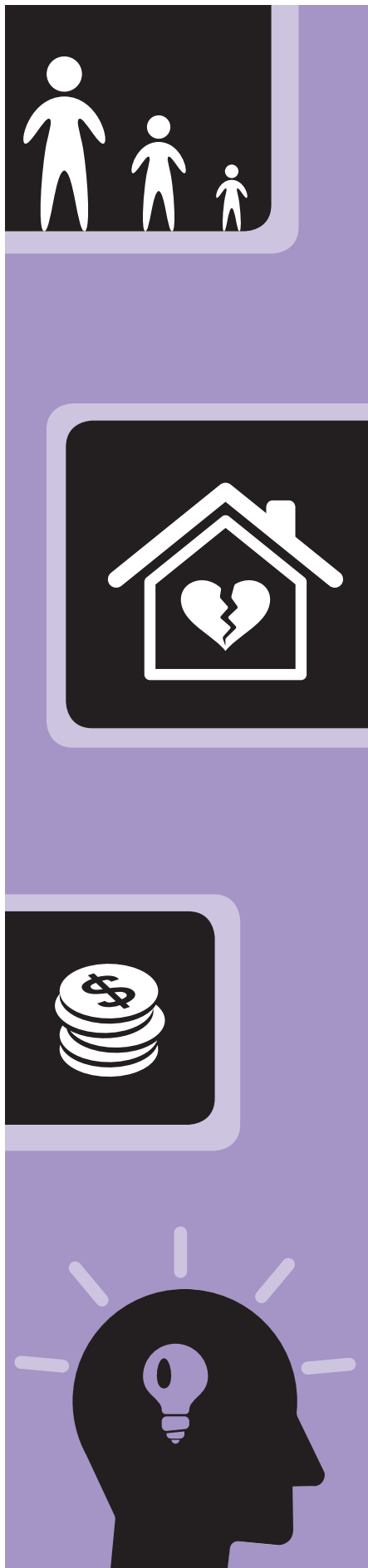
A safe place for families

Tahoe SAFE Alliance owns and operates the only safe house, Mountain Rose Safe House, in the North Lake Tahoe and Truckee communities. The Safe House is a place where community members can collect themselves, look at their lives, assess their needs and plan for the future. It is a 90-day program that can shelter up to three families. Tahoe SAFE Alliance provides shelter, food and day to day living essentials, allowing the families to save money toward independent living.

Additionally, Tahoe SAFE Alliance operates a **Transitional Housing Program** that provides qualified community members with longer-term living assistance including help with rent, furniture, utilities and food. When they are ready and able to live on their own, the Transitional Housing Program can assist them in locating and qualifying for low-income housing as the final step in their journey toward independence.



Every individual deserves a safe place to call home, and Tahoe SAFE Alliance is working to make that a reality in this community.



What EVERYONE Should Know

BY ANNA
QUINLAN

Correcting misconceptions about abuse

Domestic and sexual abuse can take many forms and is a problem in communities throughout the region. Tahoe SAFE Alliance works to prevent such violence and dispel the myths surrounding abuse.

Does domestic violence only affect low-income populations?

There is a myth that intimate partner violence predominately occurs in low-income families of color, but the reality of the situation is much more complex. A victim in a relationship that has financial assets may have restricted access to money, making the prospect of leaving especially daunting. On the other end of the spectrum, a victim in poverty may not leave due to the simple fact that they don't believe they can make it as a single parent on one income. Because such barriers exist for people from various income levels, Tahoe SAFE Alliance offers services from safe housing to legal advocacy in order to help victims from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

If something doesn't leave a mark, is it really abuse?

Many physical injuries have a healing start and end time. It's visible to the eye and the victim can physically heal. The toll of emotional and mental abuse, however, can be enormous and long-lasting.

When someone else dictates what their partner can wear, who they can talk to, where they can go and how they are labeled (e.g. promiscuous or stupid), that victim loses their identity. When they break from that abusive relationship, it's difficult to reclaim the original identity that existed before the abuse.

Tahoe SAFE Alliance provides support groups, counseling and art therapy to help victims of both physical and non-physical abuse reclaim their identities.

What is the impact of growing up in an abusive home?

Violence at home creates instability, chronic stress and fear in a child's heart. Healthy child development is dependent on caring and trusting relationships. Disrupted child development occurs when instability and chaos trigger a child's survival mechanisms. This makes it difficult for children to succeed in school and extracurricular activities and to maintain healthy relationships.

Tahoe SAFE Alliance provides advocacy, accompaniment and support groups, as well as individual and group therapy, for children impacted by abuse.

Why don't people just leave when their partner abuses them?

There are many barriers to leaving an abusive relationship. Threats to take

children away, financial instability, lack of support, loss of spiritual community and many more factors may be at play. Tahoe SAFE Alliance helps victims access resources to make leaving an abusive situation possible and safe.

What is generational violence?

Unhealthy patterns can develop and become reinforced over generations in a family. In order to stop the cycle, family members must know what domestic violence looks like, but also what a healthy relationship looks like. Tahoe SAFE Alliance shows people that they deserve a relationship filled with love, respect, equality, trust and communication. The messages that children learn about rejecting abuse and accepting safety can ultimately create new patterns of love and respect in a family.

Why do victims blame themselves?

Victims of abuse often find fault in the violence they are experiencing from their partner. Common thoughts include, "I am stupid for loving someone who hurts me," "Why do I pick partners who abuse me?" and "I must deserve this."

Tahoe SAFE Alliance advocates work with domestic violence survivors to educate them on how batterers often manipulate the victim into thinking they are to blame.

TEAM UP

against domestic violence

For more than 30 years, Tahoe SAFE Alliance has provided programs, services, education and outreach united around the goal of ending domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. Driven by the belief that everyone has the right to live a life free of violence, the agency provides safety, advocacy, support and education for victims of abuse.

ACCESSING HELP

If you or someone you know is in crisis, Tahoe SAFE Alliance can provide immediate assistance or ongoing support in breaking the cycle of abuse.



SERVICES ARE
ALWAYS FREE.



800-736-1060



www.tahoesealliance.org/get-help



Kings Beach office
265 Bear St.
Kings Beach, CA
96143
530-546-7804



Truckee office
12257 Business
Park Drive, Unit 6
Truckee, CA 96161
530-582-9117



Incline Village office
948 Incline Way
Incline Village, NV
89451
775-298-0010



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

You or your business can be a part of the effort through sponsorship, membership or volunteer opportunities. For more information, visit www.tahoesealliance.org/help-us.



“I have personally witnessed the horrible effects that domestic violence and sexual assault have on individuals. Having the resources provided by Tahoe SAFE Alliance here in our local communities is a huge gift, one that should never be taken for granted.”

Dianne Miller

Tahoe SAFE Alliance Board Member

North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Volunteer of the Year, 2016

Why I Support Tahoe SAFE Alliance



“We are constantly exposed to issues in our community that stem from family violence and unhealthy families. By creating healthy families, Tahoe SAFE Alliance holistically creates better communities. I support them so I can truly say, “No more.”

Rob Leftwich,
Captain,
Truckee Police
Department



“Tahoe SAFE Alliance addresses a number of small communities, a diverse economic demographic group, as well as all ages and genders. Its proactive approach helps all ages head off problems before they occur.”

Linda Offerdahl,
Community activist



“As a first responder and investigator, I know Tahoe SAFE Alliance’s approach is key to interrupting the cycle of violence, and helps build a foundation to prevent future violence.”

Dennis Walsh,
Captain, Tahoe
Station Commander,
Placer County
Sheriff’s Office



“By responding to unfortunate acts of family violence and educating the next generation to prevent future violence, Tahoe SAFE Alliance works on both ends of the problem, keeping our families stable and community vital.”

Stacy Caldwell, CEO,
Tahoe Truckee
Community
Foundation



“Tahoe SAFE Alliance is a primary partner for the Tahoe Truckee School District in so many ways, including their outstanding prevention and education programs. Without them, we could not provide this level of support for our students.”

Robert J. Leri, Ed.D.,
Superintendent Chief
Learning Officer,
Tahoe Truckee Unified
School District



“Tahoe SAFE Alliance’s support of those in crisis is absolutely critical. Every day they work to build a more respectful and caring community.”

Claudia Andersen,
CEO,
Parasol Tahoe
Community
Foundation