

# Worlds Unite to Clean Up Lake Tahoe Basin on September 11

by Carol Betz



On the anniversary of a day that most of us remember, with sorrow, as a day of cultural intolerance, people from over 20 countries and cultures pulled together to benefit the forests and community of Lake Tahoe for the 13th annual Tahoe Forest Stewardship Day. The League to Save Lake Tahoe, a local environmental nonprofit, also known as Keep Tahoe Blue, sponsored the event with the help of the North Tahoe Public Utilities District. This year's event was at the North Tahoe Regional Park in Tahoe Vista, California.

In addition to local community volunteers from around the Lake Tahoe Basin, Au Pair in America, a Stamford based company offering cultural exchange in the form of affordable live-in child care, brought over 40 volunteers into the area for this annual forest restoration event. The Au Pairs all live with families in Northern California and Northern Nevada and gave up their weekend to help support efforts to Keep Tahoe Blue.

Volunteers in this year's effort to improve the forests of the Lake Tahoe Basin focused on forest restoration projects in the wildland urban interface between the park and the community of Tahoe Vista. It combined field education in forest ecology, defensible space, Best Management Practices (BMPs), soil conservation, wildlife biology, and natural history with hands-on forest restoration projects. Restoration projects included hand-thinning of over-stocked forests, trail restoration, native plant re-vegetation, and erosion control BMPs.



"This is the largest volunteer turnout I have seen in my 31 years of service with the North Tahoe Public Utilities District." Kim Ingstad, Park Maintenance Superintendent told one of the Community Counselors. "I am amazed by the work ethic of these Au Pairs who are visitors to the area and to the country. It is heart warming to see the investment they are making in Tahoe's conservation." Flavia Sordelet, the League's event coordinator, was equally impressed with the turnout. "The Au Pairs helped to make this year's Tahoe Forest Stewardship Day a huge success. Everyone from the group was enthusiastic and hard-working when it came to completing the forest restoration projects. And the League looks forward to future opportunities to partner with Au Pair in America on Keep Tahoe Blue volunteer events."



Colombian, Brazilian, Thai, German, South African, Dutch and French girls, to name but a few of the countries represented, worked happily side by side as they strived towards a common goal. "What a great initiative. It was wonderful working together in helping to restore and clean up the beautiful Tahoe environment. And we had loads of fun," said Nosipho Khumalo from South Africa. Zarrineh-Lisa Valipour from Germany told a community counselor that "the idea of helping the environment and knowing that you can make a change for our future makes me feel good. I would do it again. It was fun."

To learn more about how you can help to Keep Tahoe Blue and find out about next year's Tahoe Forest Stewardship Day go to [www.keptahoeblue.org](http://www.keptahoeblue.org). To learn more about Au Pair in America go to [www.aupairinamerica.com](http://www.aupairinamerica.com).