



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**HANDS4HOPE – YOUTH MAKING A DIFFERENCE ANNOUNCES MAJOR EXPANSION TO SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, BRINGING YOUTH-LED SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMS TO THE REGION**

Hands4Hope - Youth Making A Difference (Hands4Hope), a proven youth-led service-learning nonprofit organization, is delighted to announce its significant expansion into South Lake Tahoe. This pivotal initiative is being supported and funded by the Pay It Forward Project, led by John McDougall, in close collaboration with South Tahoe Middle and High Schools. This strategic move will introduce Hands4Hope's impactful Outreach and Education Programs to the region's youth, including the launch of Service-Learning Clubs at South Tahoe Middle and High Schools, fostering a new generation of community-minded leaders in the region.

Established in 2008, Hands4Hope empowers youth through service-learning to become community-minded leaders. The organization's proven model addresses a critical need, first identified in the 2007 California Healthy Kids Survey, for community service opportunities and a sense of purpose among El Dorado County teens. Hands4Hope's youth-driven programs provide a platform for young people to create and lead service projects that support local charities and address unmet community needs.

"We are excited to welcome the transformative experience of Hands4Hope - Youth Making A Difference's service-learning programs to our campus," said Justin Zunino, Principal at South Tahoe High School. "Youth participants will have the opportunity to provide services to those in need, while also building a stronger, more engaged, and more compassionate community."

"We are excited to collaborate with Hands4Hope and our community partners to bring this club to South Tahoe Middle School! Hands4Hope will empower our students to see themselves as leaders and change-makers, providing a platform to use their voices, ideas, and hearts to make a real difference at STMS and in our community," said Cindy Martínez, Principal at South Tahoe Middle School.

John McDougall, leader of the Pay It Forward Project, an organization that promotes and supports community volunteerism, shared his enthusiasm: "The Pay It Forward Project is thrilled to collaborate with Hands4Hope and the South Lake Tahoe schools to bring these vital programs to our basin. We firmly believe in the power of youth-led service, and this expansion will create incredible new volunteer and engagement opportunities, empowering our young people to actively shape a better future for our community."

The South Lake Tahoe expansion will unfold with a clear timeline:

- **April 2026: Youth leaders** for on-campus Hands4Hope Clubs at South Tahoe Middle and South Tahoe High schools will be identified and selected, preparing them to attend Hands4Hope's empowering summer leadership training.
- **May 2026:** The Hands4Hope **Outreach Program** will officially launch in South Lake Tahoe, beginning to engage the local youth and serve needs in the community.
- **June 2026:** Youth leaders begin their summer leadership training, providing foundational knowledge and skill-building opportunities.
- **August 2026:** Hands4Hope **Service-Learning Clubs** will launch at South Tahoe Middle and High Schools, allowing students to actively participate in designing, funding, and implementing service projects tailored to their community.

Working alongside dedicated adult mentors, Hands4Hope youth participants develop 21st-century skills, including creative leadership, financial literacy, organizational cooperation, and project development and management. These skills are essential for success in college, the workforce, and beyond. Through hands-on experience, Hands4Hope youth learn to identify community problems, develop innovative solutions, and mobilize resources to make a tangible difference.

Hands4Hope - Youth Making A Difference's impact extends far beyond individual projects. The organization nurtures socially responsible, civic-minded residents who have compassion for those in need and are committed to creating a safe, vital community. By empowering youth to take action, Hands4Hope cultivates a generation of leaders equipped to solve complex problems and build a brighter future.

Hands4Hope looks forward to partnering with the South Lake Tahoe community, local schools, and residents to ensure the success of this expansion. For more information on how to get involved or support the South Lake Tahoe initiative, please visit [www.hands4hopeyouth.org](http://www.hands4hopeyouth.org) or contact Jennifer Bassett at 916.919.5695 or [jbassett@hands4hopeyouth.org](mailto:jbassett@hands4hopeyouth.org).

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