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Delivering warmth

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Emma Garrard / Sierra Sun / Steven Samlot puts a log in the back of a truck on private land on Saturday. The wood is being donated to senior citizens in South Lake Tahoe.

Dee Nangle was in need of firewood. The 74-year-old South Shore resident spent last winter heating her home with gas, but kept her thermostat at 65 degrees because of rising gas prices.

Nangle decided she needed wood for this winter, but with wood costing $250 to $450 for a split cord, she couldn't afford it.

After calling various forest-related agencies in Tahoe, Nangle connected with John Pickett, Tahoe Basin coordinator of the Nevada Fire Safe Council, who told Nangle that he had free firewood but no way to get it to her.

"It was going to cost me a couple of hundred of dollars to get it to me," Nangle said. "I do a lot of volunteer work and I was willing to take on the project. I was able to organize volunteers not only to donate a truck, but to split the wood and deliver to seniors."

Now Nangle, who recognized the need for low-income senior citizens and the disabled to have access to free firewood, and Pickett, who looks for ways to reduce burning piles in the basin, work together to accomplish both goals.

"This is a way to reduce the amount of burning in the woods and smoking out neighborhoods," Pickett said. "We are really working hard to minimize the amount of smoke. It helps the community and the seniors."

Volunteers from the Nevada Conservation Corps and Tahoe Turning Point helped split logs Saturday, and a Boy Scout troop from South Shore delivered cords Sunday. Nangle said she currently has 50 applicants in need of wood, but there are only 30 cords available this year. All of the wood went to South Shore residents.

Both Nangle and Pickett hope to expand the program to the North Shore next year.

"Our whole goal is not only to service Nevada and California South Shore area, but on

the North Shore," Nangle said. "If we can start early next year we will be basin-wide."

Pickett, who manages forest thinning and community wildfire protect plans in the basin, said there are three projects scheduled next year on the North Shore, including Kingswood West, Kingswood East and Talmont. He said these projects will enable wood to be distributed to senior citizens and the disabled in North Tahoe.

"What we have found is seniors who live in the Tahoe Basin who have lived here a long time who are afraid to turn on their lights and heat by wood only because they can't afford anything else," Pickett said. "There are a lot of seniors who only heat by wood and that is who we are looking for."

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