

It started with two people and two visions.

South Lake Tahoe Chiropractor Stewart Bittman was leading a prayer circle on the first anniversary of Sept. 11 when he saw it.

Debi LeFaye had been having terrifying nightmares about mass destruction in November when she dreamed it: a circle of people holding hands around the lake.

In a conversation some weeks later, they discovered they'd seen the same thing.

LeFaye, owner of the Academy of the Ancient Arts in Tahoe City, decided to take action. In fall

of 2002, she scheduled the inaugural Hands Around Lake Tahoe for June 21, the Summer Solstice, and set out to organize 77,000 people from the bi-state area and beyond to participate. In its first year, around 10,000 people held hands on nearly every beach around the lake. While there weren't enough people to link the chain, LeFaye hopes this year will bring thousands more.

The objective isn't necessarily to raise money for charity like Hands Across America did in 1986, but to come together to make a stand for peace and positive transfor-



Hands Around

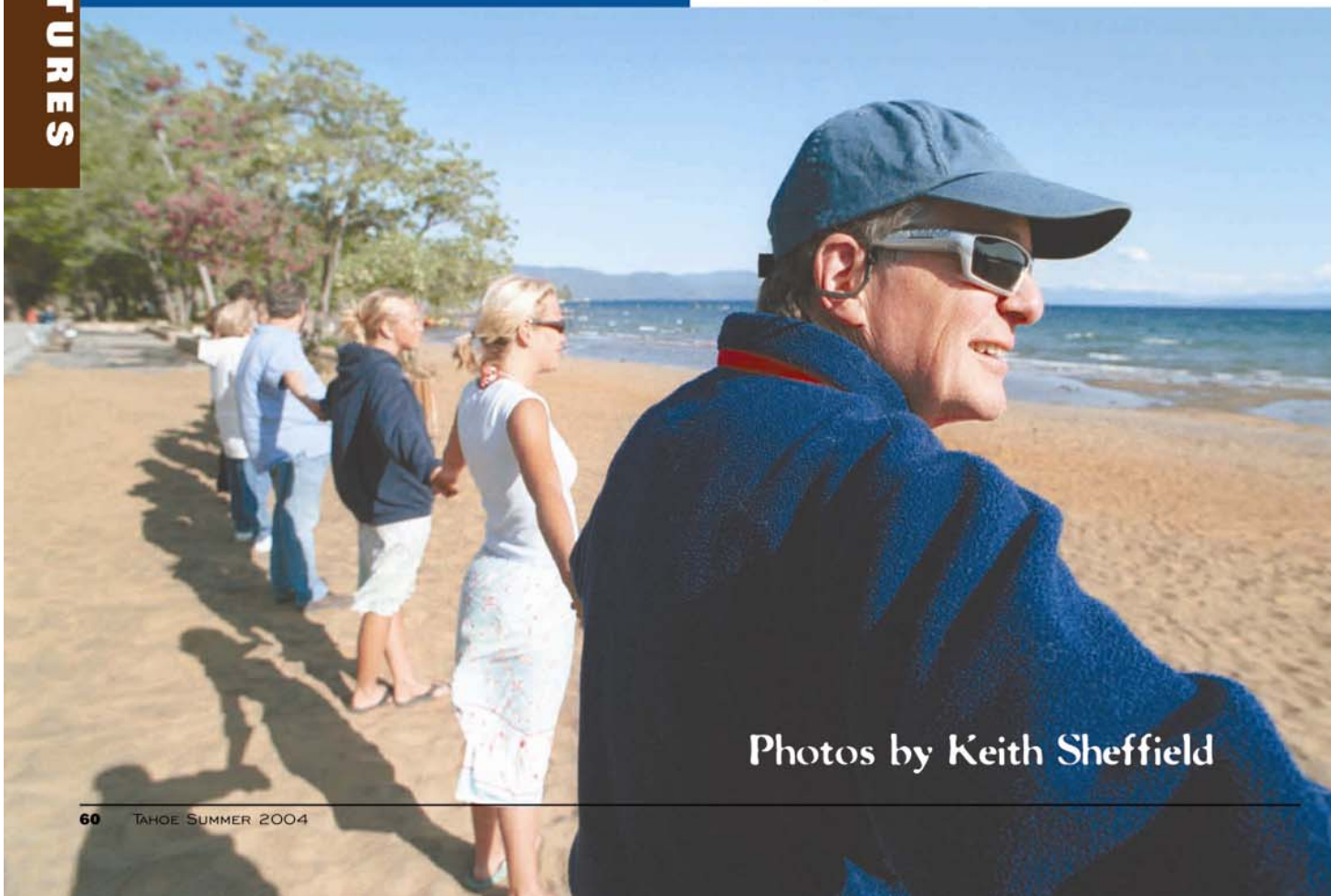
mation in a time of global chaos and change, said LeFaye.

"Why does there have to be a war for people to come together in demonstrations, and why does it have to be angry?" she said.

By bringing thousands of people together at the lake, considered a spiritual place by the Washoe tribe and countless residents and visitors, LeFaye is confident local organizations and businesses will garner support and the economy will get a jumpstart.

"I thought it would be a wonderful event for the commu-

FEATURES



Photos by Keith Sheffield



Hands Around Lake Tahoe:

WHEN: June 20, 2004 at noon

WHERE: Lake Tahoe's beaches.

Lake Tahoe

nity, because you're drawing together local residents as well as bringing visitors to the area," said public relations specialist Pettit Gilwee of the day last year when LeFaye told her about the idea.

Since June is still considered a "soft" month for tourism, Gilwee said Hands Around Lake Tahoe is good for restaurants and retail stores.

To achieve a complete circle around the lake, LeFaye and event planners are organizing volunteers to be in charge of people gathered at every public beach around the lake. Four or five "beach peacekeepers" are needed to supervise each of the 27 beaches, and more volunteers are needed. Participants should choose a beach — all public ones are listed on the Web site - and arrive with warm clothes and sunscreen by 12 p.m. on June 20.

In shoreline areas that are private or difficult to navigate, the group will employ ribbons to fill in spaces between people. LeFaye is looking for volunteers to help make ribbons, as well as participants with boats who could hold the ribbons from the water in certain places.

The task of coordinating an event of such magnitude is daunting, said LeFaye, 47, but she couldn't ignore the call to do it. In the fall of 2002, she began having "apocalyptic" dreams, complete with mass death, rivers of blood and burned-out buildings.

"It was really horrific — I woke up screaming every night for a week," she said. LeFaye, a former special education teacher and longtime spiritual counselor, learned long ago how to use her intuitive gifts from her grandmother and said she's been doing tarot readings for most of her life.

She thought she must have been shown the terrifying images for some reason, and asked the Universe or God to show her what to do. That was the night she dreamed of people holding hands around the lake, she said.

"I was scared — I'd never done anything bigger than a parent-teacher association meeting," she said. But a lot of people on the North Shore are glad she took on the project.

"As soon as I thought of it, it seemed kind of overwhelming, but others had it [the vision] too and that made it more feasible and possible," said Bittman, the chiropractor who saw the same thing as LeFaye two months before.

"I think it would make an incredibly strong statement for peace — getting 60,000 people to agree on anything would be a strong statement," he added.

To volunteer or for more information about Hands Around Lake Tahoe, call Debi LeFaye at (530) 448-1199, or visit the Web site at www.handsaroundlaketahoe.com.