

Stewards of the Sierra: Meet the owners of Carmel Gallery and Sorensen's Resort

Posted by [jeffpelline](#) on October 21, 2016 · [Leave a Comment](#)

The President of the United States visited twice this summer to help preserve and protect the Sierra—from Lake Tahoe to Yosemite. When the President is not around, we can count on local business owners, political leaders and community members to help out. Meet some of them:



Elizabeth and Olof Carmel

Award-winning fine art photographers Elizabeth and Olof Carmel— whose work is featured in this issue, including the cover—have traveled throughout the world for over 30 years exploring and photographing the world's landscapes.

Elizabeth's prints have been displayed at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C., and her work has been featured in many publications, from *People* magazine to *Tahoe Quarterly*. She also has published books of her photography.

In 2013, Elizabeth, a former land use planner with extensive experience in the Sierra, was appointed to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) governing board by California Assembly Speaker John Perez. The seat is one of 14 voting positions on the board of TRPA, which leads the effort to preserve, restore and enhance the Lake Tahoe region. Her term ended this fall.

The UC-Berkeley environmental science graduate helped formulate Truckee's first general and downtown plans, and she has worked as an advisor to the Sierra Business Council. Olof has worked as a backcountry ranger with the National Park Service in Yosemite, Denali, Glacier, Mt. Rainier and Rocky Mountain National Park.

The Carmels own and operate the [Carmel Galleries](#) in Truckee and Calistoga. They live in Truckee and Calistoga with their teenage daughter, Abbey. "I believe that great fine art photographs are a gateway to a larger perspective about ourselves and the universe we inhabit," says Elizabeth.



John and Patty Brissenden

The Brissendens live in beautiful Hope Valley, home to [Sorensen's Resort](#), which they have owned for over 35 years. They have revitalized Sorensen's, opened in 1926 by a Danish immigrant, into a year-round playground for outdoor lovers with cozy bed-and-breakfast cottages, fully outfitted cabins, even a wood-fired sauna.

Patty also is credited with helping found Friends of Hope Valley, which worked with other non-profit organizations to garner \$25 million in state and federal funds to put 25,000 acres of private ranch lands into public ownership over a 10-year effort.

She is founder and former board member/chair of the Sierra Nevada Alliance and serves as former chair and board member of The Sierra Fund.

John was elected to the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. He serves on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Before moving to the Sierra, John and Patty lived in Santa Cruz County, where John was field representative to Congressman Leon Panetta, and he helped with the founding of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County. Patty served as the chief of staff to then Assemblymember Sam Farr (now a Congressman).

During a year-long sojourn in Washington D.C. in the early 1990s, John and Patty volunteered for the Clinton White House. The Brissendens met with President Obama when he spoke at the Tahoe Summit this summer. "Our Hope Valley home remains an immense amount of enjoyment," says John. "Our guests continue to inspire us to preserve and protect this special area of the Sierra."