

State senator representing Washoe County dies

By Seth A. Richardson, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada Senate Democrats announced the death of Sparks state Sen. Debbie Smith on Sunday. She was 60.



Debbie Smith

Smith was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2015. She had successful surgery to remove the tumor at MD Anderson Cancer Clinic in Houston before returning for the final six weeks of the session.

Senate Democrats said in a release that plans for a memorial service would be released in the coming days.

She remained active in the political realm even as she fought cancer, sitting on the committee that is drafting a 2016 ballot question on funding for building and maintenance projects for the Washoe County School District. She previously said she planned to return to the Legislature in 2017.

Read the whole story

LTN reporter earns national writing honor

The North American Travel Journalists Association has recognized *Lake Tahoe News* reporter Susan Wood for her excellent feature writing ability.



Lake Tahoe News reporter Susan Wood on assignment.

Wood was a finalist in the Special Focus Travel Articles – Internet: Personality & Profiles category. This was for her **February 2015 piece on John Rice**, general manager of Sierra-at-Tahoe.

“Susan’s ability to capture the essence of her subject makes her stories seem like they are part biography, part poetry and part history lesson,” Kathryn Reed, publisher of *LTN*, said. “Having this national travel writers group single her out is testament to her ability to make her stories come alive.”

North American Travel Journalists Association is one of the largest professional associations of travel writers, photographers and editors.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Boulder on Hwy. 50 to be removed Monday



This boulder fell on Highway 50 on the Nevada side of the South Shore on Feb. 20.
Photo/Bill Kingman

Updated: Feb. 21, 5:50pm:

A boulder described as “far bigger than my SUV” by a passer-by is blocking one of the westbound lanes of Highway 50 near Logan Shoals.

The Nevada Highway Patrol told *Lake Tahoe News* the rock will not be able to be moved until at least Monday. It may take until Tuesday to clear it. It is 6-feet high and 9-feet wide.

It fell into the No. 2 lane about 6:20pm Feb. 20. That lane remains closed.

NHP said it caused a non-injury accident.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Nevada the national foreclosure leader

By Eli Segall, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada's housing market started the year on a familiar note, with one of the highest foreclosure rates in the country.

One in every 603 homes statewide received a foreclosure-related filing in January, up 30 percent from December and about 1.5 percent from January 2015, RealtyTrac reported Feb. 19.

Nevada, which last year posted the fourth-highest foreclosure rate in the country, was No. 2 in January.

Read the whole story

Nevadans put up big bucks for political races

By Adelaide Chen, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada's top political donors so far this election cycle for presidential and congressional campaigns, PACs and Super PACs are the co-founder of a data center, the former head of Reebok and a casino magnate.

Super PACs, which operate independently of the candidate's own

campaigns, are not subject to the federal contribution limits that regular political action committees have, but they are required to disclose their donors, according to the Federal Election Commission.

George Macricostas, CEO and executive chairman of RagingWire Data Centers, made America's Liberty the most funded Super PAC in Nevada in 2015, donating more than \$2.1 million indirectly to Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., who dropped out of the presidential race on Feb. 3. Reached by phone, Macricostas' father confirmed that his son lives full time in Incline Village.

Read the whole story

SLT man arrested in valley on battery charges

A South Lake Tahoe man was arrested after allegedly roughing up some Douglas County sheriff's deputies in Minden.

The incident started Feb. 15 at the Sierra Motel in the valley where Michael Adrian Lindauer, 31, was staying the night. He and the clerk got in an argument over \$20.

Deputies arrived, struggled with Lindauer and tasered him a few times until he could be handcuffed. He faces multiple charges of battery. Deputies received scratches and bruises, with one sustaining an injury to the leg.

Deputies said they recovered a large bag of marijuana from Lindauer's truck.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif. backs off easing standard for inmate firefighters

By Don Thompson, AP

SACRAMENTO — California's new corrections chief is backing off a plan to lower standards for inmate firefighters, focusing instead on persuading county sheriffs to send more jail prisoners to the state program.

Scott Kernan, who took over last month as secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, said in an interview with the Associated Press that he expects California will have enough inmate firefighters for this year's fire season despite a dwindling pool of candidates from state prisons.

The state is using more inmates with violent or serious criminal histories because recent laws have sent less serious offenders to county jails instead of state prisons, he said. Kernan hopes to use more of those local prisoners to fill the gap.

He's dropping, at least for now, a proposal by former secretary Jeffrey Beard that would have let inmates participate if they have up to seven years to serve on their sentences, an increase from the current five-year limit. Kernan said an analysis showed that changing the limit wouldn't have produced a significant increase in the number of qualified inmates.

Officials previously said they expected to ease the standard

ahead of this year's fire season, but controversy erupted in October after Beard sought to expand the number of inmates who could qualify despite having violent histories. Officials first denied, then acknowledged that they have long used inmates with violent pasts in the nation's largest and oldest inmate firefighter program. Beard quickly withdrew his proposal.

Kernan defended the use of those inmates as vital to a program that last year provided nearly 1 of 5 state, federal and local firefighters battling major blazes.

About 40 percent of the roughly 3,700 inmate firefighters committed violent crimes including 59 manslaughters, more than 500 assaults or batteries, and more than 1,000 robberies, the department said in November.

Lowering standards could have added inmates with more incentive to misbehave or escape, Stanford Criminal Justice Center co-director Robert Weisberg said. But Kernan noted that inmates are reviewed to see if they are dangerous before they are sent to live in the unfenced fire camps or dispatched to fight fires without supervision from correctional officers.

"If you don't change the rules of the prison, (the alternative) is to get them from county jails because that's where a lot of inmates have shifted now," Weisberg said.

Expanding inmates' eligibility would have been a calculated risk, said UC Berkeley, law Professor Frank Zimring, who has studied California prisons for more than 30 years. He warned that recruiting in jails may be tougher because many prisoners there have shorter sentences and may have active drug or mental health problems.

Weisberg and Zimring said they believe the program is worth the public safety risk.

Inmates must be physically fit and complete firefighting

classes. Arsonists, kidnappers, sex offenders, gang affiliates and those serving life sentences for murder and other crimes are excluded.

Kernan said the state will have enough firefighters this year without changing its standards partly because the department has agreements with 12 county sheriffs, with four more in progress. They supply about 6 percent of the firefighters in the program, or 242 firefighters.

Counties pay the state for taking jail prisoners, generally \$81 a day during training, then \$10 a day after they are certified. Los Angeles County trains its own inmates.

Sheriffs initially said they couldn't afford the program when the department proposed charging counties a higher rate after jail prisoners were trained.

California State Sheriffs' Association spokesman Cory Salzillo said more sheriffs seem to be interested after the state dropped its daily rate two years ago. State finance officials said that is enough to cover county inmates' food, clothing and pay so the state doesn't lose money.

"I know that the sheriffs have challenges with their budget as well, but I think as we expand to the county level, I think it's going to be able to keep our fire camp population at a right, reasonable level," Kernan said.

Deer Valley hotel combines comfort, elegance



Goldener Hirsch has communal seating throughout the property. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Publisher's note: *This is one in a series of stories about Park City, Utah.*

By Susan Wood

PARK CITY – If a hotel property is only as good as its leadership, then Goldener Hirsch would medal in guest services.

But it's also about teamwork at this hotel that is steps from Deer Valley, the ski area that has been rated No. 1 in the United States for multiple years.

There's a distinct reason why this 20-room boutique hotel prides itself on attention to detail and being true to its heritage. It's owned by a family with a background in the golden experience – the Eccles lineage, with Spencer as its patriarch, and daughter, Hope, as the president.

Spencer Fox Eccles, known as Spence to his employees, is a prominent financier and philanthropist in Salt Lake City.

Beyond serving on several boards including the National Chamber of Commerce, Alta Ski Corporation, National Parks Foundation and the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association, he was one of three people to steer the 2002 Salt Lake Olympic Organizing Committee. Because of his undaunted work, he was appointed as mayor of the Olympic Village during the Games and received the Pierre de Coubertin medal from the International Olympic Committee, the Olympic movement's highest honor.



Goldener Hirsch is walking distance to the slopes at Deer Valley.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Just visit Utah Olympic Park's swimming pool used by freestyle aerialists, and see whose name is mounted on a welcome sign. As a University of Utah student, Eccles earned all-American honors in 1957 and was regarded as one of the top amateur ski racers in the nation.

Guests to his hotel in Silver Lake Village, which is walking distance to Deer Valley's slopes, will notice his stamp of excellence channeled through his employees and the

establishment at every turn. Nothing but excellence will do. And Eccles takes striving for perfection to new levels, and meaningful accolades have rewarded him. The hotel gained recent recognition as the No. 2 small hotel in North America by Condé Nast Traveler magazine.

At first glance, the Austrian influence can be found on all floors of this hotel that opened in 1989. The imported, ornate décor is so tasteful and authentic, it feels like one just stepped into a “Sound of Music” production. This is not off base, according to regular Doug Whitney of Park City, who was enjoying the après ski experience at the bar one recent evening with his buddies and sister.

A yodeler used to visit the hotel to sing in the bar in Julie Andrews’s style. There are long alpenhorns on the wall in the bar and the lobby seating area. Upon seeing these unusual specimens, a few guests couldn’t resist chanting “Ricola” to signify the cough drop commercials. It’s a European feast for the eyes throughout the hotel, with sleds and antique bureaus sprinkling the floors, and antlers and horse harnesses dotting the walls. Even the heavy wooden room doors emulate a European castle experience, complete with an oversized key that guests leave at the front desk when they depart the building.



Cocktails and breakfast are served by a fireplace.

But first and foremost, it's the atmosphere that makes this place on Royal Street special. It's quiet, relaxed, yet amenity filled – with indoor and outdoor hot tubs, and among other things, a fine dining restaurant that even staffers in nearby retailer establishments recommend to their customers. Chef Ryan Burnham, who several years ago worked at Sunnyside in Tahoe City, makes meals to savor.

Dave, the concierge, serves as the consummate host. He and his fellow employees make the experience seem as though you were visiting long-lost European relatives. This guy could move mountains. As a Jersey boy, “fuggetaboutit” means he'll take care of every whim. He's quick to start a fire in a guest room or run an errand, even pick up dinner downtown.

And speaking of offerings, the hotel keeps its tradition of the finest in things from providing Aveda products in the bathrooms to better than average ingredients in the bar. Mimosas mentioned on the “specials” board are not made with the cheapest Champagne. They're made with Gloria Ferrer brut. Come time for breakfast, the whole wheat pancakes are smothered with syrup from Vermont, the connoisseur's home state of the sweet stuff.

Glance over as you sip your coffee or juice, and you'll see your skis put out by the staff to beckon you to the slopes. At the end of the day, the turn down staff tucks you in with chocolate mints and a forecast from the National Weather Service. It's hard to decide whether to stay in the hotel's comfy seating areas for a game of Backgammon or go out to Deer Valley's pristine slopes to let the two planks carve perfect turns. (Deer Valley doesn't allow snowboarders.)



Rooms at Goldener Hirsch are spacious and comfortable.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

“The spirit and camaraderie is authentic,” said Whitney, who’s frequented Goldener Hirsch since 1992. He even recalls a time when much of the staff spoke German. (Note: this Goldener Hirsch bears no ownership relation to the one in Salzburg, Austria.)

Goldener Hirsch stands for “golden stag” – hence the Deer Valley reference.

Still, American ingenuity and lifestyle provide flair to this European experience. Walk into the bar after a day of skiing, and you could hear jazz in the background. Jazz, drinks, good food and off-the-charts comfort – life is good at the Goldener Hirsch.

‘Vagina Monologues’ returning to South Lake Tahoe

“Vagina Monologues” return Feb. 26-27 for the 14th year in South Lake Tahoe.

The award-winning play “The Vagina Monologues” is based on V-Day founder/playwright Eve Ensler’s interviews with more than 200 women. With humor and grace the production celebrates women’s sexuality and strength.

Our cast is made up of community members, students, mothers, daughters, sisters, new-to-the-stage and seasoned performers.

The performance starts at 8pm at the Tahoe Beach Retreat.

Tickets are \$22.09 and may be purchased **online**. All Proceeds will go to Live Violence Free, CASA and Tahoe Youth & Family Services.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit received a \$6,000 donation from NV Energy for the Penny Pines Program, which will be used in LTBMU tree plantation sites including the Angora Fire area.
- South Lake Tahoe firefighters are participating in the March 5 St. Baldrick’s Foundation’s Brave the Shave for Kids with Cancer. More information is available **online**.
- Here is the El Dorado-Tahoe roadwork schedule from Caltrans for this coming week.
- Tahoe Sierra Century and Ride Miles for Music is Sept. 17. Choose a 30-, 60-, or 100-mile road bike route starting at village at Squaw Valley. Register **online**. All proceeds benefit music education in North Lake Tahoe.

· Kottonmouth Kings and guests Marlon Asher, Whitney Peyton and Chucky Chuck will be at Whiskey Dicks Saloon in South Lake Tahoe on March 10. Doors open at 9pm. Must be 21 to attend. Tickets are \$18 **in advance** or \$20 that night.