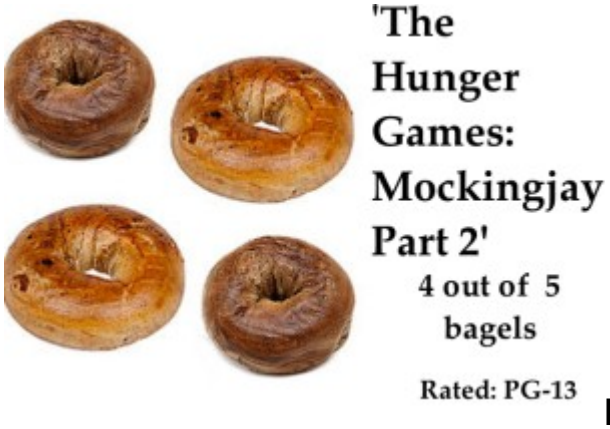
Input sought on SLT recreation center

There will be a planning meeting regarding the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Complex renovation on Dec. 8 from 5:30-8:30pm at the rec center, 1180 Rufus Allen Blvd.

The city is seeking ideas on how to revamp the recreation and swim center. This is an opportunity to offer input on design and other ideas.

This workshop will include an introduction of the project objectives, solicit community input on recreation activities for potential inclusion in the center's amenities, and discuss how this blends with neighboring properties.

'Mockingjay 2' fitting end to trilogy



By Howie Nave

I've been waiting for the fourth and final installment of this franchise (although I still consider it a trilogy with the last one broken into two parts) for so long that I was hoping

it would end with an amazing climatic experience. Well, it almost got there, but maybe that was just me anticipating too much.

It does gets there eventually and some of the special effects were mind-bending, yes, but I guess not all movie finales can live up to what one would hope for.

Still, seeing Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) shooting her arrows one last time was exhilarating. I'm bummed the story has come to a close.



Director Frances Lawrence has done a yeoman's job taking Suzanne Collins' post-apocalyptic series of books and turning the final, fourth installment into what will undoubtedly be one of the more successful box office conclusions to a franchise. And all along carrying that franchise has been Jennifer Lawrence who is virtually in every scene.

Katniss is still the reluctant leader of the rebellion on the war of Panem and wants to overtake the capital and kill President Snow (Donald Sutherland) but rebel organizer Alma Coin (Julianne Moore) wants to use her more as a media tool, the face, if you will, to rally the other districts to form one cohesive army to battle Snow's. Katniss may be the mockingjay, but she has other plans.

So much has transpired since Part 1, especially the death of Philip Seymour Hoffman who didn't live long enough to finish his role as the game master/public relations sidekick to Coin, Plutarch Heavensbee. It's kind of obvious when watching the movie and the filmmakers must have scrambled to use whatever footage was unused from Part 1 to utilize here in Part 2. The

filmmakers were, however able to stretch his presence in select scenes and his final words were read in a letter through Woody Harrelson's character, Haymitch.

For diehard fans of Katniss hoping for a love angle to blossom the movie teases with this love triangle instead pitting Katniss, Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) and her old flame Gale (Liam Hemsworth) as a sort of throw away, threesome element that never really gets defined (which I'll leave at that when you ultimately go see the movie for yourself). Yes, Peeta is still a risk to the rebels after being tortured by Snow's thugs and we don't know when he's going to snap at any given time. There are some new cast members, including Gwendoline Christie from "Game Of Thrones" (in an almost cameo role as a rebel commander). I enjoyed seeing the familiar faces such as soldier Boggs (Mahershala Ali from "House Of Cards" again, too briefly), Jeffrey Wright's Beetee, and Stanley Tucci's Caesar Flickerman who I wish was given more screen time as well.

In the end, "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2" centers around Katniss and her drive to get to President Snow and as we all know the journey is the best part (be prepared to jump out of your seats when her band of rebels go underground). And what a journey it's been. When "The Hunger Games" opened back in 2012 it was directed by Gary Ross. There was little voice over narration with that one just you, as the filmgoer taking it all in as it happened with your own mind interpreting the scenes as they happened. When director Francis Lawrence took over the series starting with No. 2 (2013's "Catching Fire") he established this visual narrative and design that continued through all three of his other films. At least the narration is coming from Katniss, which kept my attention during some of the lag time (mainly at the beginning of this movie).

Don't get me wrong, I'd follow Lawrence in any movie she does and I know "The Hunger Games" franchise has done very well because of her. I mean, c'mon she won an Oscar for best actress in 2012's "Silver Linings Playbook" and played the

character of Raven/Mystique in 2011's "X-Men: First Class" and last year's "X-Men: Days of Future Past" (my personal fav in that franchise) so yeah, Jennifer was the perfect casting choice as Katniss in this franchise. The last three have already garnered close to 2.5 billions dollars at the box office so how much do you wanna bet that the studio heads are already envisioning a prequel, huh?

"The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2" is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of violence and action, and for some thematic material and clocks in at 2 hours, 16 minutes.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Gail

Gail is a 7-month-old terrier mix puppy. She is tall and lanky and full of fun.

Gail arrived at another shelter with a broken leg and had to be crated for six weeks for her leg to heal, so now she is

ready for her new, hopefully active, forever home.

Gail is spayed, microchipped, heart worm negative, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

Restoration of Hope Valley meadow in the works



Preservation of Hope Valley meadow in Alpine County has been assured. Photo/Provided

By Anne Knowles

The restoration of Alpine County's Hope Valley meadow has been a long time coming.

Within a year, work to restore a 400-acre portion of the 1,600-acre meadow, which includes three miles of the West Fork Carson River, should be complete.

That project, which is just the start of a long-term healing process, has been in the planning stages for five years. But everyone involved in the undertaking will tell you it all started more than a century ago.

"There had been heavy grazing there, sheep and cattle, since the Emigrant Trail days," said Julie Fair, project manager with American Rivers in Nevada City. Her group is taking the lead on the restoration effort.

As a result, vegetation was nearly eliminated, causing erosion and incision that left some banks as much as 10 to 12 feet higher than the river and creeks, upending the overall ecosystem.

The meadow hasn't been grazed for 20 years and during that time Friends of Hope Valley, a citizen's group founded in 1985 to stop the installation of a power line in the valley, has been planting willows to stabilize the river's banks.

Before that, the group was instrumental in saving the meadow from development.

In the early 1990s, ranchers in the area were planning to sell their land, possibly to a condo developer.

Friends of Hope Valley teamed up with the Trust for Public Lands, a 43-year-old organization that works to protect lands,

to stop it.



There was a time when this area south of Lake Tahoe was slated to be paved. Photo/Provided

“We walked the halls of Congress and in 1992 we got $23 million to purchase the land,” Debbie Waldear, president, Friends of Hope Valley, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The meadow was then turned over to the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which manage it now.

“Since then we’ve been the watch dog of the area. We prevented some logging and we’ve been doing restoration work everywhere,” Waldear said.

Now, American Rivers, in conjunction with its partners, is building on that work.

In 2011, it did an initial assessment of the meadow and, at the same time, the Alpine Watershed Group established its Hope Valley Meadows Stewards Program to collect data on the meadow in preparation for the restoration.

“Our goal is to protect water quality and the integrity of the meadow,” Shane Fryer, watershed coordinator for the Alpine Watershed Group, said. For the watershed group, the goals are

to drop water temperature, lower the alkaline content and extend the river's flow season past August.

"It's an important water source for Carson Valley," Fryer said.

After the initial assessment, Waterway Consulting Inc. in Santa Cruz and River Run Consulting Inc. in Cedarville did a more detailed plan.

From that, American Rivers determined the project should use a more "light-handed approach," to the restoration, according to Fair.

A popular technique to quickly raise the water table is to do what she called pond and plug.

"You put in a series of berms in the channel and it raises the water table without damming it," she told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It mimics what beavers do."

It also creates ugly ponds, which eventually fill in with sediment. But it's costly and causes more disturbances to the watershed.

"So we decided to focus on stabilizing the banks rather than raising the water table rapidly," said Fair.

To do that, American Rivers is using several methods, including additional vegetation planting and excavating sod from high banks to essentially bring the meadow back down to the water.

"It's a pilot in one part and if we had all the money in the world, we'd do that everywhere. It would create a wet meadow right away. We'll see if we want to do more of it," she said.

Another technique is using logs to stabilize the banks.

"You put in logs with roots still attached and lay the out

with the root wad in the water and stabilize with other logs and willows," Fair said. "The root wads will push flows away from the banks, create a buffer and as flows meander it creates a great fish habitat."

The log crib structure was the first phase of the project, completed last month by Habitat Restoration Sciences Inc., an engineering firm that works throughout California.

"We had a short window because of the permits," Fair said.

The overall project, which is costing about $750,000 to construct, has required four permits.

"Permitting is a bottleneck. Some permits haven't been streamlined for restoration and you have to meet the same criteria as development projects," said Fair.

But no delay came from any protest to the permits.

"Throughout developing the designs we worked with the Alpine Watershed Group, the Friends of Hope Valley and had public meetings," Fair said. "I think that was critical to the process. Everyone was engaged and it reflected what the community wanted."



Beavers are good and bad when it comes to restoration. Photo/Provided

If any controversy remains, it's over beavers, which are

thriving there and have created more than 70 dams in the area at last count.

Everyone agrees they're a mixed blessing, doing some of the restoration work, but some see the animals as more hindrance than help.

The beaver use the willows for dam making, reducing the vegetation, and the pools they create can heat up the water, said Fryer.

"Is this a beneficial use? The Forest Service will decide, they have management authority on this issue," said Fryer. "We think the beaver should be managed where they're a detriment and encouraged where they help."

The remainder of the Hope Valley meadow restoration project is scheduled to be completed over a six to eight week period next summer.

Opinion: Calif. schools falling short on accountability

By George Miller, Sacramento Bee

We live in a progressive and forward-thinking state with a constitution that guarantees equity in our public education system. We have a lot to be proud of – successfully implementing the Common Core standards, expanding services for students in foster care and investing in early childhood education.

But we also should be striving every day to more fully deliver on that constitutional promise of an equal education for every California child. Critical to that promise is a system rooted in accountability and transparency, and on that front, we are falling short.

On the same day this month that the State Board of Education agreed to a historic settlement agreement in Cruz v. California – a class-action lawsuit filed by 22 students who were being placed in fake classes – the board also considered rolling back key accountability measures.

Read the whole story

Frenzied start for Calif. traffic ticket amnesty program

By Lee Romney, Los Angeles Times Heavy equipment mechanic Fredrick Jefferson said it was when a supervisor fired him that he learned his driver's license had been revoked because of unpaid traffic fines.
Over the next year and a half, the "snowball effect" caused his relationship to crumble and he wound up homeless, scraping by on a $221 monthly general relief check.

With add-on penalties, his total fines swelled to $5,000.

Thanks to a sweeping traffic ticket amnesty that took effect Oct. 1, Jefferson now is on a payment plan of $1 per month – an amount that will increase once he lands a job. Last week, he got his license back.

Read the whole story

Diet study upends concepts about ‘healthy’ food

By Ariana Eunjung Cha, Washington Post

If you’ve ever tried out the latest diet fad only to find yourself gaining weight and feeling awful and wondered what you were doing wrong, scientists now have an explanation for you.

Israeli researchers, writing in the journal Cell last week, have found that different people’s bodies respond to eating the same meal very differently – which means that a diet that may work wonders for your best friend may not have the same impact on you.

Lead authors Eran Segal and Eran Elinav of the Weizmann Institute of Science focused on one key component used in creating balanced diet plans like Atkins, Zone or South Beach. Known as the glycemic index or GI for short, it was developed decades ago as a measure of how certain foods impact blood sugar level and has been assumed to be a fixed number.

But it’s not. It turns out that it varies widely depending on the individual.

Read the whole story

$2 gas coming soon for most of the U.S.

By Chris Isidore, CNN Money

Driving over the river and through the woods will be quite a bit cheaper this Thanksgiving, thanks to rapidly falling gas prices.
The average price of a gallon of regular gas is $2.13 according to AAA, down 75 cents from a year ago. That decline means consumers will save about $7 billion on gas during the 37-day period between now and Christmas, or about $40 a driver.

And prices are expected to keep falling.

Read the whole story

Are daily fantasy sports contests gambling or games of skill?

By Michael Hiltzik, Los Angeles Times

If Californians – indeed, all Americans – had a thoughtful, consistent approach to gaming, daily fantasy sports sites such as FanDuel and DraftKings would be treated as gambling and their sponsors regulated and taxed. They'd be subjected to government oversight, background checks of employees, audits of their books and certification that their games aren't rigged – just like most other forms of U.S. gambling.

Instead, fantasy sports games have become ensnared in the web of inconsistent laws and confusing regulations governing gaming. At issue is whether daily fantasy play really qualifies as gambling, and if so whether it should be outlawed or merely regulated.

The biggest stakes for the mushrooming fantasy sports industry may be in California, which could hold the largest population of fantasy sports players in the nation. And at the moment, the legality of their daily games is very much up in the air.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



· Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules for the week from Caltrans.

· Scholarships are available for students entering Sierra Nevada College's master's teaching programs.

· It's time to signup for youth basketball programs at Kahle Community Center in Stateline. For more info, go **online**.

· Diamond Peak has moved its opening day to Dec. 3.