Calif. may allow inmate firefighters with violent pasts



Inmate crews were used on the Washington Fire near Markleeville this summer. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Associated Press

California officials are considering allowing inmates with violent backgrounds to work outside prison walls fighting wildfires, and the idea is generating concerns about public safety.

The state has the nation’s largest and oldest inmate firefighting unit, with about 3,800 members who provide critical assistance to professional firefighters. That’s down from about 4,400 in previous years, however, and so prison officials are looking for ways to add inmates.

Now, only minimum-security inmates with no history of violent crimes can participate. Starting next year, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is proposing adding inmates convicted of violent offenses such as assaults and robberies, if their security classification level has been

reduced after years of good behavior.

Officials also are seeking to allow inmates who have up to seven years left on their sentences instead of the current five. Arsonists, kidnappers, sex offenders, gang affiliates and those serving life sentences for murder and other crimes would still be excluded.

“All it does is enlarge the pool of inmates we look at, but it doesn’t change the nature of the inmate that we put in camp,” Corrections spokesman Bill Sessa told the Associated Press. “We still are not going to put an inmate in camp that has a violent attitude.”

The changes are pending final approval within the Corrections Department. They still have not been sent to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, which says it also must sign off.

The proposal comes at a time when the overall prison population is smaller and drought has created the potential for explosive wildfires like the ones that recently roared through the Sierra foothills and communities north of Napa, in Northern California.

Mike Lopez, president of the union representing state firefighters who oversee inmates at fire scenes, supports a robust inmate program but worries about what the proposed changes could bring.

“Any acceptance of criminals with a violent background calls into question the security of our membership,” he said, adding, “at what risk is CalFire willing to go to get those inmates?”

SNC student missing after trip to SoCal

By Jack Perry, Providence Journal



Dianne Thacher

A sheriff’s office in California is asking for help in finding a 23-year-old college student from Rhode Island.

Dianne Thacher’s family has not heard from her since Oct. 5, and the family reported her missing Oct. 11, according to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office.

Thacher, who is from South Kingstown and a student at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village, was reportedly in the Santa Barbara area to meet friends and was last seen checking out of a motel on Oct. 6.

Read the whole story

Should the U.S. allow

gambling on elections?

By Chris Moody and Alexander Rosen, CNN

The sportsbook section at the South Point Casino was packed, the nearby bar overflowed and rowdy gamblers dressed in their team's colors crowded the walls while they gazed up at screens broadcasting live football games. It was a Sunday—the busiest time for sports betting—and Jimmy Vaccaro, the casino's lead odds maker, scurried around the room greeting familiar faces and checking in on employees taking bets below a massive board that displayed the live betting odds of each game.

For years, Vaccaro has watched billions of dollars pour into Nevada for sports betting. And he dreams of extending casino gambling to political elections.

The effort has had little success.

Casino gambling on elections is currently illegal throughout the country.

Read the whole story

Talk to focus on knees and winter sports

Hear from a team of experts on Nov. 4 about how to stay injury free during the winter season.

Terry Orr from Tahoe Center for Orthopedics will share what happens when a knee gets injured and LTCC anatomy Professor Beach Orr will teach about the anatomy of the knee. Two of

Barton Health's certified athletic trainers will also lead participants in exercises to get the winter season going.

The free talk is from 6-7pm at Lake Tahoe Community College's board room.

Sierra's slopes cleared of debris, ready for snow



Crushed empties no longer litter the slopes of Sierra-at-Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – It might behoove skiers and snowboarders to adopt the hikers' mantras of "leave not trace" and "pack it in, pack it out".

More than a ton of trash (2,047.6 pounds to be exact) was removed from the slopes of Sierra-at-Tahoe on Sunday. This was the ninth year the ski resort near Echo Summit put a call out to people to rid the woods of debris. A record number – more than 400 – showed up.



James Gasper of Camino, who has been picking up trash at Sierra every year, says the beginner slopes have the most garbage.

It was a family event on Oct. 11 for the Atchisons of Roseville. Sierra is where they regularly ski.

"It's paying it forward to Tahoe," is how Sierra Atchison put it. She was there with her husband, Anthony, and their kids Sidney, 14, and A.J., 10.

"I love this mountain. I want to give back for everything they do for us," Charlie Plamondon told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The senior at El Dorado High School was with a bunch of his ski-snowboard teammates picking up trash. Sierra is where they train and race.



A lift ticket more than 20-years-old – based on it saying the resort's original name – was found under the West Bowl lift.

John Rice, the resort's general manager, said the cleanup day started as a way for young riders to see what the mountain looks like this time of year when empties are tossed from a chairlift. He told *Lake Tahoe News* this event really hits home and gets people to think twice.

Still, empty beer cans were the dominant items scattered under West Bowl chairlift. Bottles – some intact, some shattered – also littered the slopes.

People had a choice to do an easy, moderate or more advanced route – with West Bowl being the advanced. Everyone rode up Nob Hill chairlift and then dispersed from there.

One guy said it takes six pairs of eyes on any given area to make sure it is pristine. It's easy to miss tiny scraps of paper and plastic do-dads whose purpose only the owner knows.



More than 2,000 pounds of trash were carted off the slopes.

Rylan Thomas, who is out from Roanoke, Va., working for the U.S. Forest Service, hauled in the most garbage for one person, at least by weight. On Dogwood he found a cog for a ski lift. It weighed 95 pounds. He rigged a system with ropes, his belt and PVC pipe to drag it halfway down the mountain.

Two of the nastiest items were a tampon applicator and underwear.

More common debris included parts of bindings and ski poles.

Skis and snowboards that were lost are now recovered. If they aren’t claimed, they go the finder.



Kyle Smaine, who rides for Sierra, chills in the chair he found.

A couple oldies but goodies were a Sierra Ski Ranch lift ticket – the name of the resort prior to 1996. A Northstar-at-Tahoe name badge from a guy from Brazil was located. Sierra and Northstar were sister resorts until five years ago this month.

Kyle Smaine, who in January won his first World Championships in halfpipe as a skier for Sierra, appropriately spent the day in the terrain park off Bashful. Instead of flying through the features like he might do in winter, he helped remove some unwanted ones – in particular an Adirondack chair that had seen better days.

Now the resort is waiting for Mother Nature to cover the slopes with white stuff in hopes of having a full ski season.

Opinion: Dying for a cure for metastatic breast cancer

By Kelly Shanahan

Sometimes it takes an earthquake to wake you up. My personal earthquake jolted me on Nov. 14, 2013, when I was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer. My carefully constructed world came crumbling down; I could no longer perform surgery, the core of my life as an ob-gyn; the plans for eventually retiring and traveling blew away like dust in the wind; and, most devastating, there loomed the real possibility I would not live to see my daughter, the light of my life, graduate from high school.



Kelly Shanahan

Metastatic breast cancer means that rogue cancer cells escape the breast and take up residence elsewhere in the body. There is no cure and less than a quarter of those diagnosed live five years. No one dies from early stage cancer, yet less than 7 percent of cancer research dollars is devoted to metastatic research. That 7 percent figure covers all types of advanced cancer. In October, everywhere you look there is pink, but little if any of those pink ribbon products do anything to actually find a cure for a disease that kills 40,000 American women and men every year – 108 wives, mothers, sisters, brothers, fathers, and, yes, doctors every single day.

I’ve never been average and I plan to beat the statistical

average life expectancy after a diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer, because 32 months just isn't long enough to accomplish everything I am meant to do. I haven't finished my job as a mom or a wife. I am passionate about bringing attention to and increasing funding for metastatic breast cancer research.

The latter is why I'm writing this in LAX, on my way to Washington, D.C., to lie down in front of the Capitol to draw attention to metastatic breast cancer. MET-UP is an organization founded by fellow "lifers", women (and men) like me who are living with metastatic breast cancer, knowing that unless more is done, we will die long before we should. Modeled on ACT UP, the activist movement born of the AIDs crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s, this group is designed to shake things up and demand action. Our first action is a "die-in" on Oct. 13, Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day, the one day out of 31 devoted to the only breast cancer that actually kills.

I won't just be lying on the Capitol lawn: I'll also be meeting with Sen. Barbara Boxer's staff to discuss what can be done to further research into metastatic cancers. Federal funding for cancer research has been cut, and even if further money cannot be obtained, redistribution of current cancer research dollars to metastatic research can make a huge difference. The SEER database, run by the National Cancer Institute, collects information on cancer diagnosis in the U.S., but SEER does not gather data on conversion from early stage to metastatic cancer. Without such basic information, it is impossible to accurately gauge the extent of metastatic disease or know whether current treatments improve life expectancy. Ideally, with more information and more research, one day there will be a cure for the only breast cancer that kills, metastatic breast cancer.

When the earthquake strikes, the survival instinct kicks in. You will claw your way out of the rubble to see the light of another day. You will kiss your family goodbye and fly 2,500

miles across the country to meet with others who have experienced the same upheaval in their lives. You will join hands and lie down to honor the 40,000 who have died every year over the past 30 years, a number that has not decreased despite all the awareness and the pink. You will do this in front of the Capitol, to demand action because those of us living with metastatic disease deserve more; we deserve the chance to see another sunrise, to cheer at a graduation, cry at a wedding, and maybe even hold a grandchild's hand. On Oct. 13 be aware that we are, quite literally, dying for a cure.

Kelly Shanahan is a 21-year resident of South Lake Tahoe and the owner of Emerald Bay Center for Women's Health. She has been living with metastatic breast cancer for nearly two years. A mom, a wife, an active member of our community, she continues to work part time as a gynecologist.

Calif. first state to ban 'Redskins' team name

By Lydia O'Connor, Huffington Post



The Washington Redskins have come under fire for their

name.
Photo/Keith
Allison

California became the first state to ban public schools from using “Redskins” as a team name, nickname or mascot on Sunday in a move applauded by Native American activists.

Signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown, the California Racial Mascots Act outlaws schools’ use of the slur effective Jan. 1, 2017.

Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter and National Congress of American Indians Executive Director Jackie Pata, who lead the advocacy group Change the Mascot, praised the action.

Read the whole story

Researchers: Nev. alpine lakes warmest in 7,000 years

By Henry Brean, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The alpine lakes high in Nevada’s only national park are warmer now than they have been for thousands of years, according to findings by a team from Ohio State University.

For the past decade, the researchers have conducted a variety of studies at Great Basin National Park, 300 miles northeast of Las Vegas, aimed at reconstructing the climate record for the area over the past 7,000 or so years.

Using core samples of lake-bed sediment and other clues

collected during annual visits to the park, they think they have identified a warming trend that began about 35 years ago and continues today.

“In Stella Lake, the temperatures are higher (now) than pretty much anything we’re seeing going back about 2,000 years,” said Scott Reinemann, an adjunct professor in Ohio State’s Department of Geography. “They’re probably the warmest temperatures in the past 7,000 years.”

Their work could help predict the future of the park and its glaciers – including the shrinking remnant of the only exposed ice glacier left in Nevada – in the face of global warming.

Read the whole story

Calif. pushes to make landfills food-free

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Heather Maloney thinks of herself as an environmentalist but, as a working mother, doesn’t have the time to create a backyard compost heap. The little bucket for food waste that Napa’s recycling authority sent her offers a more convenient way to keep her leftovers from lining a landfill.

“You’re already scraping plates and rinsing them off to put in the dishwasher, so it’s a pretty easy system,” Maloney said, standing in her kitchen. “It’s definitely cut down on our trash.”

Barbara Barstad is less enthusiastic. She gave up after being repulsed by the bugs and odor, two of the top three reasons

Napa residents offered for declining to participate (the third came from people accustomed to putting food scraps in the garbage disposal).

“It just made a big mess,” said Barstad, 76.

Those reactions can be expected to echo across California. Napa County, and a few select jurisdictions such as San Francisco, are incubating a policy that will take hold statewide in the next decade.

In a little-heralded move with potentially sweeping implications, the California Air Resources Board last month announced a push to halt disposal of nearly all organic waste by 2025. The shift would likely require building new processing facilities, prod cities and counties to develop ways to collect it, and add an extra trash-sorting step before Californians drag bins to the curb.

Read the whole story

Avalanche workshop at LTCC

Lake Tahoe Community College is going to be the site of an all-day avalanche workshop on Oct. 17.

The California Avalanche Workshop is a pre-season gathering of snow travelers to share knowledge, learn, laugh, and network. This seminar is modeled after the International Snow Science Workshop and other regional one-day snow and avalanche workshops throughout the west.

The event is from 9am-4pm. Cost is $20.

For more info, email reichel@ltcc.edu.