

S. Lake Tahoe wants out of ambulance business

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe Fire Department is on its way to returning to its primary focus – dealing with all things related to fire.

The City Council on Tuesday voted unanimously to make this happen. Lake Valley Fire is poised to be the provider of all ambulance services in El Dorado County on the South Shore.

The Cal-Tahoe Joint Powers Authority has been wrestling for some time with how to make the financials balance. One of the problems is the city and Lake Valley – the entities making up the JPA – entered a contract with the county to provide three ambulances and get reimbursed for the cost of two. The other issue is how inter facility transfers (IFTs) affect service and the bottom line.

The JPA is paid a flat fee for the IFTs. Depending on how far of a drive it is – could be the Bay Area – it's a losing proposition. It also means a depleted work force at the local stations. There were 640 IFTs in 2014, with 2015 on target to be higher than that.

"Our resource will be here all the time and not off the hill," SLT Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* of the change. "We will have stability here."

His biggest desire is to have his charges focus on fires.

In 2000, before the city had ambulances, 12 people worked any given fire shift to handle the 2,000 annual calls. In 2001, the first year of city provided ambulance service, the on duty staff was at 14 for 2,200 calls. Today the staff is at 10, with 3,200 annual calls.

What will change is that a paramedic will be added to the engines at Stations 1 and 3, meaning three people will be on each rig. That unit is likely to be the first to arrive, with a Lake Valley staffed ambulance to follow. Lake Valley would staff two ambulances at Station 2 in the city.

The contract with the county necessitates a certain response time. Lake Valley Fire Chief Gareth Harris at the July 7 meeting said his people would meet the criteria of the contract. People are not expected to notice a change in the level of service.

The cost savings for Lake Valley comes from hiring emergency medical technicians for the ambulances instead of each one having two paramedics.

Between the two agencies there are 17 fire employees per shift. Employing EMTs will bring that number to 19.

Ultimately the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors will vote on the proposal. The JPA board will discuss the matter July 13. If all goes through, the city's representation on the board goes from two positions to one, with Lake Valley retaining two.

In other council action:

- City Attorney Tom Watson's rolling three-year contract was extended for another year. Changes to his compensation package are being worked on.

- The Tahoe Prosperity Center will give another presentation on July 21 in an attempt to get the council to pony up \$10,000. The majority of the council wants to see the nonprofit's budget and have a better understanding of how the money would be spent.

- Direction was given to start work on forming a recreation joint powers authority with Lake Tahoe Community

Opinion: California isn't the real West

By Joe Mathews

Let's stipulate that U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia was wrong to dissent in last month's ruling legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide.

But Scalia was right when, in the same dissent, he suggested that California is a different place than the American West. And in so doing, he unwittingly raised an important question about California's future.



Joe Mathews

Scalia made his point via a swipe at his colleagues for being unrepresentative of the United States population (and thus wrong to impose their support for marriage equality on the entire country). After noting that all nine justices attended Harvard or Yale law schools and that only one grew up in the Midwest, he wrote that the court has "not a single Southwesterner or even, to tell the truth, a genuine Westerner." But what about Justice Anthony Kennedy, who is

from Sacramento? Scalia's answer: "California does not count."

The words "California does not count" prompted California pundits to fly off the handle. How dare he disrespect California? Of course we count! "Antonin Scalia Doesn't Heart California – or Get Us, Either" said an *LA Times* headline.

Attorney General Kamala Harris coolly countered Scalia – an old-school "originalist" who thinks the U.S. Constitution should be read as it was in 1789 –with a line from old-school rapper Ice T: "Don't hate the playa, hate the game." You should know that Ice T's line was inspired by one from Gandhi's 1927 autobiography ("Hate the sin not the sinner") and St. Augustine's 424 A.D. letter ("with love for mankind and hatred of sins"), so Harris out-originalist-ed the originalist Supreme Court justice by more than 1,300 years.

Despite the snappy California retorts, Scalia's fundamental point went unchallenged, because he's right: California doesn't fit in the American West. Or anywhere else for that matter.

Indeed, the best book ever written about California – Carey McWilliams' "California: The Great Exception", published in 1949 – is about precisely this reality. California is singular among Western U.S. states in how it was settled so early, grew so quickly, and changed so suddenly. Our Western neighbors are more plodding, less populous places.

"One cannot, as yet, properly place California in the American scheme of things," wrote McWilliams, adding: "California is no ordinary state; it is an anomaly, a freak, the great exception among the American states."

But is California still such a great exception? Not exactly. Yes, we're the only state to break ground on high-speed rail. But in a number of ways, we have begun to resemble other Western states.

Most crucially, California is no longer a state of arrival, a destination for the world. Immigration is flat. More people have been leaving California for other states than have been moving here from the rest of the country.

As a result, states like Nevada, Arizona, Oregon and Utah – having received so many Californians seeking cheaper living – have effectively been colonized by us, and are voting and eating more like California. All four now have In-N-Out Burger outlets, as does Texas, another big destination for exiting Californians. And as we jack up tuition at our universities, more California high school graduates head to public universities in neighboring states. (I've seen this firsthand while teaching at Arizona State University).

Those of us left behind in California are also more Western – because we are more likely to have grown up here. In previous generations, California was populated by people from Asia, Latin America, and the American Midwest and South. In today's California, the majority is homegrown – born and raised in California – and newer arrivals are more likely to be from Las Vegas than Little Rock. This homegrown California is also older – and less dynamic. We remain more ethnically and racially diverse than other Western states, but there are signs that our diversity lead is narrowing.

It's not just demography making us more Western; drought has a role too. We're becoming a drier place, with dustier landscaping that resembles Arizona and Nevada. Last year, we finally regulated groundwater, as other Western states have been doing for years.

If these trends persist, and California continues to Westernize, it will pose questions for our state and our country. The fact that California was so exceptional often accelerated change nationwide. As the historian H.W. Brands has noted, the American dream was of slow, tedious Poor Richard's Almanac-style growth until California became a state

– and gave us a new, faster dream of rapidly accumulated wealth. Will it be good for us, and for America if we become just another Western state?

For now, you are right, Justice Scalia. California doesn't really count as Western. But time has a way of changing the meaning of many things, including marriage and our messy state.

Joe Mathews is California & innovation editor for Zócalo Public Square, for which he writes the Connecting California column.

Budding interest in growers' farm-to-toke pot salons

By Joe Garofoli, San Francisco Chronicle

In the days before medical cannabis dispensaries offered dozens of strains, marijuana smokers blindly scored their weed on the street. Or, more likely, “from a guy I know.” Some still do.

But in this era of heirloom tomatoes and shade-grown coffee, a more discerning generation wants to meet the farmer who grew their bud – and they prefer their pot as pesticide-free as their kale.

“These are the people who shop at Whole Foods,” said Mendocino grower Nikki Lastreto as she mingled at a cannabis tasting party she helped organize this week at the Cole Valley home of a friend. “We want them to have the same experience with cannabis.”

In a backyard lit with the glow of fire pits and dusted with the smell of herb, elder statesmen like Frenchy Cannoli – a Frenchman who has been making hash for 40 years – extolled the virtues of Northern California terroir to young tech workers as he offered them a hit of his prized 5-year-old hash.

Read the whole story

Torch Jenner ran with in Tahoe to be sold

By Ula Ilnytzky, AP

NEW YORK – The 1984 Summer Olympic Torch that Bruce Jenner carried through Lake Tahoe is going on the auction block where it could fetch \$20,000 or more.

It's the first major piece of Jenner memorabilia to go to auction since the winner of the 1976 Olympic Decathlon Gold Medal became Caitlyn Jenner.

The 24-inch torch, featuring a brass finish and leather handle, is being offered by Heritage Auctions at its Platinum Night Sports Auction in Chicago on July 30. The seller is Bob Lorsch, a Los Angeles philanthropist and entrepreneur who orchestrated the Tahoe leg of the torch relay and secured Jenner's participation.

"This torch serves as a wonderful symbol that masculinity and femininity are not mutually exclusive," said Chris Ivy, Heritage's director of sports auctions. "The decathlon has long been considered the ultimate athletic proving ground. Jenner has played both gender roles masterfully."

Jenner was approached to carry the torch as part of the Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games to help support Caesars Tahoe's agenda of giving back to the local community and promoting area youth programs, said Lorsch. The hotel casino held a drawing for a chance to win a place in the relay and sponsored 50 kilometers or about 31 miles of the Nevada route. Seven went to individuals and 42 to local organizations. Jenner was asked to run the remaining kilometer or 1,000 meters.

"Caesars saw it as a tremendous opportunity ... to do something more special, never realizing that we would be creating what is truly a piece of history that originated as a piece of sports history, then evolved as a piece of entertainment history through the Kardashian legacy and becoming a cultural phenomenon through the transition to Caitlyn," said Lorsch.

"Other than trinkets and signed memorabilia, this is the first piece of what I would consider significant Jenner memorabilia to reach the auction block," said Ivy.

Better known to a younger generation as the patriarch on "Keeping up With the Kardashians," Jenner, 65, announced earlier this year that he was transitioning to become a woman. Vanity Fair ran glamour photos of him as Caitlyn.

A spokesman for Jenner did not respond to a request for comment.

Caitlyn Jenner will receive the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the upcoming ESPY Awards on July 15 for her bravery for publicly coming out as a transgender woman.

An E! Entertainment network documentary series "I Am Cait," depicting Jenner's transition from a man to a woman, will debut July 26.

Placer County academy looking for participants

Reservations are being taken for the Placer County Sheriff Office's Community Awareness Academy.

This year participants will tour the new South Placer Jail in addition to several other field trips.

There are eight classes, each of which covers a different topic. Classes are Tuesday and Thursday evenings, from Sept. 1-24. Participants will hear from members of the department's special units and, in addition to touring the jail, morgue, 911 dispatch center, and the air operations hangar.

Classes are in the Community Room at the Placer County Sheriff's Office headquarters in Auburn from 6-9pm.

The academy is intended to provide the citizens of Placer County with an overview of the sheriff office's functions, policies and procedures, as well as getting them involved in their community. The goal of the academy is to provide a greater awareness and understanding of law enforcement's role in the community. Attendees must be at least 18, work or reside in Placer County and agree to submit to a minor background check.

The deadline for making a reservation is Aug. 6. To reserve a spot, call Community Services Officer Kim Rivera at 530.889.6922 or email krivera@placer.ca.gov.

Study: Nature may be vital for mental health

By Peter Dockrill, Science Alert

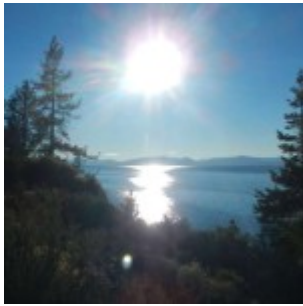
Getting away from it all in the great outdoors has been a proven panacea for generations of city-dwellers, but a new study has quantified how access to nature could be a vital component in our overall mental health.

With more and more of us living in urban areas, researchers from Stanford University wanted to investigate why urbanisation is associated with greater incidences of mental illness. In a controlled experiment, they looked at whether exposure to nature could influence depression levels and specifically 'rumination': repetitive thoughts focused on negative aspects of the self.

The researchers took two groups of participants and led them on 90-minute walks through two very different kinds of environments. One group walked across a grassland area populated with oak trees and shrubs, while the other group walked along the side of a heavily trafficked four-lane highway.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Lake Tahoe made this list for best places to swim before you die.

- Check out this photo essay to see where *USA Today* thinks people should be dining in the Tahoe-Reno area.

- Here is the El Dorado-Tahoe roadwork schedule from Caltrans for this week.

- Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, will host a town hall meeting in Truckee on Sept. 2 at 6pm. The meeting will be at the Truckee Tahoe Airport Community Room, 10356 Truckee Airport Road in Truckee.

Reasons behind California's high gas prices

By Los Angeles Times

Gasoline sold in California costs more than in the rest of the U.S. – sometimes dramatically so. That's because the Golden State's market is isolated from outside fuel suppliers that might moderate prices. The fuel market here is an economic island, and occasionally circumstances combine to make California's gasoline even pricier than on the actual island of Hawaii.

Here are some factors that affect California's pump prices:

California's tough environmental rules mandate that gasoline sold within the state be produced according to strict formulas that reduce pollution. But the gas is more expensive and difficult to produce than dirtier fuel sold elsewhere. Few refineries outside the state are equipped to produce it.

What's more, the state gasoline formula changes twice a year, from a winter recipe to a summer blend designed to retard evaporation during warm-weather months. The summer blend is even more expensive and trickier to make, increasing the chance of refinery mishaps. In addition, refiners try to use up inventories of one type of fuel before the switch to the other type, increasing the risk of price volatility.

Read the whole story

5 arrested during Hwy. 50 DUI checkpoint

Four people were caught for allegedly driving drunk on July 4 in the DUI checkpoint on Spooner Summit.

The event had 2,021 vehicles pass through the checkpoint from approximately 2:30-8:15pm. There were 22 drivers that went to a secondary screening which found four people under the influence of alcohol and or drugs. Three were arrested on charges of driving under the influence of drugs and one for alcohol. Another person was arrested on an outstanding warrant.

During the entire month of July law enforcement agencies all

across Nevada will be increasing the number of officers on the roads in a continued effort to curb driving under the influences of alcohol and or drugs.

SLT motorcycle passenger dies

A 21-year-old South Lake Tahoe woman has died from injuries sustained in a motorcycle collision Sunday night.

The woman was a passenger on the motorcycle. Names of the three people involved in the accident are not being released pending notification of family.

The woman died at Renown Medical Center in Reno.

The man driving a Nissan pickup was turning left onto Modesto Avenue from Highway 50 about 8:30pm July 5 when he struck a motorcycle going west on the highway.

The motorcycle driver sustained minor injuries. Both people on the motorcycle were wearing helmets. The truck driver was not injured, but the vehicle was severely damaged.

According to South Lake Tahoe police Lt. Brian Williams, both drivers have been cooperative with authorities. He told *Lake Tahoe News* alcohol and drugs are not believed to be a factor.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*