

Opinion: The cost of paying attention

By Matthew B. Crawford, New York Times

A few years ago, in a supermarket, I swiped my bank card to pay for groceries. I watched the little screen, waiting for its prompts. During the intervals between swiping my card, confirming the amount and entering my PIN, I was shown advertisements. Clearly some genius had realized that a person in this situation is a captive audience.

Attention is a resource; a person has only so much of it. And yet we've auctioned off more and more of our public space to private commercial interests, with their constant demands on us to look at the products on display or simply absorb some bit of corporate messaging. Lately, our self-appointed disrupters have opened up a new frontier of capitalism, complete with its own frontier ethic: to boldly dig up and monetize every bit of private head space by appropriating our collective attention. In the process, we've sacrificed silence – the condition of not being addressed. And just as clean air makes it possible to breathe, silence makes it possible to think.

What if we saw attention in the same way that we saw air or water, as a valuable resource that we hold in common? Perhaps, if we could envision an “attentional commons,” then we could figure out how to protect it.

The sad state of this commons is on display everywhere; consider the experience of being in an airport. I have found I have to be careful when going through airport security, because the trays that you place your items in for X-ray screening are now papered with advertisements, and it's very easy to miss a lipstick-size flash memory stick against a

picture of fanned-out L'Oréal lipstick colors.

Read the whole story

Fire emphasized in sage grouse habitat strategy

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

A new wildfire strategy designed to protect sagebrush terrain vital to a chicken-sized bird now under consideration for endangered species protection was announced by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell Tuesday, with Nevada officials praising proposals that they've been pushing for years.

The plan is detailed in the first of two reports called for in a secretarial order issued by Jewell in January and outlines actions and activities designed to reduce the size and severity of rangeland fires as the summer 2015 fire season quickly approaches. In Nevada, wildfire and the related invasion of cheatgrass and other non-native vegetation is described as the foremost danger facing populations of the greater sage grouse, a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

The plan calls for a firefighting strategy making protection of prime sage grouse habitat a top priority. To do so it will, among other things, rely to a greater degree on the expertise of veteran fire crews, rural fire departments and fire protection associations made up of ranchers who can respond to a fire quickly.

Read the whole story

Senators unveil bipartisan medical marijuana bill

By Adam Howard, MSNBC

Democratic Sens. Cory Booker and Kirsten Gillibrand, as well as Republican Sen. Rand Paul, unveiled arguably the most progressive medical marijuana legislation in history on Tuesday.

Their new bill – The Compassionate Access, Research Expansion and Respect States (CAREERS) Act – would end federal prohibition of medical marijuana and also introduce a host of other reforms aiming to curb restrictions on its transport, prescription and availability.

“We need policies that empower states to legalize medical marijuana if they so choose – recognizing that there are Americans who can realize real medical benefits if this treatment option is brought out of the shadows,” Booker told reporters at a press conference Tuesday on Capitol Hill. “Doctors and patients deserve federal laws that are fair and compassionate, and states should be able to set their own medical marijuana policies without federal interference.”

Read the whole story

Tahoe celebrity home wins award



The former Howard Hughes estate is for sale.
Photo/Eric Jarvis

Howard Hughes' former Lake Tahoe estate found its way back to the spotlight as a winner in HGTV's 2014 Doory Awards.

The cabin received the most online votes in the Celebrity Homes category. The monthlong contest on HGTV's FrontDoor.com attracted nearly 50 million views.

Billed as "The Ultimate House Hunt," the Doory Awards present extraordinary homes for sale, allowing consumers to vote for the homes they find most appealing.

The Hughes property is a modest mountain home inspired by the great camps of the Adirondacks. The main home was built from locally sourced timber in 1934 and has five bedrooms, four baths and an office. A guest cottage was built in 1940. The 5.5-acre property was purchased from the Howard Hughes Corporation in 1995.

S. Tahoe works on solutions for mental health

By Molly Hucklebridge

Change 'I' to 'we' and you go from illness to wellness.

More than 80 mental health clinicians, medical providers, law enforcement, social service groups, and the school district staff attended the mental health forum on March 5. Attendees discussed local mental health issues and walked away with specific plans to improve our community's mental health in the next six months.

Donald Ashton, director of El Dorado County Health and Human Services, started the morning with the "the ugly, the bad, and the good" to describe the state of county mental health services.

According to Ashton, domestic violence in El Dorado County rates $1\frac{1}{2}$ times higher than the state. Suicide rates are double California's rate and substance abuse is high particularly in South Lake Tahoe.

Pregnant women in the county suffer from mental health issues $2\frac{1}{2}$ times more than their state counterparts. Mental health services and substance abuse programs are limited, but more El Dorado County residents suffer from a mental illness than ever before.

In the 2012 Community Health Needs Assessment, Barton Health identified mental health as one of the top three issues in the South Lake Tahoe community. Access to healthcare services and substance abuse, the other top priorities, are closely linked to mental health. As Ashton pointed out, Marshall Hospital's Assessment produced the same results and South Lake Tahoe is not alone.

At the mental health forum, medical providers, law enforcement, social service groups, school district staff, and community members shared their own stories, hopes, and concerns about mental health issues. Attendees discussed professional and personal experiences with every age level, and offered their insights and ideas.

In the afternoon, the insights and ideas were transformed into short-term action items. Sub-groups each had a different age group to focus on and determine key actions and next steps to improve the community's state of mental health in the next six months.

"We all know mental health issues are complex and solutions will take time," explained Michael Ward, the forum's facilitator. "But what steps can we take in the next six months to achieve a victory for mental health?"

Attendees in each age group offered between 10 and 20 action items. Then, within their groups, individuals and agencies committed to specific actions. Some attendees formed teams to execute a plan.

"I am so impressed by the enthusiasm and number of the ideas that came to the table," said Kindle Craig, director of Strategy and Development at the Barton Foundation. "If we accomplished just three of these goals in the next six months – a local mental health services directory, mental health first aid training for all first responders, and the return of NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) to our community – these services and amenities would make such a difference for our community."

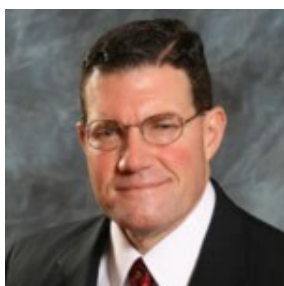
Molly Hucklebridge works for Barton Health as the communications specialist.

Barton Health fires CFO after 7 months

By Kathryn Reed

Steve Neff, chief financial officer of Barton Health, was fired today.

Neff had been on the job since August.



Steve Neff

“He got fired today. I’m not at liberty to give all the reasons behind that,” Kirk Ledbetter, chairman of the board, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It was something the leaders at Barton felt was appropriate.” Ledbetter sent a memo Wednesday letting the rest of the board know what was going on.

The CFO reports to the chief executive officer. Only the CEO reports to the board.

CEO John Williams was not available Wednesday afternoon. However, the morning of March 11 he sent an email to staff saying Neff had been terminated.

Mindi Befu, spokeswoman for the South Lake Tahoe-based healthcare organization, told *Lake Tahoe News* because it’s a personnel issue the reasons for Neff’s firing could not be

disclosed, but added that the terms of his contract were followed.

Befu would not say what Neff's salary was. His predecessor was making about \$400,000 a year.

Neff joined Barton after Dick Derby, who had the position for 14 years, retired last summer. Before coming to Tahoe Neff had been a partner with Renaissance Healthcare Partners in Massachusetts for 17 months. He has been in health care for more than 30 years, with 14 of them in leadership positions.

At the time he was hired, Williams in a statement said, "We look forward to his experience and leadership in the coming years."

Recruiting for another CFO will begin in the next month. Ledbetter expects the board to be updated on matters at the March 26 meeting.

El Dorado County man indicted on wire fraud charges

A federal grand jury returned a three-count wire fraud indictment March 11 against Jeffrey Lamson, 51, of El Dorado Hills.

According to court documents, from at least 2009 through 2011, Lamson embezzled more than \$400,000 from a company located in Placer and Sacramento counties while he was controller. Lamson

used company funds to make unauthorized payments to himself and others and made payments to a fictitious vendor, controlled by Lamson, for services that were never performed.

If convicted, Lamson faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gain or loss caused by the fraud.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

‘Sugar papers’ show industry’s influence on dental program

By Lisa Aliferis, California Report

Hundreds of pages of newly-found documents show that the sugar industry worked closely with the federal government in the late 1960s and early 1970s to determine a research agenda to prevent cavities in children, researchers who analyzed the documents say.

In the analysis, published Wednesday in the journal PLOS Medicine, researchers concluded that industry influence starting in the late 1960s helped steer the National Institute of Dental Research, part of the National Institutes of Health, away from addressing the question of determining a safe level of sugar.

“What this paper has shown is that our (NIH) was working toward potentially answering that question,” said Cristin Kearns, a fellow at UC San Francisco and lead author of the analysis, “and the sugar industry derailed them from doing the

research to help to answer that question, so we're still debating (it) here in 2015."

Kearns uncovered the 1,551 pages of documents at a public archive at the University of Illinois.

The documents show that an expert panel formed by the sugar industry included all but one member of the government panel that was examining priorities for research.

Read the whole story

LTCC celebrating Pi Day

The Math Club at Lake Tahoe Community College is celebrating Pi Day on March 14 at 9am at the giant clock near the Heavenly Village gondola.

Club members will demonstrate and share facts about pi. There will be a countdown to the big event ending at precisely 9:26:53am.

Pi Day is an annual celebration commemorating the mathematical constant π (pi), or 3.1415926535897 and on into infinity. Pi is used in mathematics to represent a constant – the ratio between a circle's circumference and its diameter. No matter what size the circle, the ratio between its circumference and diameter remains constant.

Pi Day is always March 14 as a tribute to pi's first three significant digits: 3 and 14. This year's Pi Day is particularly special because the next digits in pi after 3 and 14 is 15. That number lineup won't happen again in our lifetimes.

LTCC's Math Club will officially celebrate Pi Day at 9:26:53 a.m. because those are the next digits following 3, 14 and 15 in pi's infinitely long string of random numbers.

Study: Calif nearly guaranteed major temblor soon

By CBS and Associated Press

LOS ANGELES – The probability California will experience a magnitude 8 or larger earthquake in the next couple of decades has increased, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

“The new likelihoods are due to the inclusion of possible multi-fault ruptures, where earthquakes are no longer confined to separate, individual faults, but can occasionally rupture multiple faults simultaneously,” said lead author and USGS scientist Ned Field. “This is a significant advancement in terms of representing a broader range of earthquakes throughout California’s complex fault system.”

Compared to the 2008 assessment, earthquakes around magnitude 6.7 – the size of the destructive 1994 Northridge quake – has gone down by 30 percent with a frequency from an average of one per 4.8 years to about one per 6.3 years.

The study also says the likelihood that California will experience a magnitude 8 or larger earthquake in the next 30 years has gone up from about 4.7 percent to about 7 percent.

Read the whole story