

Smoke in Truckee from controlled fires

People in the Truckee area are reporting concerns about smoke plumes.

Officials say it is from prescribed burns in the Eldorado National Forest.

For more info, call 530.587.3558.

King Fire sites reopening for public access

Stumpy Meadows Boat Ramp and Picnic Area, located east of Georgetown in the Eldorado National Forest, is open to the public.

This is one of the changes in the forest closure order for areas affected by the King Fire.

Due to the hazards of dead trees along roads within the burned area, most of the closure order is still in effect. Roadside hazards in the burned area are being evaluated as part of the environmental analysis for the King Fire Restoration Project which is expected to be completed by the end of March.

Most of the roads that define the boundary of the fire closure area are open, in addition to the Hellhole Trail, which defines a section of the closure boundary in the northeast part of the closure near the Tahoe National Forest. Also now removed from the fire closure order is the Ponderosa Cove

Group Campground. The Ponderosa Cove Group Campground is managed by a concessionaire and will reopen later this year for the summer recreation season.

All unpaved, native surface roads and trails in the forest will remain closed to vehicle use under the seasonal road closure in accordance with the Eldorado National Forest Travel Management Plan.

An updated description and map of the King Fire Closure area is available online.

Calif. lawmakers aim to limit vaccine exemptions

By Fenit Nirappil, AP

SACRAMENTO — California lawmakers proposed legislation Wednesday that would require parents to vaccinate all schoolchildren unless a child's health is in danger, joining only two other states with such stringent restrictions.

Parents could no longer cite personal beliefs or religious reasons to send unvaccinated children to private and public schools under a proposal introduced after dozens of people have fallen ill from a measles outbreak that started at Disneyland. Mississippi and West Virginia are the only other states with such strict vaccine rules, though the California bill's chief author said he would consider including a religious exemption.

"People are starting to realize, 'I'm vulnerable, my children are vulnerable,'" said Sen. Richard Pan, a Democratic

pediatrician from Sacramento. "We should not wait for more children to sicken or die before we act."

Childhood vaccine has become an emotionally charged topic amid a measles outbreak that has sickened more than 100 people across the U.S. and in Mexico. No deaths have been reported.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, California is among 20 states that allow for personal belief exemptions and 48 that allow for religious exemptions.

A Washington state lawmaker introduced a bill Wednesday that would remove the personal belief allowance for an exemption in that state.

Public health officials believe an immunization rate of at least 90 percent is critical to minimizing the potential for a disease outbreak. California's kindergarteners met that threshold at the start of this school year, according to state statistics: 2 percent were exempted because of their parents' personal beliefs and another half a percent were exempted because of their parent's religion.

Less than one-fifth of a percent of all students – about 1,000 – had a medical vaccine exemption that would be preserved under the bill.

Pan, who previously served in the Assembly, was the author of another vaccination bill that took effect last year. It requires parents who don't have their children vaccinated for non-religious reasons to get a note from the doctor's office before enrolling their children in school.

A spokesman for Gov. Jerry Brown, who signed that bill, did not say if the governor would oppose efforts to end exemptions.

"The governor believes that vaccinations are profoundly important and a major public health benefit and any bill that

reaches his desk will be closely considered,” spokesman Evan Westrup wrote in an email.

Parents cite a variety of reasons for not immunizing their children: religious values, concerns the shots could cause illness and a belief that allowing children to get sick helps them to build a stronger immune system.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says doctors should bring up the importance of vaccinations during visits but should respect a parent’s wishes unless there’s a significant risk to the child.

The California bill is also backed by Democratic Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez and Democratic Sen. Ben Allen, a former Santa Monica school board member.

Separately on Wednesday, Sens. Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein called on California’s top health official to reconsider the state’s policy on vaccine exemptions in light of the measles outbreak.

“We believe there should be no such thing as a philosophical or personal belief exemption, since everyone uses public spaces,” the Democratic senators wrote in an open letter.

Decrease in water use by Calif. may be temporary

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Driven by drenching rainstorms that dramatically reduced the need to water lawns, Californians cut water use 22.2 percent in December compared with the same month a year before,

according to new data released Tuesday.

For the first time since last June, when the State Water Resources Control Board required the 411 largest cities and water districts in California to issue monthly water use reports, residents of the Los Angeles and San Diego areas conserved more water than residents of the Bay Area: 23.2 percent vs. 21.6 percent.

But leaders at the board said Tuesday that the impressive gains aren't expected to last.

January was bone dry and hot, and officials hope water use doesn't shoot right back up again when the tally is done for January.

Read the whole story

Snowshoe fundraiser at Camp Rich

The Tahoe Mountain Milers Running Club is hosting the Fresh Tracks 5K Snowshoe Walk and Race on Feb. 22 at 10am at Historic Camp Richardson Resort.

The beneficiaries are the Eric Nageotte-Lowe Scholarship Fund for the Heavenly Freestyle Team and Girls On the Run-Sierra.

If there is now show, it will be run-walk.

Register before Feb. 14 and the cost is \$20, which includes choice of swag, snowshoe rental, post-race refreshments, and continued day use of groomed Camp Richardson trails. Day of race registration is \$30. For those who like to compete,

unique handmade age-group awards are three deep.

Register online or get an entry form at Kahle Community Center, South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center, Reno Running Company and Eclipse Sports in Reno and CV Sports in Carson City.

For more info, call 775.588.2864 or email tahoecarol@charter.net.

Caesars changing CEOs

By Nikki Bowers, KLAS-TV

LAS VEGAS – Caesars Entertainment Corporation announced Wednesday that its CEO was stepping down.

“After 12 years as CEO, Caesars has accomplished more than what we could have imagined when I arrived in 1998. Now, with the company in the midst of a formal restructuring of one of its subsidiaries and a merger between entities, the time is ripe for a transition,” said Gary Loveman, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Caesars Entertainment.

According to a statement from the company, Loveman will begin transitioning management of the company at the end of the first quarter.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah’s Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

[Read the whole story](#)

Hard Rock – branding Tahoe’s music lifestyle

By Scott A. Lukas

STATELINE – As someone who studies themed and immersive spaces from around the world, I have always felt that Tahoe (and its many consumer spaces) needs a theme ... besides itself. In this case, music is the theme of choice.



Hard Rock Hotel & Casino is
redefining the South Shore.
Photos/Scott A. Lukas

In so many ways, the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino is an ideal addition to Stateline and Lake Tahoe. As a press release states, the \$60 million renovation “[of] the debilitated Horizon ... ushers in an improved property make-over and economic revitalization of Tahoe South and the Hwy 50 corridor.” The Hard Rock takes over for the Horizon, which had struggled with its identity late in its existence and which had itself been remade and rebranded from the iconic Del Webb’s Sahara Tahoe (and its Elvis glory) and the later Western-themed Del Webb’s High Sierra Hotel.

The lake, the mountains, and all of the natural beauty and activities that go along with the Tahoe lifestyle are wonderful and shouldn't be downplayed, but relying solely on these themes can be limiting. Newer events like SnowGlobe Music Festival remind us all that a community's identity is ever shifting and changes in line with what is happening within the community and outside of it. This, I think, is case and point for the excitement that we should have for the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino and its recent grand opening.

I would suggest that as a metaphor, the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino represents the beginnings of a revitalization of the Tahoe region. The community is changing economically, demographically, and in terms of its tourist patterns, and certainly the gaming industry has undergone major changes that have been felt in Las Vegas, China, and right here in Lake Tahoe. The Hard Rock is a new direction and its major theme – music – could be seen (literally and metaphorically) as a source of great vitality for the region.



Elvis' connection to the area has not been forgotten.

It's with this theme of music that I began my experiential visit to the Hard Rock. In my research and consulting work on themed and immersive spaces, one of my first steps is to take an initial walk-through of a space in order to discover its key essences. Later, I often share these on my YouTube channel, which gives visitors the opportunity to join in the

tour and to discover something exciting about the space.

I learned many years ago, while working as a trainer for Six Flags theme parks, that the first impressions a guest has of a space are the lasting ones, so I try to capture my own impressions as a visitor would when visiting a new space like the Hard Rock. I am also a cultural anthropologist, so my insights are not just based on first impressions, but on years of research and study in the analysis, design, and operation of themed and immersive spaces.

So, here is my hybrid ethnography-tour that I recorded on Feb. 2, 2015.

Before I entered the Hard Rock, I had decided that I needed to survey the massive guitar that adorns the Highway 50 entrance of the hotel and casino. I had heard a great deal about the sculpture, which was created by Terrence Martin of Jagged Edge Metal Art of Sacramento. On first glance I think, "It's a guitar and, yes, guitars are heavily symbolic of music," but I begin to note some other features that are rather ingenious reflections of a number of metaphors. We have *music*, but it's amplified through the metaphors of the lake (with glass boulders backlit to appear like the water at night), the *remade* and *revitalized* (with its patina that looks like old lumber and a crazy quilt of hinges and other parts), and *change* and *vitality* (with the movement of the guitar around its space – which wasn't actually spinning during my visit).

What's key in my observation of these metaphors is how complementary they are. Most important is the fact that the guitar (and its representation as the Hard Rock brand) dialogues with the lake as it evokes its presence – which is just down the road – through the backlighting and a base made to look like a tree. As I walked past the guitar, it also occurred to me that having an iconic symbol like this one at the entrance is very important. So many cultures rely on such symbols and their related threshold spaces in order to create

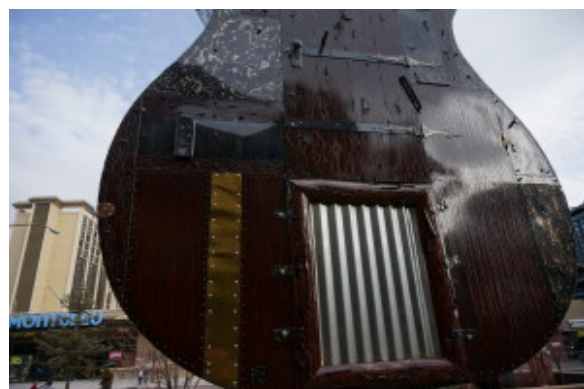
transformative experiences for those who enter those spaces.



The base conjures images of Lake Tahoe.



The guitar is multifaceted.



The guitar has elements from

the Park family ranch in the
Carson Valley.

Just entering the casino, I found a first dose of music memorabilia – a rather large case that features many items from the career of Kurt Cobain and Nirvana. One of the things that has always struck me about the Hard Rock brand is how it uses music memorabilia to create atmosphere—an ambiance of the lifestyle brand that is music. This is certainly the case here in terms of how this aspect of the design is used to connote music as lifestyle.

Just to the left, I notice the first of a number of restaurants – the Fire Break Kitchen & Bar. The Fire Break, in a bit of local homage, takes its name from a run at Heavenly Mountain Resort. Not unlike some of the indoor-outdoor concept restaurants and clubs on the Las Vegas Strip, Fire Break features interior and exterior dining areas and, appropriately enough, outdoor fire pits just beyond the iconic guitar. I was impressed to see the reference to the local and to snowsports, as I noted a number of snowboards on the walls and other depictions of the significance of snow sports in Tahoe.

As a metaphor, fire has multiple useful connotations that help establish links between Tahoe and the music lifestyle brand of Hard Rock. Fire is warmth, the cooking of comfort food, the playing of a guitarist who is shredding through a solo, and many other things.

Like other casino spaces, the perimeter of the Hard Rock includes the many restaurants and thematic content, while the interior features table games and slots. Wandering around this space, I just slightly thought of the casino space of the New York-New York in Las Vegas, only because I felt somewhat claustrophobic and missed some of the theming that makes the perimeter spaces shine. This is certainly not a fault of the Hard Rock as they were working with the space that remained of the Horizon.

Getting back to the perimeter area, I couldn't help but notice the many subtle nods to music theming. Guests may sign up for a Backstage Pass, which was emphasized on signage that was made to resemble roadie crates and in many other spaces, such as the valet area, we see lamps that are also kick drums.



Memorabilia is everywhere.



Is it a drum or a lamp?

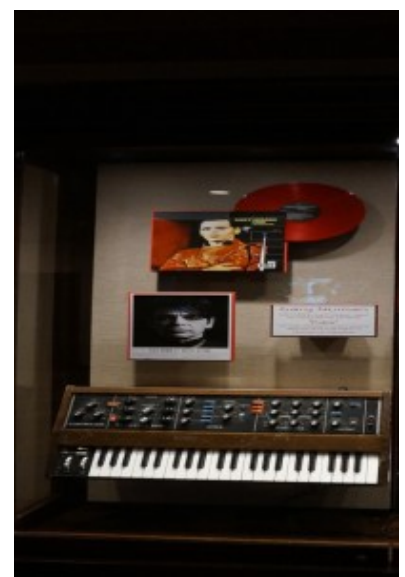
As we might expect, the music theming is carried beyond the physical spaces and into the website of the hotel and casino. The text "Start Me Up," by the Rolling Stones, is a link on the hotel and casino's website. "The Only Way to Rock Tahoe," a similar link, is connected to a Heavenly-Hard Rock package deal on the same site.

As a press release states, the theming at the Hard Rock is consistent with the idea of the "omnipresent soul of music," and I believe that this is a great way of describing how the

design and memorabilia elements of the space are used to connect the guest to the ambiance of the lifestyle brand. A number of critics of the general Hard Rock brand have missed this point in their claims that just staring at music memorabilia, artwork, and instruments will not make one a musician. The point of the Hard Rock, at least as I understand it, is to use the thematic elements that connote music and its lifestyle associations to immerse the guest within the space. Whether she or he is a musician is irrelevant as the spaces are all about the enjoyment of the brand and the lifestyle that is music. There certainly is a lot of memorabilia to appreciate at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino.



Chris Squire belongs.



Memorabilia is varied.

Being a prog rock and analog synth fan, I was taken with the Chris Squire (of Yes) and Gary Numan displays. Certainly, one could spend the better part of a half-day going through the many examples of classic music represented in the cases at the Hard Rock. On so many occasions, while in a Hard Rock venue I am reminded of the space of a museum; of course, there are limitations in terms of the volume of information that is presented about any given artist or band in the hotel and casino's displays.

It's just past the Chris Squire display where I believe the Hard Rock truly shines. This is the space that includes the Oyster Bar, the chic-minimalist Center Bar, Fuel café, Vinyl (the entertainment space), the Hard Rock Store, and the hotel check-in area. There's a remarkable sense of consistency in the design elements that run throughout this area. We note some of the colors common to the Hard Rock brand (the purples and earth tones) and we also note additional design elements in chandeliers and carpet insets that reminded me of some of the upscale chic of the Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas. This area also includes the important Elvis homage cases, which include everything from concert posters from the Del Webb's Sahara Tahoe days of Elvis, video of Elvis' family life, and information on Elvis' costumes. Again, we might see that the inclusion of these Elvis elements allows the Hard Rock to highlight both the rock theme and its connection to Lake Tahoe.

In addition to Elvis, we find iconic band and artist items ranging from Gwar, the Sex Pistols, Ramones, Foo Fighters, and many others. I cannot help but think that the selection of this diverse range of artists connects to the overall lifestyle philosophy of the Hard Rock brand. Many of us recall the popular Hard Rock "You Know Who You Are" advertising campaign that featured everyday people in business attire who, while hanging out with their families and doing domestic sorts of things, are shown to have an edgy tattoo peeking out from

under the conservative business attire – the true rocker inner soul of the guest.

I was reminded of both this campaign and the Hard Rock's "come as you are" and "be yourself" hiring and training philosophies as I noted the artists (perhaps) chosen for their attitude, hard edge, and non-conformist tendencies. A hidden metaphoric potential of these artists is this sense of the avant-garde and all its non-conformist possibilities – an irony, no doubt, as we are speaking of a highly popular corporate brand in the Hard Rock.



The lobby is full of mementos.



GWAR items at the Hard Rock.

Speaking of this last point, it would be very easy for us to scoff at a brand like the Hard Rock because of it merely being a brand, and a very recognizable one. Again, I would say that

the Hard Rock has been misunderstood and what is offered to the guest at Tahoe's version of the Hard Rock has been highly localized with the many forms of homage to the lake, the mountains, snowsports, and Elvis. As well, the metaphors that are present through the design and music lifestyle elements at the hotel and casino are very appropriate for both connecting us with the music brand and its relationships to Lake Tahoe. For so many reasons, I believe that music and its lifestyle associations are especially apt forms of theming for this latest hotel and casino in Tahoe. Lake Tahoe has a strong arts and music community which, I believe, could be even stronger with some of the potentials that we see in the Hard Rock's emphasis on music and lifestyle. And, there is something awkwardly cool about the fact that we can now all wear a "Hard Rock Hotel, Est. 2015 Lake Tahoe" T-shirt. But, beyond the gift shop, let me end on one final metaphor that I noted near the end of my visit.



Plenty of clothing to buy in the store.

Just across from the hotel's front desk area is a very iconic piece of music memorabilia – a glove once worn by the King of Pop, Michael Jackson. I couldn't help but marvel at this remarkable piece of music history which is made even more so in these years following Jackson's untimely death. I found myself, as I typically do in themed spaces, snapping many, many photos and I even found it necessary to capture a video of the glove – which moves in a circular motion inside a case

– doing a complete rotation. Then, it struck me. In this one piece –this iconic glove of Jackson’s – we have the most powerful and relevant metaphor of them all. This is *mana*. Mana is a spiritual concept from Polynesian culture that, though hard to translate, roughly suggests a power, prestige, or special presence that may be held by an object, artifact, place, even a person. For many people, Jackson represented such mana and the general inexplicable sense of awe that they encounter when listening to their favorite artist. With Jackson now gone, his glove is a remainder and reminder of a vitality that is still present with us today through this mana. For me, it is this object and its specific placement in the space that makes it the centerpiece of the Hard Rock. Its power and its specific ability to connect us with the likes of Michael Jackson, not unlike the other objects and displays within the hotel and casino, allow us to feel and experience something quite magical and transformative. This, the power of music and everything that it entails.



Michael Jackson's glove is prominently displayed.

Scott A. Lukas teaches anthropology and sociology at Lake Tahoe Community College and taught American Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz. He was recognized at the top undergraduate professor of anthropology in the United States by the American Anthropological Association in 2005, was also awarded the California Community Colleges' statewide Hayward Award for Excellence in Education in 2003, and was

honored as Lake Tahoe Community College's Distinguished Faculty Member in 2013.

Opinion: Ring the school bell later

By Richard V. Reeves, Wall Street Journal

It is easy to lose heart over the prospects of improving American education, and in particular for narrowing achievement gaps between affluent and poorer students. Reforms are often expensive, politically fraught, or structurally complex (or all three). But once in a while, along comes a reform that is almost free, proven to be effective, and simple to implement. A perfect example: start high school later in the morning.

A raft of studies have shown that high school start times of 8:30am or later make for healthier, happier teenagers and higher test scores. There is a bigger positive impact for students from lower-income families, so later start times should narrow, even if just a little, the huge inequalities in educational outcomes. It is now well-established that most adolescents, as a result of changes in their body clock during puberty, will get their best sleep between 11pm and 8am. Right now, the average American high school starts class at 7:59am. Many start even earlier.

A report out this week from the Center for Equitable Growth argues for policies to narrow the school achievement gap. "Some of these policies are costly to put into practice because they involve complex social, economic, and cultural considerations," concedes the report's author, Robert G.

Lynch. “But others, such as delaying the start time of high schools so that teenagers can get more sleep, are inexpensive and breathtakingly simple to implement.”

Read the whole story

Homewood closes; rain forecast for Tahoe

Mother Nature is crippling the ski season.

Homewood Mountain Resort has closed because of the lack of snow. The resort said if conditions improve, it will reopen.

January was a record dry month for the Lake Tahoe Basin. Resorts with little or no snow making capabilities are struggling to cope.

A storm is headed to the basin Thursday night is supposed to bring rain through Sunday. While the moisture is needed, it could wreak havoc on the already thin layer of snow at higher elevations.

The storm is expected to bring heavy winds. The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a high wind watch from Thursday evening through Friday evening.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Lake Tahoe Bike Coalition has a new website.

- The former Econo Lodge in South Lake Tahoe has new owners and it now called Sunray Tahoe Hotel.
- Tahoe Regional Young Professional's Feb. 18 professional development workshop is titled TRPA 101. Those in attendance will learn how the TRPA operates, and what takes place during permitting and planning processes. The workshop will be at the TRPA offices, 128 Market St., Stateline from 6-7pm. It is free for members, \$5 for others.
- According to Nielsen Scarborough 2014, adults younger than 50 represent nearly 70 percent of the online news audience and they have a higher annual income compared to print readers. Year-over-year the print market is declining, while the online market is increasing. More reasons your business should be advertising with *Lake Tahoe News*.
- It's possible to stop having telephone directories delivered to your residence. Go online to fill out a form to do so. It does require setting up an account with Yellow Pages.