

Hospitals abandoning New Year baby tradition

Publisher's note: *Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe is still recognizing the first baby of the New Year. The expected New Year baby, though, arrived New Year's Eve, so the first South Shore baby is not likely to be a New Year's Day baby.*

By Associated Press

Bye, bye Baby New Year. The crowning of the year's first baby is being kept secret in many communities as hospitals say safety concerns are more important than tradition.

Community Health Systems – one of the largest health care operators in the United States – recently ordered its 207 facilities to stop publicizing the first baby of the year, citing the potential for abductions and identity theft. Other U.S. hospitals have either removed themselves from the tradition or limited the amount of information provided to the media.

“We know the birth of the new year baby is a joyous and exciting event, but protecting patient safety and privacy is our most important responsibility,” said Tomi Galin, a spokeswoman for the company.

Galin said the policy change came after several of the company's hospitals stopped publicizing New Year's births on their own. She described it as a preventative measure and that it was not a reaction to threats or abduction attempts. She pointed to guidance from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, which has suggested health care providers obtain parental consent and eliminate home addresses and other identifying information from birth announcements or stop providing them to media.

Still, the head of the center's missing children division said, the tradition of publicizing a hospital's first birth of the year is relatively low-risk.

"We've never given direction to hospitals that they shouldn't do it," said the center's Robert Lowery, stressing caution, not overreaction.

Community Health's decision made front-page headlines this week in many states after journalists learned they would need to look elsewhere for news on the usually slow holiday. The company's Pennsylvania spokeswoman, Renita Fennick, said doctors will still let parents know if their baby arrived first and that new moms and dads could still contact the media on their own, so long as reporters and photographers stayed away from the maternity ward.

The Joint Commission, a health care accreditation organization, suggested hospitals stop providing birth notices to local newspapers more than a decade ago after a rash of hospital abductions, but it has not required that they be eliminated. Other hospitals continue to highlight the first baby of the year, same as ever, with parents' permission.

The New York Health and Hospitals Corporation, which runs the city's 11 public hospitals, gets written permission before releasing the mother and baby's names, measurements and borough of residence. They also send out a photo.

"If there is hesitation from the family, we will only release the information they are comfortable with," city hospitals spokeswoman Jen Bender said. "We've only had positive experiences promoting the first baby of the new year."

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- The pool and locker rooms at the South Lake Tahoe swim complex will be off limits Jan. 7 from 12:15-3:30pm and Jan. 9 from 1:30-6:30pm while repairs are made.

- More than 50 vendors and experts will be on hand at the free Bridal Faire at Olympic Village Lodge in Squaw Valley on Feb. 7 from 11am-3pm. For more info, go online.

- Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce is putting on Social Media: A Different Kind of Networking on Jan. 14 from 9-11am. Go online for more info.

- There will be a free demo day at Royal Gorge on Jan. 2 from 9am-3pm at Summit Station. Skiers may test out new gear and talk to equipment experts about the latest cross country ski products. A trail pass is required to participate.

- TOCCATA's 10th anniversary Brroque Masters starts Jan. 4. For concert dates/locations, go online.

Stateline casinos deal with busted pipes

Frigid temperatures caused pipes to burst at Harveys and Hard Rock casinos in Stateline on Dec. 30.

A call to Harveys was not returned so it is not known how extensive the damage was, where it occurred or how many people

were affected by it.

Some flooding occurred at the unoccupied Lake Tahoe Hard Rock, according to Tahoe Douglas fire officials. A Hard Rock spokesperson did not have any information to provide to *Lake Tahoe News*.

South Lake Tahoe fire officials have not had any reports of busted pipes because of the cold, but said that could change as temps rise into the 40s this weekend.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Tahoe Queen runs into sand bar – again

By Anjeanette Damon, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Tahoe Queen ran aground shortly after midnight Thursday during a New Year's Eve cruise, stranding revelers in the icy cold weather for about two hours, the U.S. Coast Guard reported.

About 200 people made it safely off the boat after a tug pulled the stranded ship off the sand bar in Zephyr Cove, Ensign Jake Urrutia said.

"By the time we got the report, the 200 passengers were off the vessel," Urrutia said. "The vessel had been pulled out by the tug and moored out. We don't know exactly what happened yet."

No injuries were reported on the popular paddle-wheel boat. But the weather was extremely cold, with a low of about 8 degrees.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Barton not surprised by ER visits

By Warren Withers

Are you seeing illness related to the cold temperatures?

Withers: We seeing quite a few cases of cough, cold, and flu.

We have seen a few cases of frostbite, but not any severe cases. People complain of feeling cold, but hypothermia is rare.

Any activity related to SnowGlobe?

Withers: Any time there is a large event such as SnowGlobe there is some degree of emergency care needed. What we are seeing appears typical for a large scale event and long night of revelry.

Any advice?

Withers: If you have mild cough or cold symptoms, stay home. Get plenty of rest and drink fluids. If needed, you can go to Urgent Care in Stateline or we are available to provide further evaluation at the Emergency Department.

Warren Withers is head of the Emergency Department at Barton Hospital.

17 New Year's arrests in South Lake Tahoe

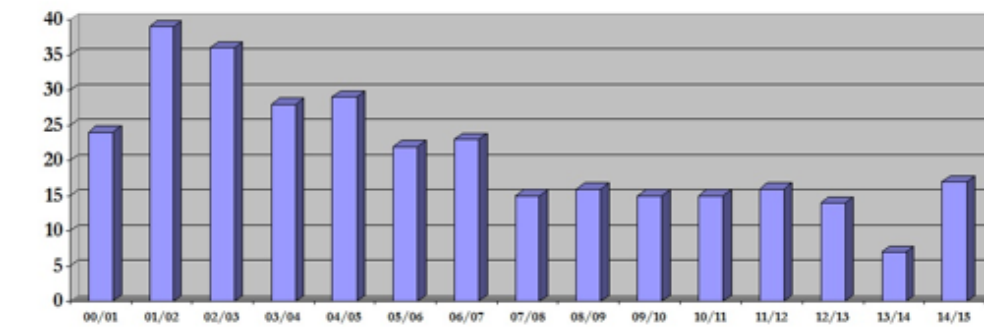
Between 12:01am Dec. 31 and noon Jan. 1, South Lake Tahoe police officers made 17 arrests.

The majority of these were for either drunken-disorderly conduct in public or driving under the influence. Some arrests also involved incidents of domestic violence and drug possession.

These arrest numbers do not include arrests made by allied law enforcement agencies, such as the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, which cited several individuals SnowGlobe for misdemeanor violations.

Officers said the number of arrests is similar to previous years. Since 2000, the most number of arrests was in 2001 at 39, with 2013 having the fewest arrests at seven.

"Since the beginning of 2008, a clear trend indicates that the size and associated arrests generated by the celebration at the state line has gradually diminished. While the SnowGlobe festival has generated thousands of attendees over the past four years, the number of arrests generated there have not caused an overall uptick in arrest stats," police said in a press release.



Number of arrests in South Lake Tahoe in the 36-hour New Year's period.

Source: *SLTPD*

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Backers: Plastic bag ban referendum has enough signatures

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Extending the fight over California's ban on single-use plastic bags, manufacturers and other opponents of the law on Monday submitted what they said were enough signatures for a referendum that would dispose of the ban before it can take effect.

Numerous cities, like South Lake Tahoe, and counties in California prohibit or charge for single-use plastic bags, and

a bid to extend the policy statewide fueled one of the fiercest fights of the 2014 legislative session. Soon after Gov. Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 270, an industry-backed organization called the American Progressive Bag Alliance announced the referendum drive.

Working under a narrow 90-day window – referendums have less time to qualify than other ballot initiatives – referendum backers said they had accumulated more than 800,000 signatures, many more than the 504,760 needed to qualify. Some of those signatures could be invalid, however, and now counties must conduct random samples to determine if enough of them are legitimate.

“We are pleased to have reached this important milestone in the effort to repeal a terrible piece of job-killing legislation and look forward to giving California voters a chance to make their voice heard at the ballot box in 2016,” American Progressive Bag Alliance executive director Lee Califf said in a statement.

[Read the whole story](#)

What to do with leftover Champagne

By Jillian Eugenios, CNNMoney

Here's the thing about Champagne: It's only good for drinking when it's freshly opened, cold and sparkling in its glass.

If the New Year's Eve celebration got a little out of hand, and you have some opened bottles that lasted longer than your guests, fear not: There are still plenty of delicious ways to

keep the party going.

Channel Marilyn Monroe, who was rumored to bathe in 350 bottles of bubbly, taking advantage of the grape's naturally-occurring antioxidants.

But if you don't have a few hundred bottles to spare, use a sip's worth for a natural toner. Michelle Phan, makeup artist and YouTube star, promises it will be "light, cool and refreshing."

She wrote on her website, "Champagne is a favorite toner of mine for its detoxifying properties and its ability to fight free radicals."

According to Phan, the acid also helps to even out skin tone. She suggests putting a small amount on a cotton pad and wiping it across the face.

Read the whole story

11 arrested NYE at Stateline

Although the crowd was small at Stateline, 11 people were arrested New Year's Eve.

Charges included battery, domestic battery, disorderly conduct, minor consuming alcohol and possession of a dangerous drug. Three arrests were related to traffic offenses and driving under the influence.

Highway 50 was closed for about 30 minutes as revelers began to fill the street about 10 minutes before the New Year.

Crowds in this area of the South Shore have dramatically

decreased in recent years with the introduction of SnowGlobe and Heavenly Holidays – both in South Lake Tahoe. There was a time when Stateline crowds topped 60,000 people.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

LTWC receives 2 cubs at end of year

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care received two unexpected packages at the end of the year – bear cubs.

Both are from the Eureka area and weigh about 24 pounds.

The first one had been seen for several days near Fortuna. Mom was nowhere to be found.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife picked the cub up and took it to regional headquarters in Rancho Cordova on Dec. 23. Tom and Cheryl Millham, who run the wildlife rehabilitation center on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe, drove the cub to Tahoe in the wee hours of Christmas Eve.

The second cub arrived at the center about 3:30pm New Year's Eve. This one came from the Hoopa Indian Reservation.

State officials want the local care center to fatten the cubs up so they could be released in the spring.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report