

Kids' first sip of booze likely to be in Dec.

By Christopher Ingraham, Washington Post

Here's a holiday tip for parents of teens: Keep a close eye on the eggnog.

Data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration show that 12- to 17-year-olds are more likely to take their first sip of alcohol in December than in any other month except July.

In December, an average of 11,400 teens try alcohol for the first time each day of the month, which works out to about 353,000 new drinkers by months' end. By contrast, in February the daily number of new teenage drinkers is less than half of that.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- According to the EPA, paper makes up almost 30 percent of America's waste each year. All the more reason to get your news only online.
- Randy Vogelgesang is now president of the South Tahoe Public Utility District board and Kelly Sheehan is VP.
- The Douglas and Gloria Rumberger Foundation sent a \$2,500 grant to the Washoe County Honorary Deputy's Association earlier this month on the condition the money be used to

provide gifts to the homeless.

- Rick Normington, dean of Business and chair of the Siebens Entrepreneurship Program, retired from classroom teaching at Sierra Nevada College at the end of the fall semester.
- Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation has donated \$250 to the Safeway Foundation for its partnership with local food banks to provide \$10 dollar food bags to those in need.

Missing Citrus Heights man found in Truckee

By Charles Piller, Sacramento Bee

The search for a 77-year-old Citrus Heights man ended Thursday night when he was located in Truckee, according to Citrus Heights police officers.

A family member had reported James Mengel was missing as of 11:30pm Wednesday. Citrus Heights police Sgt. Nicole Garing said his family believed Mengel was driving alone. He had been seen at Holy Family Catholic Church in Citrus Heights on Old Auburn Rd. near Sunrise Boulevard, but then never returned home.

Read the whole story

USFS reworking where to play in Sierra snow

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

There's a reason why during winter it can be hard to find a parking place along Mount Rose Highway near the Tahoe Meadows and Chickadee Ridge.

The short stretch of road is the best place to access some of the most scenic backcountry in Nevada, an area that includes snow-covered meadows, alpine peaks and Lake Tahoe views.

It's also the epicenter of a debate over winter access to public land in the Sierra Nevada as U.S. Forest Service units throughout the range are in the process of reworking their winter travel management plans.

Six separate Forest Service units, Lake Tahoe Basin, Tahoe, Eldorado, Lassen and Stanislaus, and Plumas are in varying stages of reworking their plans, some of which haven't been updated for decades.

The result could be new boundaries that limit where people can ride snowmobiles and set aside areas that are restricted to human-powered recreation such as snowshoeing and backcountry skiing.

Read the whole story

Opinion: California tax battle looms in '16

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

When Democrats lost their legislative supermajorities last month, it doomed even the very faint chance that legislators would enact the hefty tax increases liberal groups yearn to impose.



Dan Walters

That, however, doesn't end the perpetual debate over whether Californians should pay more taxes; it merely shifts it to the ballot, most likely in 2016.

The much higher voter turnout of a presidential election, coupled with a much lower threshold for qualifying initiative ballot measures, creates the opportunity for pro-tax-increase forces – such as public employee unions – to make their big move.

At least four embryonic tax-hike campaigns are evident, with the biggie being whether the temporary increases in sales taxes on everyone and income taxes on the affluent, passed by voters in 2012 at the behest of Gov. Jerry Brown, will be extended.

Read the whole story

Time to sign up for master gardener class

Training to become a master gardener of Lake Tahoe will begin March 13 in South Lake Tahoe.

The training continues for 12 weeks until May 29 on alternating Fridays/Saturdays from 10am-3pm.

Lake Tahoe Basin residents from Nevada and California are encouraged to apply. The University of California Cooperative Extension – Central Sierra is offering the training.

Upon completion of the 50-hour training course, certified master gardeners of Lake Tahoe will provide the community with research-based information about home horticulture and gardening.

The training will consist of core programs in horticulture and botany, native plants, soils, irrigation, pest management, plant nutrition, diseases, soil health, forest health, wildfire defensible space plus additional topics specific to the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Once certified, Master Gardeners volunteer 50 hours during their first year of service and 25 hours in subsequent years.

The application is available online and is due Jan. 16 at 5pm.

For more info, call 530.621.5528.

Placer County issues listeriosis warning

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

Placer County health officials on Wednesday warned that a nationwide outbreak of listeriosis associated with commercially produced caramel apples may have extended locally.

Initial reports indicate that an El Dorado County resident recovering from listeriosis probably acquired the illness from a caramel apple purchased at a retail store in Placer County, said Robert Miller, the county's public information officer, in a news release.

[Read the whole story](#)

Skiing becomes a present for many in Tahoe



Mother Nature delivered a package of fresh powder to Sierra-at-Tahoe on Christmas. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – New and untraditional traditions – that’s what skiing on Christmas Day is all about.

“We don’t see snow every day. That’s what Christmas is all about,” Andrew Benavides said as he sat at the bar at West Bowl at Sierra-at-Tahoe with his dad, Mike Withers.

The two live in Orangevale, so an easy day trip to the resort on Highway 50. They had a big Christmas party the night before, invited others to ski, but they were the only two to make it up the hill.

“Tahoe is just awesome,” Withers said. He learned to ski at Sierra, so he still has a fondness for the resort.

Skiing on the holiday is becoming a tradition for the Dawsons who live in El Dorado Hills. First they unwrapped what Santa brought and then they loaded the vehicle for an afternoon on the slopes.

Six-year-old Christopher had opened a present on Monday so the family of four could ski that day, too. Fluorescent green ski pants were in the box.



Pyramid Peak popped in and out of the clouds as flurries blew and the temps never got above 40 degrees Dec. 25.

More people than usual on Thursday were in the plaza at the base of the ski resort in footwear other than ski or snowboard boots. Anna Venhan of Palo Alto had her hood on to ward off the chilly breeze. She was focused on her book.

“It’s kind of relaxing,” she told *Lake Tahoe News*, especially knowing her kids were in ski school.

Being six months pregnant is keeping her off the slopes this season.

Bobbie Bennett and a group eight have been here since Sunday from the Houston area. Another nine from Houston were arriving in time for a big Christmas dinner.

“We are here because Heavenly didn’t have enough snow. We are happy here. The staff is very friendly,” Bennett told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Her legs were too sore to strap on equipment, but her teenage sons were out shredding. Bennett was perfectly content to keep warm by the fire pit in the plaza.



David Kim relaxes at
Sierra's plaza.

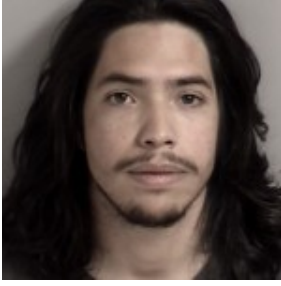
David Kim of Folsom was stretched out in one of the lounge chairs at the plaza. His daughter and wife were skiing while he hung out in the sun. Knowing it had rained at their house the day before they were in search of freshies on Christmas.

Sierra did not disappoint with the 4 inches it received overnight. Stashes of powder could still be found in the afternoon – another present to unwrap.

SLT man accused of Christmas Day burglary

A South Lake Tahoe man was arrested Dec. 25 in conjunction with a burglary in the Al Tahoe area of South Lake Tahoe.

People renting a vacation house on Fresno Avenue were awakened about 6:30am to a man rummaging through their belongings. He allegedly entered through a second story sliding glass door.



Daniel Vega

He ran out the front door with their property, according to officers.

“The burglar fell in the snow just outside the entrance and dropped a folding knife with a blade of about 4 inches,” according to a police press release. “The suspect had not brandished the knife at any of the victims during the crime.”

South Tahoe officers with the assistance of El Dorado County sheriff’s deputies found Daniel Vega, 24, in the neighborhood. He was reportedly stealing things from vehicles after he left the residence.

Vega was booked into the El Dorado County Jail on a felony charge of first-degree residential burglary.

Police believe other people are involved. They also are trying to locate stolen goods. Missing are an Apple laptop computer with several stickers displayed on it, and a woman’s brown purse with gray strap and its contents.

Anyone with information is asked to call the South Lake Tahoe Police Department at 530.542.6100 or Lake Tahoe Secret Witness at 530.541.6800.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Comments sought on Hwy. 89-Fanny Bridge project

Three meetings are scheduled for January to discuss the Highway 89/Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization Project in Tahoe City.

Comments will be accepted through Feb. 17.

The proposed project aims to improve traffic congestion at the intersection of highways 28 and 89 in Tahoe City and address the long-term structural integrity of Fanny Bridge over the Truckee River. Improvements are designed to reduce traffic congestion, accommodate future traffic increases, enhance motorized and non-motorized mobility, increase access across the Truckee River, address pedestrian and traffic safety concerns, and encourage revitalization of the Tahoe City community.

Tahoe Transportation District is lead agency for the environmental impact report prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. TRPA is lead agency for the environmental impact statement. Federal Highway Lands Administration Central Federal Lands Highway Division is lead agency for the environmental assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The environmental documents are available online.

The environmental documents examine seven project alternatives.

Public hearings are scheduled for:

- Jan. 14, 9:30am, TRPA Advisory Planning Commission, 128

Market St., Stateline.

- Jan. 23 9:30am, Tahoe Transportation District board of directors, Granlibakken Resort, Tahoe City.
- Jan. 28, 9:30am, TRPA Governing Board, the Chateau, Incline Village.