

USPS expects record number of parcels

The U.S. Postal Service is predicting this will be a record parcel season, with about 470 million packages delivered this holiday season, up about 12 percent from last year.

As Cyber Monday and online shopping in general grows, it means those items have to be shipped in some manner. Personal shipping also increases this time of year.

Facts about this holiday season and the Postal Service:

- USPS will process 15.5 billion cards, letters and packages this holiday season.
- In many large cities, delivery will be seven days a week.
- In some locations, there will be seven-day-a-week retail service.
- Three million people will use usps.com to print their postage and leave their parcel for their carrier to pick up.

Dec. 15 is expected to be the busiest retail day, while Dec. 17 should be the busiest delivery day.

Shipping deadlines to ensure delivery by Dec. 25:

Dec. 2 – Priority mail international

Dec. 10 – APO/FPO military priority mail and first-class mail

Dec. 15 – Standard post (ground)

Dec. 17 – Military priority mail express

Dec. 20 – First-class letters and priority packages

Dec. 23 – Domestic priority mail express.

Typewriters make a comeback

By Siobhan Lyons, Washington Post

In writing, music, photography and other areas, “outdated” technologies have initially been valued for their retro, nostalgic appeal in the hipster culture. Vinyl is one of the most notable technologies to have achieved a noticeable revival, not only for its retro value but also for its superior sound quality.

Now people are seeing the security benefits of returning to other so-called anachronistic technologies. Typewriters, for instance, are experiencing a revival in politics. Earlier this year, German politician Patrick Sensburg announced that Germany’s government officials might start using typewriters, as they are seen as being an “unhackable” technology.

While this move might be viewed as somewhat regressive, it’s actually progressive.

[Read the whole story](#)

Management firms change Tahoe rental market

By Kathryn Reed

Owning a vacation rental may be a luxury, but it is also a business.

And for most people, they would prefer a middleman handle the business end. That's why property management firms became so popular. The industry for a time had become static, but now it is growing and changing.

With about 75 percent of the residences on the South Shore being owned by second homeowners, there is a definite market for people to handle renting them. While not all of those people put their property on the rental market, a large percentage do.

The going rate is 30 to 50 percent of a night's fee to handle renting the property. The firms deal with noise complaints, cleaning services, and checking people in and out.

TurnKey is a firm out of Austin that this fall opened an office in South Lake Tahoe. It's biggest selling point is that for the first year it takes a 14 percent cut, with that figure going to 18 percent in subsequent years.

It is handling properties from Glenbrook to Christmas Valley and out to Camp Richardson. Expanding to the North Shore and Truckee are goals.

"We had been with the other company a long time. We were dissatisfied," John Puccinelli of Cupertino told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It was brick and mortar. This is Internet. I thought that's where the future is."

He has owned a vacation rental in the Tahoe Keys for 20 years and was with the same company that whole time. Puccinelli said it was time for a change and opted for TurnKey.

One thing that TurnKey does that most other agencies don't do is treat vacation rentals more like hotels. While hotels and airlines traditionally raise and lower rates based on peak times, vacation rental rates are often stagnant – except perhaps for Christmas, New Year's and Fourth of July – the three busiest weeks of the year in Lake Tahoe.

Jon Sween, general manager of the South Lake Tahoe office, said being able to tweak prices for clients allows for annual revenues to be greater and less emphasis on actual nights rented.

Using algorithms for people inquiring about a rental helps operators in Texas to determine if queries were sent out to multiple agencies or just TurnKey. This then allows them to direct their resources to whom they deem to be the most serious potential renters.

Technology is something that separates TurnKey from other rental agencies.

"I like the ability for them to change door locks remotely and track people when they come in and out of the house so they can provide security for the house as well and not just for vacation rental," Roger Isaac told *Lake Tahoe News*. He has had a vacation rental off North Upper Truckee for a couple years and is now using TurnKey. "When a vacation renter comes up they change the lock remotely so each person has a personalized entry key to come in the house."

TurnKey also uses an Android tablet to communicate with renters. This includes eliminating the traditional binder full of info in the rental; it's on the tablet. The tablet is also available for guests to use while in Tahoe to research places to go.

Housekeepers must take 25 photos with it when they are done. Guests are asked to rate the cleanliness when they check in.

"If they check five, the housekeeper receives a bonus. If it's a one, we call the client about it right away," Sween told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Renters also receive a welcome call when they arrive; which in part is to check on any issues at the get-go.

The tablet also has a built in decibel meter. This has to do with noise being the biggest complaint about vacation rentals. If it gets too loud, the renters are sent a message to keep it down. They don't know (until now) that their noise level is being monitored.

TurnKey isn't the only newcomer to the market. Denver-based Evolve mailed info to owners last month offering 10 percent fees. Evolve and Red Awning offer marketing and reservation services only. TurnKey will do the same. It just means no active management, just bookings.

Opinion: California's massage industry explosion

By Joe Mathews

For the record, I did not intend to get naked for this column.

But the woman at the local massage parlor insisted that I remove my pants and underwear before she would put her hands on me. And so I took it all off—in order to better understand today's California.

Judging by our streetscapes, this is a state of massage. It has become nearly impossible to drive a thoroughfare anywhere in California without encountering multiple massage parlors. Since the 2007 arrival of the Great Recession, no retail business sector has grown faster, with hotbeds in San Francisco, San Mateo, Fresno, and Sacramento and Orange counties.

Then there's California's massage capital, the San Gabriel

Valley, where I live. The city of San Gabriel has gone from one to 53 massage parlors in a decade, while little old ladies in Pasadena can now choose from more than 100 massage parlors (that's one for every 1,300 residents), up from nine a decade ago, according to the Pasadena Star-News. My own neighbors in South Pasadena also seem to have a lot of stress in need of relief. On a recent walk, I counted 10 parlors within six blocks of our house, with names like Massage Place, Shiatsu of Zen, King Spa, Massage Villa, Gifted Hands Therapeutic Massage, Massage Envy, and Happy Feet Foot Massage.

Read the whole story

Fewer El Dorado County grapes to harvest

El Dorado County produced fewer wine grapes than the last three years, but the quality is said to be high.

Significant spring rains followed by consistent, slightly above average temperatures during the growing season marked one of the earliest harvests on record.

"The quality of this year was outstanding," Josh Bendick of Holly's Hill Vineyards said in a press release. "2014 was the shortest harvest we have ever had. Although we've started picking earlier in previous years, we were done earlier this year."

There are more than 70 wineries and nearly 2,000 vineyard acres in the county.

The drought is a larger contributor less tonnage.

Wildland fires in the area burned on the fringes of the wine region.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Tahoe shelter helps 7 more puppies left for dead



Pet Network Humane Society
in Incline Village is trying
to save abandoned puppies.
Photo/Pet Network

By Associated Press

A Lake Tahoe animal shelter has provided a new lease on life to another litter of puppies left for dead in a trash bin.

Volunteers at the Pet Network Humane Society in Incline

Village have nursed back to health seven pups abandoned in Susanville, California, only a couple days after they were born.

The animals were discovered Oct. 29 in a trash bin behind a Radio Shack with their umbilical cords still attached.

The nonprofit Pet Network was contacted after the animals were taken to the Lassen County Animal Shelter, which lacked the staff to care for them.

Pet Network spokeswoman Brittney Schilpp said the prognosis is upbeat for the four females and three males, and they'll eventually be put up for adoption.

"All of them are healthy and looking great," Schilpp told the Associated Press. "They're chubby and walking around. We're no stranger to the scenario and lucky to have such a strong volunteer base to care for them."

Last year, the shelter provided similar care to a litter of six puppies found abandoned in a trash bin at a South Lake Tahoe gas station only a few hours after they were born. The animals all wound up with permanent homes.

"It usually takes between six to eight weeks before they're ready for adoption," Schilpp said. "The care for them is time consuming since they have to be fed every two to three hours by bottle."

The Pet Network is accepting donations for care of the puppies and applications to adopt them. It will cost the shelter \$1,000 each for the canines' care until they're adopted.

Group leaders acknowledge it's unlikely the person or persons who dumped the puppies will be caught in either case. Under California law, they would face felony charges.

The newborn dogs should have instead been taken to a veterinarian's office or animal shelter, preferably with their

mother to improve their chances of survival, they say.

Breath test being developed to detect pot

By Melissa Santos, News Tribune

A team at Washington State University is working to develop a breath test that could quickly determine whether a driver is under the influence of marijuana.

Law enforcement officers already use preliminary breath tests in the field to estimate drivers' blood alcohol content. But no similar portable tool exists to test for marijuana impairment via a breath sample.

Stoned drivers have become an increasing concern since Washington voters legalized recreational use of marijuana in 2012. A quarter of blood samples taken from drivers in 2013, the first full year the initiative was in effect, came back positive for pot.

WSU chemistry professor Herbert Hill said that existing technologies – including those already used by airport security and customs agents to detect drugs and explosives – can be re-purposed to test breath for THC, the psychoactive component of marijuana.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Tapping Tuesday will focus on clearing and balancing the throat chakra with emotional freedom technique. This is good for people dealing with a difficulty expressing emotions, especially grief or sadness. The free class (donations accepted) is Dec. 2 from 6-7pm at Rejuvenate Spa (behind Nephele's restaurant on Ski Run Boulevard).
 - Capital City Community Band will commemorate the anniversary of Pearl Harbor with a free concert Dec. 7 at 3pm at the Carson City Community Center.
 - Nevada Artists Association is having a special meeting for the election of NAA board members on Dec. 6 at 10am at the Brewery Arts Center, 449 West King St., Carson City.
 - Homewood Mountain Resort is planning to open Dec. 12. Santa will be on the slopes Dec. 20.
 - Wilbur D. May Museum in Reno's Art Angels workshop is a free watercolor class for kids 6-12. It is Dec. 13 from 9:30-11:30am. Register by calling 775.785.5961.
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Time to think about wine at Christmas

By Will Lyons, Wall Street Journal

Christmas isn't a time to improvise. The holiday season is all about spending time with family and friends, basking in the

warm glow of the familiar. It's the same with wine.

At this time of year, I like to pull out old favorites, confident in the knowledge that I know what I'm getting and can relax and enjoy them for what they are.

This year, I've done the work for you and sipped my way through dozens of wines to find the perfect case for the holidays.

In the course of the next month, you're likely to find yourself opening more bottles of sparkling wine than at any other time of the year. So you need an affordable fizz as well as something sought-after and rare.

I've chosen two sparkling wines that I think offer tremendous value for money: New Zealand's Miru Miru and California's Quartet. Both are ideal for small family gatherings and larger drinks parties. For something a little more special, there's a stunning vintage Champagne from Pol Roger.

Read the whole story

Program ensures kids have winter coats

Each year the Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe coordinates the Coats for Kids project. This year more than 500 new winter coats were distributed to youth throughout South Lake Tahoe.

Teachers communicate with parents, families, and youth-serving agencies to identify the youth. Volunteers from the three Kiwanis Clubs, Optimist, Tahoe Turning Point, California Conservation Corps and businesses work throughout the year to

raise the funds necessary to purchase the coats. The coats are then distributed at each of the schools, where each child gets to choose the coat they would like.

To learn more about how to donate to Coats for Kids, go online.