

Lake Spirit Award nominations being sought

Lake Spirit Awards recognize real people making real progress in conserving Lake Tahoe's unique natural environment. Nominations are open for this year's contest.

The awards honor those committed to a spirit of cooperation and protecting Lake Tahoe.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency created the Lake Spirit Awards in 2011 to recognize individuals showing exceptional commitment to the Lake Tahoe Basin. The awards expanded the following year to include categories for exemplary citizen and agency representative/environmental scientist. A winner from the North Shore and South Shore will be selected in each category.

The nomination form is **online**. The deadline to submit is March 23.

Book review: Seeing the world through Airbnb

By Kathryn Reed

One Seattle couple has turned short-term rentals into their home.

For Debbie and Michael Campbell they call home someplace new every few days. They are traveling the world, going from one Airbnb rental to the next.



The couple, who is in their 60s, have written a book about their experience. “Your Keys, Our Home: The Senior Nomads Incredible Airbnb Journey (Elliot Bay Events, 2016).”

It’s part memoir, part how to use Airbnb, and a big part about how to be the best host – according to them.

They choose to primarily stay in an entire house/condo. But they want a lot from their hosts.

While I have rented a whole house before – some with better amenities than others – I don’t want interaction with the owner. This is why in some ways I found the Campbells’ desires a bit off-putting. I wouldn’t want hosts or potential hosts, as Airbnb calls owners, to think the Campbells represent all guests/renters.

What they are doing is interesting, but the book itself wasn’t that great of a read. It was a bit jumbled. I kept wondering where the editor was.

What was interesting was to learn about the different types of rentals and how they are just about everywhere one would want to travel.

Shining light on SLT's contract with law firm

By Kathryn Reed

It is normal for government bodies to have an attorney with their best interests in mind review all contracts.

That doesn't appear to have happened last fall when the South Lake Tahoe City Council entered into an agreement for Burke, Williams & Sorensen to provide city attorney services on an interim basis.

Mayor Wendy David told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I'm not aware of an outside attorney reviewing the contract."

So, this means there was no independent review of the contract.

It was signed by outgoing City Attorney Tom Watson, who was leaving because he was tired of the city. No one thought to question if he would have the city's best interests at heart at that juncture and whether it was appropriate for him to handle the contract for his successor.

The contract was also signed by then Mayor Austin Sass and Eric Vail of the law firm.

That contract states, "Burke will not employ or otherwise incur an obligation to pay other counsel, specialists or experts for services in connection with this agreement without prior written approval of the city attorney."

In other words, the law firm has carte blanche to hire whomever it wants for presumably whatever reason and the city has no say because the firm is the city attorney.

That open ended allowance is how Nira Doherty, who is the law

firm's designee to be South Lake Tahoe's interim city attorney, was able to approve the contract with Municipal Resource Group. Mary Egan, who heads MRG, is the one who came in last fall at the urging of Sass to assess the culture of the city.

Even so, with the council taking action in closed session to approve the agreement it needed to be reported in open session. It never has been. All that the city has provided to *Lake Tahoe News* is the agreement MRG sent to the city, not the actual contract.

While city officials have told *LTN* at some point the contract is going to come back to correct that Brown Act violation, this could be a violation of the California Constitution in regards to approving a contract retroactively.

Doherty allowed the council to violate the Brown Act by not insisting the MRG contract be reported in open session. Brown Act violations are misdemeanors; every council member could be charged.

The MRG agreement called for Sass to arrange meeting space at the Marriott for Egan to conduct her interviews with council and department heads.

Lake Tahoe News has asked for detailed bills regarding the law firm, but to date has only received totals. The contract with the firm says, "As a condition precedent to any payment to Burke under this agreement, Burke shall submit monthly to the city separate statements of account which clearly sets forth by dates the designated items of work for which the billings are submitted." So, clearly, those details exist.

There is also a question as to what role Doherty really has. In October, she filled out the state Form 700 disclosing economic interests. Under office/agency/court she listed city of South Lake Tahoe, with her position being city attorney.

This makes it appear she is an officer of the city.

The contract with the law firm further states, "No member of the governing body of the city, and no other officer, employee or agent of the city who exercises any functions or responsibilities in connection with the carrying out of any project, to which this agreement pertains, shall have any personal interest, direct or indirect, in this agreement."

That would mean Doherty would have a conflict with said agreement because she does have a personal and direct interest.

California Government Code 1090 says, "Members of the Legislature, state, county, district, judicial district, and city officers or employees shall not be financially interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity, or by anybody or board of which they are members. Nor shall state, county, district, judicial district, and city officers or employees be purchasers at any sale or vendors at any purchase made by them in their official capacity."

If she is an officer of the city as written on Form 700, it appears she violated the Government Code by devising a contract with the city in which she benefits. This is a felony.

Doherty is on vacation. At this week's council meeting she said she would be unavailable for comment during this time.

Doherty has asked for her law firm's contract to be on the March 20 council agenda.

Opinion: The importance of protecting K9s

By Ted Gaines

Orange police chased hit-and-run suspect Steve Montee for three hours before his truck ran out of gas, but the drama did not end there. Montee refused to exit his vehicle. For two more hours, the officers negotiated and offered Montee opportunities to surrender. They shot pepper spray into his truck cabin, but Montee would not budge and the standoff was moving toward a dangerous and volatile resolution. But the officers had one more card to play, and they dispatched a highly-trained, highly-effective police asset named Bosco to rescue the day.



Ted Gaines

Bosco ran forward alone and incapacitated the suspect so the officers could move in safely and arrest the driver. Bosco, the hero of the encounter, is a dog.

It's because of dogs such as Bosco that I have introduced the Police Dog Protection Act of 2018. Under current law, harming a police dog is what's called a "wobbler," meaning it's a crime that can be charged as either a felony or misdemeanor. My bill will automatically make it a felony – every time – for anyone who willfully and maliciously harms or kills one of these law dogs.

Police dogs, usually German shepherds or Belgian malinois, can cost departments upward of \$10,000 to purchase and put into service, and continuing health, upkeep, and training can run as much as \$100,000 over the course of their service lives. The investment pays off.

These dogs are deployed in hundreds of law enforcement agencies around the state. They protect their handlers – just ask Montee – but also search for drugs and explosives, locate missing persons, and find crime scene evidence. Their amazing sense of smell, 10,000 times more powerful than a human's, coupled with intense training, makes them a unique weapon in the fight to keep our neighborhoods safe.

Dogs and their handlers also visit schools and community groups throughout the year, demonstrating their expertise and special skills, and in the process build healthy bonds between officers and the people they protect and serve. They are vital community outreach tools.

Sadly, at least 10 of these K-9s died in the line of duty over the past five years in California. That's 10 too many. And at a time when prison "realignment," Proposition 47 and Proposition 57 are flooding our neighborhoods with criminals who should still be behind bars, our officers need all the help and support they can get.

These are extraordinary animals playing a special role in our society, but it also comes down to this: An attack on any part of law enforcement is an attack on every part of law enforcement. We need to drop the hammer on anyone who tries to hurt those who are protecting us all.

My Police Dog Protection Act will do just that.

State Sen. Ted Gaines represents the 1st Senate District, which includes all or parts of Alpine, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, Shasta, Sierra and Siskiyou counties.

Shootings put teachers in role as human shields

By Julie Turkewitz, New York Times

TAMARAC, Fla. — The shooting was all over, but the emotional reckoning had just begun, and so on Saturday the teachers of Broward County packed their union hall to discuss what it meant to have become the nation's human shields.

"Last night I told my wife I would take a bullet for the kids," said Robert Parish, a teacher at an elementary school just miles from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High, where a former student killed 17 people, including three staff members who found themselves in the line of fire.

Since the attack last week, said Parish, "I think about it all the time."

Across the country, teachers are grappling with how their roles have expanded, from educator and counselor to bodyguard and protector. They wonder if their classrooms are properly equipped, if they would recognize the signs of a dangerous student, and most of all, if they are prepared to jump in front of a bullet.

Read the whole story

Placer pilots Hwy. 89 project to relieve congestion

Southbound traffic on Highway 89 can back up from the entrance of Squaw Valley to Interstate 80 during a big ski weekend.

On Saturday, Placer County will continue a pilot project to extend the turn lane into the resort, aimed at relieving this congestion.

Placer began a limited trial of the turn lane extension Feb. 17, and will launch it in full Feb. 24 and March 3.

The existing turn lane into Squaw Valley is only about 250 feet, which accommodates about 12 cars. Cars eventually spill into the highway, holding up through traffic. The pilot project will extend the turn lane along the road shoulder by 2,000 feet, separating another 100 cars from southbound through traffic.

Electronic signs will be placed along the highway.

Road Beat: Hyundai Elantra sedan brings value

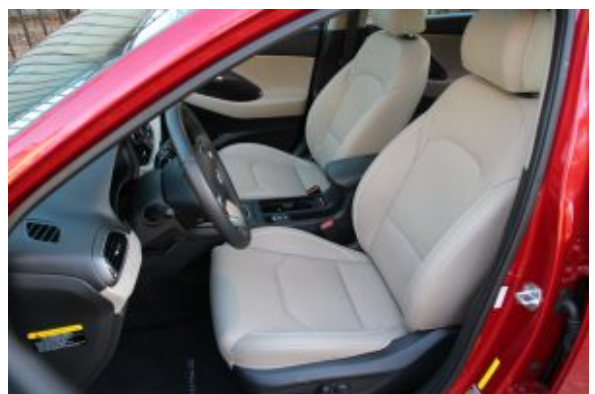
By Larry Weitzman

Hyundai is a mature car company that produces cutting edge cars, vehicles that are world class. The new Hyundai GT is another example of real automotive value in a vehicle that has no negatives, not even a small one. If you wanted a vehicle that is comparable, you would have to look at the Mazda3 five-

door, and they are so close, comparisons throughout this Road Beat will occur.

Hyundai's Elantra GT (HGT) is effectively the station wagon version of the Hyundai Elantra sedan. But a lot happens before it gets to the lucky buyer. While the hatchback design is sleeker as with the Mazda3, it is also smaller by a significant amount, with length shrinking about 10 inches to 171 inches, while interior room, volume and practicality all go up. The HGT is about 5 inches shorter than the M3 (Mazda3), a plus for the HGT.

Width is 71 inches, average for this class and HGT stands 58 inches tall, maybe an inch higher than average. But HGT looks sportier than the Elantra sedan, making it the best looking Elantra, especially with its new front end and rakish character lines. I am not yet sold on the rounded rear window line. If there is a difference between the M3 and the HGT, it's in this small aspect of the overall design giving the Mada3 a slight edge in overall looks. But overall, both cars are great looking vehicles. And the difference may be in the beholder.



Specification

Price \$21,235 to \$27,460 all in

Engine 2.0L DOHC, 16 valve inline four 161 hp @ 6,200 rpm

150 lb-ft of torque @ 4,700 rpm

Transmission

Six speed automatic

Six speed manual

Chassis layout

Front transverse engine,
front wheel drive

Dimensions

Length 170.9 inches

Wheelbase 104.3 inches

Width 70.7 inches

Height 57.7 inches

Track (f/r) 61.1/61.5 inches

Ground clearance 5.9 inches

Weight 3,040 pounds

Fuel capacity 14.0 gallons

Cargo capacity (rear seats
down/up) 55.1/24.9 cubic
feet

Passenger volume 96.6 cubic
feet

Steering lock to lock 2.6
turns

Turning circle 34.8 feet

Wheels 17X7 inch alloys

Tires 225/45X17

Co-efficient of drag 0.30

Performance

0-60 mph 7.23 seconds

50-70 mph 3.96 seconds

50-70 uphill 6.28 seconds

Fuel economy EPA rated
24/32/27 mpg

city/highway/combined.

Expect 35.6 mpg on the
highway and 30-33 mpg in

rural country driving.

Underhood is the biggest difference, however, in reality, it's a small difference. The standard engine for the HGT is a 2.0L DOHC, 16 valve inline four banger. Knocking down 161 big horses at 6,200 rpm and 150 pounds of twist at 4,700 rpm, it drives the front wheels via a six speed manual cog swapper or as in my tester a six speed torque converter, auto cog swapper. Go with the auto as performance is virtually identical and its easier to extract.

Also available is a spunkier, 1.6L turbo engine making 201 hp and 195 pounds of twist and it too connects to the front wheels through a seven-speed DCT. Nice. The normally aspirated HGT was the subject of this Road Beat and it is comparable to the Mazda3 which gets a 2.5L 184 hp engine. Zero-60 mph comes up is a quick 7.23 seconds while passing times of 3.96 seconds (50-70 mph) and 6.28 seconds up a 6-7 percent grade. Not many compact type cars compare. The more powerful Mazda3 betters these times marginally, but the difference is insignificant in the 0-60 test and about a half a second in the passing test where the extra power is more noticeable. But in actual driving the HGT feels just as responsive and powerful. If you are tracking the vehicle, the Mazda3 has the advantage, but otherwise it's a close toss-up. However, the 201 hp turbo engine HGT might just smoke the Mazda3, dropping the performance tests by a second in each category.

Fuel economy for the HGT as per the EPA tests is 24/32/27 mpg city/highway/combined. But my tests continually exceeded those numbers by at least 20 percent. Overall for the 425 miles driven, the HGT averaged an amazing 33.4 mpg with almost no time spent on the freeway (15 percent) and 25 percent spent in moderate traffic. In my round trip to Carson City from Placerville, the HGT averaged 35.6 mpg and at 70 mph on a level highway with the engine spinning 2,000 rpm, the HGT averaged 39.3 mpg. With 14 gallons of fuel on hand that's an

easy 500 miles non-stop. See if your tank can last that long? The HGT betters the Mazda by about an MPG, which is insignificant.

Hyundai comes with all the creds for being a sports sedan/wagon, except the rear suspension is a semi-independent torsion beam instead of the HGT Sport (1.6T) fully independent multilink system. For 99.9 percent of buyers, no one will notice. The rest of the creds are all high performance, sports tuned suspension (meaning it's just tightened up a bit), a quick electric power rack (2.6 turns lock to lock) and 17 x 7 inch alloys shod with 225/45 series tires. It adds up to confident, flat grippy handling made easy with good steering feedback.

In the twisties the fun was adding throttle to balance the car mid turn. Very nice. HGT will surprise most people with its powerful agility. While the Mazda3 may be marginally better, it would be hard to discern any difference. Turning circle is a tight 34.8 feet.

Ride quality of the Hyundai is very good, smooth and quiet and very quiet on smooth roads. The cabin is quiet and over heavy bumps, pitch motions are well controlled. It is certainly equal to the Mazda3.

Safety is everywhere. Four-wheel discs (fronts ventilated) with all the acronyms and with the Style Package (\$1,800) you get blind spot detection. Add the Tech Package (4,300) and fabulous LED headlights. Both those packages include oodles of extras, most of them desirable.

Inside is where the Hyundai also excels. Quality materials are everywhere, including with the above packages, leather, power and heated seats that are superb. Instrumentation is perfect, big tach and speedo flanking the center info/trip computer and a super easy to use center stack.

The hatchback/station wagon design offers versatility and

utility with 55 cubes with the rear seat folded and 25 cubes with the seats up.

Now here is where the GT scores, price. The base car which still comes with loads of standard equipment stickers for just \$20,350 plus \$885 for the boat from Ulsan, Korea. My tester had two packages, the Style pack (\$1,800) which adds BSD, push button start, power to the driver's and heat to both front chairs. The Tech pack (\$4,300) adds leather, nav, LED lights, big sunroof and more. Add a \$120 for the embroidered carpeted floor mats. Total damage is \$27,480, a couple of grand less than the Mazda. That makes the Hyundai GT hard to beat, especially considering the standard 10 year/100,000 mile powertrain warranty.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

‘Bachelor’ a boon for Lake Tahoe tourism

By Bridget Chavez, KOL0-TV

A handful of Lake Tahoe locations featured on an episode of “The Bachelor” has businesses seeing an increase in traffic and overall interest.

Michelle Wickham is a big fan of the show and says she booked her flight to Reno-Tahoe International Airport within hours of seeing the episode.

"I'm a huge Bachelor fan and watch every episode, and I recently met some friends from Reno, and then when I watched 'The Bachelor,' I saw that Lake Tahoe was featured on there, and I saw that it was just gorgeous and there was an awesome lake and scenery, and I just wanted to come and check it out," she says.

Read the whole story

\$85,000 in health grants awarded by Barton Foundation

Barton Foundation dispersed \$85,000 to increase patient safety and privacy, offer comfort for children and their family members, and provide education and training for local first responders.

At Barton Memorial Hospital, the MRI imaging suite now has a ferromagnetic threat detector installed at the entrance. This device detects metal objects inside of or being carried by the patient before they enter the MRI suite and risk becoming a projectile. Barton Health Skilled Nursing Facility received Accora floor beds that reduce the risk of falls and improve patients' head and foot mobility to receive care while still in bed.

Patient privacy has been improved through sound resistant privacy curtains in Lake Tahoe Surgery Center, which extend all the way to the floor. Privacy glass has been added at the Barton Community Health Center, ensuring more privacy for tele-medicine visits.

Barton Foundation presented a wagon full of teddy bears to the

hospital's emergency department to help ease anxiety for pediatric patients. Further relief is being offered in the form of Buzzys, a combination ice pack and vibration kit that numbs and distracts individuals nervous about needles.

Recommended by the American College of Surgeons as well as the Department of Homeland Security, Barton ER staff will receive training on the Stop Bleed Program. This program educates medics and nurses on the use of tourniquets in the event of a mass casualty incident. Training classes be available to local first responders at schools, police departments and fire protection agencies in addition to Barton employees.

EDC district apologizes for raffling off an AR-15

By Ellen Garrison, Sacramento Bee

The Cameron Park Community Services District issued a statement Monday apologizing for raffling off an AR-15 rifle at a weekend fundraiser for its fire department.

Some attendees of the Cameron Park Fire Fighters Association's annual crab feed on Feb. 17 had said they were upset to find the firearm included among the raffle items. The same type of weapon was used in the recent school shooting in Parkland, Fla., that left 17 dead.

"The district deeply apologizes for this insensitivity to the youth and families affected by the horrific event in Florida and other mass shootings," the district's board said in a statement.

Read the whole story