

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- El Dorado County supervisors in January reappointed County Counsel Mike Ciccozzi to another four-year term.
 - Veteran El Dorado County prosecutor Trish Kelliher will launch her campaign for El Dorado County district attorney at noon Feb. 10 at the Placerville Town Hall.
 - Placer County Elections Office is having a candidates' workshop on Feb. 17 from 10am-1pm at its office in Auburn. For more info, call 530.886.5650.
 - Sierra Watch is throwing a kick-off party Feb. 7 to launch "The Movie to Keep Squaw True." It will be from 6-9:30pm at Alibi Ale Works in Truckee.
 - Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra road work schedules for the week from Caltrans.
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House fire displaces tourists in Incline Village

One person was injured in an early morning house fire Saturday in Incline Village.

North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District crews were called out to Spencer Way at 5:33am Feb. 4.

The eight adults, eight children and two dogs were able to escape. One adult was treated on scene and released.

The cause of the fire at the vacation rental is under

investigation.

The estimated damage loss has not been released.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Tax reform a hurdle in fixing Nev.'s affordable housing shortage

By Michael Scott Davidson, Las Vegas Review-Journal

As Nevada grapples with a massive shortage of affordable housing, state officials fear federal tax reform has stymied a long-standing funding resource.

Since 1986 the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program has allowed private investors to reduce their federal tax liability if they help pay for the creation or rehabilitation of affordable rental housing. Last year the program financed nearly 1,150 homes and apartments in Nevada and capped their rents for at least 30 years.

“It’s by far the single-biggest program across the country to generate affordable housing units,” Nevada Housing Division Chief Financial Officer Michael Holliday said.

Read the whole story

SLT mayor to host informal gathering

Each month South Lake Tahoe Mayor Wendy David will be hosting “conversations” with anyone who wants to attend.

These are informal gatherings that give the public an opportunity to ask questions and for there to be a dialogue.

David plans to bring a guest each time. At the Feb. 21 gathering Councilmember Brooke Laine will join her.

The “conversation” will begin at 9am at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center.

Author to talk about 1960 Squaw Olympics

Author David Antonucci on Feb. 13 will share the story of how in 1960 the eyes of the world focused on Squaw Valley and Lake Tahoe as the Winter Olympics played out on a world stage.

At the Lake Tahoe Historical Society’s first Fireside Chat of the year, guests will hear about and see vignettes that describe the individual stories of enigma and invention, written off underdogs that ultimately came out on top, and a promise to win gold made to a terminally ill loved one. The presentation is based on Antonucci’s book, “Snowball’s Chance: The Story of the 1960 Olympic Winter Games,” which will be available for purchase and signing.

The event will begin at 7pm at Camp Richardson's Historic Hotel. Cost is \$3 to attend, free for LTHS members.

Canadian alpinist to highlight film series

Barry Blanchard and his film "The Mountain, An Arrow Pointing Up" will be the fifth and final installment of the 12th annual Alpenglow Sports Winter Film Series.

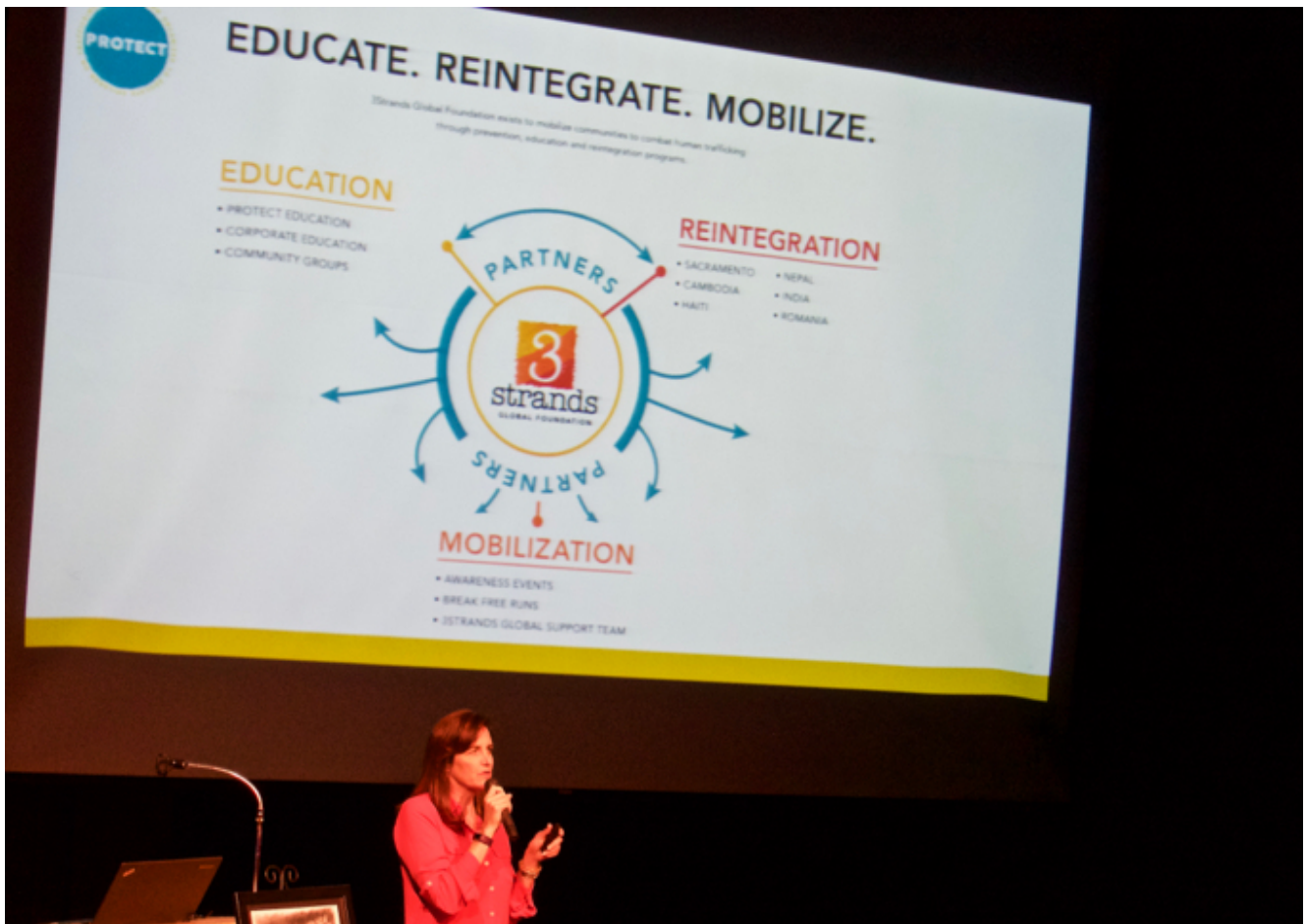
The event is Feb. 22 at 7pm at Squaw Valleys' Olympic Lodge.

Blanchard, one of Canada's foremost alpinists, will tell why he's dedicated his entire adult life to finding the most epic first ascents across the globe. Showing images from alpine adventures in the Canadian Rockies, European Alps, Pakistani Karakorum and Greater Himalaya, Everest and K2, he will illustrate the ways in which mountains engage and inspire, and demonstrate how climbing soothes the soul. Blanchard will also touch on his career as a mountain guide and his involvement in making the Hollywood movies "K2," "Cliffhanger" and "Vertical Limit."

It is free to attend. Prizes from industry sponsors are raffled off at each show to raise money for local nonprofits. The beneficiaries that night will be Truckee Tahoe Humane Society and Squaw Dogs.

Doors open at 6:15pm. Fireside Pizza Co. will be on-hand with dinner offerings to enjoy before and during the show.

Human trafficking now a topic in schools



Ashlie Bryant, co-founder and president of 3Strands, talks about human trafficking. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

While human trafficking – better known as forced prostitution – has been a subject of several talks in South Lake Tahoe, the extent of the problem locally has not been well documented.

During a presentation last week someone asked how prevalent the problem is in South Lake Tahoe.

The answer: "We don't have the data." South Shore law enforcement along with the FBI, which has a local office, is "trying to create it."

Those working to combat the problem are also working to change the vocabulary. Instead of pimp, trafficker or exploiter is issued. Instead of john, it's buyer. Instead of prostitute, it's exploited victim.

The Jan. 30 get together at Lake Tahoe Community College was put on by PATH – Partners Against Trafficking of Humans. This is a group that was created in 2014 out of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe.

Predators lurk wherever kids hang out – near schools, ski slopes, malls. Victims don't fit a profile. They come from all socio-economic backgrounds, and every race. While mostly it's girls who are targeted, boys are not immune from being exploited.

A couple of videos were shown with the survivors telling their stories how the nightmare began. Often it's a slightly older man who befriends them and they become a couple. One made \$85 a night in tips as a waitress. The guy said he had a way she would make 10 times that amount in a night. He had her work in a strip club. She was convinced he was good for her, that she was making money for their future.

It leads to her having sex for money. Sometimes she is sold to others.

Often it starts with this guy being so sweet, buying her things, making her feel special, being affectionate and saying he loves her.

It can be hard to get out. Threats are made – such as telling family and friends what she has been doing. Physical abuse may have started.

Much of the evening was a presentation by members of 3Strands Global Foundation, which was created in 2010 after a 17-year-old West Slope girl was trafficked for eight days. Their goal is to rid the world of human trafficking. They want to disrupt the economy of this business.

One way of doing this is through Assembly Bill 1227 that was signed last year by Gov. Jerry Brown and took effect Jan. 1. It is known as the Human Trafficking Prevention and Education Act.

According to Ashlie Bryant, co-founder and president of 3Strands, the bill requires all California schools to provide curriculum about human trafficking to fifth-, seventh- ninth-, and 11th-graders. Younger students learn about boundaries; older kids are taught to recognize tactics.

An audience member asked if the curriculum was in Lake Tahoe Unified School District classrooms. No, was the answer. The 3Strands reps said they've gotten push back locally.

"The board's perspective is that we always have to investigate curriculum options before the district brings the information before our students. Although the process may seem cumbersome to the outside eyes, the board wants any information – especially topics that are as difficult as human trafficking – to be fully checked out. We are dealing with children and want to provide the most accurate and appropriately delivered message," LTUSD board President Barbara Bannar told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I did check with (Superintendent) Jim Tarwater and he stated that there was no push back on this topic."

The district said there was a community meeting two years ago to talk to parents and students about the dangers of human trafficking, which 3Strands attended, as well as law enforcement. 3Strands officials have conducted presentations for freshmen at South Tahoe High School each of the last two years and plan to do so again this spring.

One issue with the state law is that it is an unfunded mandate – meaning there is no money to implement it. Plus, there is always the issue that when something is added to the school day, something has to be taken away.

Notes:

Statistics from 3Strands website:

- There are nearly 2 million children worldwide exploited in the global sex trade; each year, as many as 100,000-300,000 American children are at risk of being trafficked for commercial sex in the United States.
 - The average age of a trafficking victim in the United States is 11-14.
 - There are approximately 20 million victims held in modern slavery globally.
 - Human trafficking is a \$150 billion global industry, annually. In the U.S. alone, a \$9.8 billion industry.
 - All 50 states in the U.S., and 167 countries have reported incidents of human trafficking.
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Opinion: Give Coachella to the Canadians

By Joe Mathews

Let's give the Coachella Valley to Canada.

After all, Canadians already rule the desert in winter. Canadian snowbirds love Palm Springs because it's a shorter flight than Maui and because it offers more culture—the international film festival, Modernism Week, the Coachella music festivals—than Phoenix.



Joe Mathews

The desert has developed a Canadian-friendly infrastructure of restaurants, country clubs, and social organizations. The Canadian Club of the Desert, founded in 1982 at the Gene Autry Hotel, holds monthly breakfast forums “sharing experiences and ideas concerning issues of importance to Canadians.” The club also hosts a “Welcome Back Cocktail Party” in early December and “A Wind-Up Dinner and Dance” in March at the Lakes Country Club.

While snowbirds have been coming for decades, the Great Recession accelerated this Canadianization of the California desert. In 2008 the Canadian dollar was at all-time highs just as California real estate was in freefall—allowing Canadians to snap up properties cheaply. In the first four years of this decade, Canadians accounted for one-quarter of home purchases in the desert.

And home purchases are just one form of Canadian stimulus in Coachella. By one estimate, Canada is responsible for 450,000 visitors annually; the Canadian government has taken credit for tripling the population of Palm Springs during winter. The Canadian hordes also have fueled the expansion of Palm Springs International Airport, which boasts direct service to Toronto,

Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg.

This Canadian invasion has stirred only minor resentments. Restaurant servers say they could tip better. Canadians are also blamed for making traffic slower, given their strange national proclivity for obeying posted speed limits.

But the biggest problem with Coachella's Canadianization is that it isn't as big as it could be.

The Coachella Valley could get even more of a boost if more Canadians could visit more, buy more homes, and stay longer. But Canadians are welcome here only part-time. Our federal government imposes its complicated tax and immigration systems on you if you spend too much time here.

While the details are complicated, many Canadians in Coachella limit themselves to just 182 days a year. Spend 183 days here—more than half the year—and you can be considered a U.S. “resident alien” and the IRS may force you to pay U.S. taxes on all your global income.

This hurts California, since our Canadian visitors and part-time residents pay state and local taxes, while using relatively little in services.

A Canadian couple who split their time between Indio and British Columbia (I am not naming them to spare them federal government hassles) wonder why they can't stay longer. They have come to the Coachella Valley every year since 1984, have owned homes here since 2003, and pay property taxes 180 percent higher than in Canada.

And yet they make no social service demands and even buy extra insurance “to ensure that we can protect ourselves against the bankrupting cost of medical services here.”

“We are welcome here for 182 days, then we become ‘alien,’ and must depart,” they said. “We can own property but not weapons.

We can pay every tax but not vote We commit no crimes. We buy media but seldom appear in it. We are a potential resource, never a threat.”

Recent declines in the Canadian dollar have made them less of a resource: Spending by Canadian visitors is down about 10 percent in the last couple years. The California housing shortage, and the soaring home costs that come with it, have made buying here harder for everyone, including our friends from the True North. (Still, median home prices in the desert are half what it costs to buy in Vancouver or Toronto.)

But the Canadians still come—and we would profit by lengthening their stays. Imagine if federal law were changed to make it possible for Canadians to spend nine months a year in California without triggering U.S. residency rules and taxes. That would be 50 percent more time, and much more spending and sales taxes from Canadians.

Could this happen? Maybe not. The federal government is generally hostile to policies that benefit California. But congressional Republicans are open to tax reform, and President Trump has indicated a preference for immigrants from wealthier and whiter countries like Canada.

And if the feds won't make things easier for Canadians in California, the state could step in.

Maybe the desert heart is getting to me, but I wonder if California might just deed the Coachella Valley to Canada. Not only would we get more Canadians and better governance, we'd also get insurance: If the federal government escalates its war against California, we'd only have to drive to Palm Springs to request asylum.

A Canada colony in California might not be paradise. But it sounds pretty good, eh?

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo

Lack of snow severely impacts Central Sierra resorts

By Marek Warszawski, Sacramento Bee



Tim Cohee

This winter marks the 60th anniversary of China Peak, the 1,300-acre ski area in the Sierra National Forest east of Fresno.

But instead of celebrating, owner/operator Tim Cohee is contemplating the ultimate bummer while struggling through what he describes as the worst season he's experienced during more than 40 years in the business.

"We have reserves, but at some point they're going to run out," Cohee, the former chief executive at Kirkwood resort, said. "At that point you have to shut the resort down. There is a scenario – maybe it's not this year – but there is a scenario that says the ski area no longer exists because of these droughts."

[Read the whole story](#)

Caesars real estate owner raises more money than expected in IPO

By Todd Prince, Las Vegas Review-Journal

VICI, the owner of nearly two dozen Caesars Entertainment Corp. properties, raised more money in an initial public offering of stock than it anticipated amid strong demand.

The Las Vegas-based real estate investment trust sold 60.5 million shares at \$20 a piece, raising \$1.21 billion, the company said in a statement late Wednesday. The company initially sought to sell 50 million shares between \$19 and \$21.

VICI also increased the over-allotment option to 9.1 million shares from 7.5 million. That will enable the company to raise an additional \$181 million in the IPO.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys.

[Read the whole story](#)