

Comments sought on Stateline event center

The Tahoe Douglas Visitor's Authority and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency are seeking scoping comments on the proposed Tahoe South Events Center in Stateline.

The events center would be a publicly-owned assembly, event, and entertainment venue located on Highway 50 where the current parking lot of MontBleu is.

Edgewood Companies owns the parcels it would be built on.

TDVA will be responsible for the planning, construction, and eventual operation of the events center.

A subdivision of land consistent with TRPA policies is anticipated for the purpose of conveying the newly created parcel to TDVA. The newly created parcel will function completely independent from the Edgewood Companies parcels through the acquisition of utility and access easements necessary for the events center to operate as a standalone facility.

The events center is estimated to be a 88,420 square foot building.

Comments are due Feb. 5. For more info, contact Paul Nielsen at 530.318-6025 or pnielsen@trpa.org.

More info is available **online**.

TOCCATA to start season remembering founding member

TOCCATA – Tahoe Symphony Orchestra & Chorus – lost a singer in November.

Phil Stevenson was a founding member of TOCCATA. He accompanied the group on the 2015 and 2017 concert tours to Italy and Austria.

The Jan. 7 kick off performance to the 13th season will be to celebrate his memory.

All donations to help TOCCATA celebrate his memory will be used to provide Sunday's concert free of charge.

The concert will be at 3:30pm at St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe.

For more info, email jamesrawietoccata@gmail.com.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• At the annual USTA Northern California awards banquet in February the most outstanding senior tournament will be awarded to Tahoe Donner 7th annual Senior Tournament and the most outstanding NTRP tournament will go to Tahoe Donner Ninth annual NTRP Tournament. Adult tournament director of the year is Ian Mindell of Truckee.

• Diane Dealey Neill, secretary of the Amador El Dorado Forest Forum and the executive director of Forestry Educators Incorporated, will be the guest speaker at the El Dorado

County State of Jefferson meeting Jan. 9 at the American Legion Hall, 4561 Greenstone Road, Placerville. Doors open at 5:30pm and the meeting begins at 6:30pm.

- Dottie Linden, president of the CFRW Northern Division, will speak to the South Lake Tahoe Republican Women about the 2018 elections on Jan. 9 at 11:30am at the Cantina on Emerald Bay Road. Cost is \$15, which includes lunch.

- Here is the Sierra roadwork schedule from Caltrans for next week.

- Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District is hosting a blood drive Jan. 9 from 11:am-5:30pm at the Elks Point Road station. Call 755.588.3591 to make an appointment.

Lukins rates affected by third party contamination

By Kathryn Reed

Lukins Brothers water customers are likely to have higher water bills in order to deal with contaminants in the groundwater that the company had nothing to do with.

If only it were as easy to get rid of the “stain” on South Lake Tahoe’s groundwater as it is to dry clean a blouse.

It is PCE – tetrachloroethylene – a solvent used at the old Lake Tahoe Laundry Works at the Y that is blamed for polluting the aquifer and contaminating wells used by Lukins, South Tahoe Public Utility District and Tahoe Keys Water District.

While Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is tasked

with determining who is responsible for remediation, what that would then look like and how it will be paid, progress is moving at a glacial pace.

PES Environmental out of Novato has been in South Lake Tahoe this week near the Y using "remote sensing equipment to see what the subsurface swales are like and where potential contamination is," Jeff Brooks, an engineer with Lahontan, told *LTN*. These are screening instruments. This work will be followed up with water samples; results could be ready by the end of the month.

The state first mandated water companies test for PCE in 1989.

Lukins was the last of these three companies to be affected, with detection coming in July 2014. Since that time the family-run business that has 975 customers has been trying to solve the problem with the cooperation of the other water districts and various regulatory agencies.

Lukins lost use of four of five wells, though the biggest producing one is still in operation. Tahoe Keys had to shut down two of its three wells. South Tahoe PUD had to shut wells, but has since drilled new ones.

Lukins is in the process of requesting approval from the California Public Utilities Commission to go out for a \$2.1 million loan that would be used to build a treatment plant. In the long run, this will be cheaper so the company could stop buying water from STPUD.

At the same time Lukins is applying for a state grant that would do the same thing, and in turn would be less of a burden to the ratepayers.

The loan route would on average add \$15 to customer's monthly bills for the next 20 years. This would make monthly bills about \$91.

The public comment period has closed and now Lukins has about another week to respond to the 10 letters that were submitted regarding the loan request/rate increase.

"In general they are protesting the increase, saying the amount is too much. They say they should not pay for something they did not cause, which I agree with. But at this point and time we have to get the wells up and running," Jenn Lukins, who runs the water company, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I'm doing everything in my power to find alternate solutions, to get the responsible parties to pay, and to get a grant."

She'd like the public to direct their frustration/concerns to Lahontan and the Division of Drinking Water to prod those state agencies to do more and do it faster.

"We are working to get a plan up to our standard," Brooks, the senior engineering geologist with Lahontan, said. "We are trying to do what we can as fast as possible. These cases generally are not fast."

Some believe there have been plenty of studies, that now is the time for real cleanup of what is out there. Compounding the problem is there are at least two plumes and the original source undetermined. Even though the dry cleaners is being blamed, where exactly it oozed from is a mystery, so it's not like anyone can plug a hole or turn off a spigot.

While there is somewhat of a remediation plan in place, it is not all encompassing. Part of this has to do with the plume moving, lack of consensus if all of the contamination is from the former dry cleaner, and then who associated with that business and building should be liable.

The system in place near the site that is supposed to treat the water was offline between August and November because of a dispute with the electric bill. The state didn't learn of this until an email was sent Nov. 10 by those responsible for the remediation. The local water companies were never advised more

pollutants were headed their way.

Opinion: Is road bike riding worth the risk?

By Aaron Gulley, Outside

The impact was as sudden and unexpected as lightning on a cloudless afternoon. One moment I was pedaling on a side road to my house after wrapping up a trail ride. The next I was 20 feet off the road on my back, tangled beneath my mountain bike in a stand of chamisa. People talk about their lives flashing before them in such moments, but for me there was only the sound of breaking glass and a searing pain in my left side as the car hit me from behind.

Short-circuited with adrenaline, I leapt from beneath my bike and sprinted down the roadway toward the scuffed and dented late-model Nissan, which was easing to a stop in the bike lane several hundred yards up the road. I gripped my phone—I don't remember pulling it from my thigh pocket—to get a photo of the car's license plate, and I was screaming as I ran: "You hit me! You f*%#ing hit me!" I now realize that, by saying those words aloud, I was trying to make sense of what had happened. To the driver's credit, despite my rage, he didn't flee.

Read the whole story

Bi-state chase ends with 1 arrest

A car chase that started in Carson City on Thursday night ended in South Lake Tahoe with a foot chase.

James Thomas Cook, 35, was driving a stolen vehicle from the Bay Area. He faces five charges, including driving under the influence, vehicle theft and evading a police officer. Bail was set at \$90,500.

Nevada Highway Patrol troopers followed him from Carson City to Stateline, then South Lake Tahoe officers took over the pursuit on Jan. 5.

Officers said Cook went up Pioneer Trail to Black Bart Avenue, then through the South Tahoe PUD gate. That's when the suspect ran. Offices were able to apprehend him.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Delving into why people troll

By Justin Cheng, Cristian Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, Jure Leskovec and Michael Bernstein, The Conversation

"Fail at life. Go bomb yourself."

Comments like this one, found on a CNN article about how women perceive themselves, are prevalent today across the internet, whether it's Facebook, Reddit or a news website. Such behavior can range from profanity and name-calling to personal attacks, sexual harassment or hate speech.

A recent Pew Internet Survey found that four out of 10 people online have been harassed online, with far more having witnessed such behavior. Trolling has become so rampant that several websites have even resorted to completely removing comments.

Many believe that trolling is done by a small, vocal minority of sociopathic individuals. This belief has been reinforced not only in the media, but also in past research on trolling, which focused on interviewing these individuals. Some studies even showed that trolls have predisposing personal and biological traits, such as sadism and a propensity to seek excessive stimulation.

But what if all trolls aren't born trolls? What if they are ordinary people like you and me? In our research, we found that people can be influenced to troll others under the right circumstances in an online community. By analyzing 16 million comments made on CNN.com and conducting an online controlled experiment, we identified two key factors that can lead ordinary people to troll.

What makes a troll?

We recruited 667 participants through an online crowdsourcing platform and asked them to first take a quiz, then read an article and engage in discussion. Every participant saw the same article, but some were given a discussion that had started with comments by trolls, where others saw neutral comments instead. Here, trolling was defined using standard community guidelines – for example, name-calling, profanity, racism or harassment. The quiz given beforehand was also varied to either be easy or difficult.

Our analysis of comments on CNN.com helped to verify and extend these experimental observations.

The first factor that seems to influence trolling is a person's mood. In our experiment, people put into negative

moods were much more likely to start trolling. We also discovered that trolling ebbs and flows with the time of day and day of week, in sync with natural human mood patterns. Trolling is most frequent late at night, and least frequent in the morning. Trolling also peaks on Monday, at the beginning of the work week.

Moreover, we discovered that a negative mood can persist beyond the events that brought about those feelings. Suppose that a person participates in a discussion where other people wrote troll comments. If that person goes on to participate in an unrelated discussion, they are more likely to troll in that discussion too.

The second factor is the context of a discussion. If a discussion begins with a “troll comment,” then it is twice as likely to be trolled by other participants later on, compared to a discussion that does not start with a troll comment.

In fact, these troll comments can add up. The more troll comments in a discussion, the more likely that future participants will also troll the discussion. Altogether, these results show how the initial comments in a discussion set a strong, lasting precedent for later trolling.

We wondered if, by using these two factors, we could predict when trolling would occur. Using machine learning algorithms, we were able to forecast whether a person was going to troll about 80 percent of the time.

Interestingly, mood and discussion context were together a much stronger indicator of trolling than identifying specific individuals as trolls. In other words, trolling is caused more by the person’s environment than any inherent trait.

Since trolling is situational, and ordinary people can be influenced to troll, such behavior can end up spreading from person to person. A single troll comment in a discussion – perhaps written by a person who woke up on the wrong side of

the bed – can lead to worse moods among other participants, and even more troll comments elsewhere. As this negative behavior continues to propagate, trolling can end up becoming the norm in communities if left unchecked.

Fighting back

Despite these sobering results, there are several ways this research can help us create better online spaces for public discussion.

By understanding what leads to trolling, we can now better predict when trolling is likely to happen. This can let us identify potentially contentious discussions ahead of time and preemptively alert moderators, who can then intervene in these aggressive situations.

Machine learning algorithms can also sort through millions of posts much more quickly than any human. By training computers to spot trolling behavior, we can identify and filter undesirable content with much greater speed.

Social interventions can also reduce trolling. If we allow people to retract recently posted comments, then we may be able to minimize regret from posting in the heat of the moment. Altering the context of a discussion, by prioritizing constructive comments, can increase the perception of civility. Even just pinning a post about a community's rules to the top of discussion pages helps, as a recent experiment conducted on Reddit showed.

Nonetheless, there's lots more work to be done to address trolling. Understanding the role of organized trolling can limit some types of undesirable behavior.

Trolling also can differ in severity, from swearing to targeted bullying, which necessitates different responses.

It's also important to differentiate the impact of a troll

comment from the author's intent: Did the troll mean to hurt others, or was he or she just trying to express a different viewpoint? This can help separate undesirable individuals from those who just need help communicating their ideas.

When online discussions break down, it's not just sociopaths who are to blame. We are also at fault. Many "trolls" are just people like ourselves who are having a bad day. Understanding that we're responsible for both the inspiring and depressing conversations we have online is key to having more productive online discussions.

Nev. docs say opioid law causing them pain

By Jessie Bekker Las Vegas Review-Journal

It's been only four days since Nevada's new opioid prescription law took effect, and doctors already are venting about its impact on their practices.

About 40 physicians, lawyers and others attended a meeting of the state medical and dental boards Wednesday in Las Vegas to express concerns over draft disciplinary rules for doctors who issue illegal, fraudulent, unauthorized or "otherwise inappropriate" prescriptions for pain medications under the law.

Several doctors said the law makes unreasonable paperwork demands, while the proposed regulations don't specify the types of conduct that could lead to penalties or even the loss of their medical licenses.

Read the whole story

Fed pot policy change could alter Nev. economy

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada's thousands of marijuana employees and millions of dollars in pot tax revenue could be in jeopardy with the rescinding of a federal memo seen as the sole protector for state-regulated pot markets.

The Obama-era policy called the Cole Memo had paved the way for legalized marijuana to flourish in states across the country, but Attorney General Jeff Sessions said in a memo to federal prosecutors that they should follow "federal law enforcement priorities set by the Attorney General." Sessions has often stated his opposition to marijuana.

The directive puts the hundreds of licensed marijuana businesses in Nevada – and nearly 9,000 workers – in a state of flux as they wait to see what the move means for the state's budding industry that generated more than \$126 million in sales and some \$19 million in tax revenue through its first four months of operation.

Read the whole story

Calif. homeowners struggle to get fire insurance

By Johnathan J. Cooper, AP

California's top insurance regulator said Thursday that insurers are increasingly refusing to offer homeowner's policies in areas prone to wildfire – a problem that's likely to get worse as companies respond to last year's devastating blazes.

Insurers in 2016 refused to renew more than 10,000 policies in the 24 counties most prone to wildfires, according to a report issued by Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones. That was up 15 percent from the prior year, when fires in Lake and Calaveras counties destroyed more than 3,000 buildings and became some of the most destructive in state history.

[Read the whole story](#)