Opinion: Mourning the end of Pacific News Service

By Russell Morse, San Francisco Chronicle

My introduction to Pacific News Service came in 1996, when I was an angry teenager housed at San Francisco's Juvenile Hall. Officially, PNS was a nonprofit news service based in San Francisco, but it had many projects, including the Beat Within, which facilitated weekly creative writing workshops with the kids in the hall. It printed our work in a newsletter, a rare bright spot in our lives.

One week, Sandy Close, the brilliant and brash executive editor of PNS, came in lieu of the regular facilitators. After the workshop, Close grabbed me by the arm as I was shuffling out and asked me, "What's it like being the only white kid in here?" I shrugged. She smiled and leaned in. "Write about that."

It was my first assignment in a now 20-year career in journalism that has taken me from the juvenile justice system to the Ivy League, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a short bout on an MTV reality show.

It ceased operations on Nov. 30.

Read the whole story

LT Humane Society case in

DA’s hands

South Lake Tahoe police detectives this week concluded a 10-month investigation into the nearly $100,000 that went missing from the Lake Tahoe Humane Society.

At the center of the investigation is Niki Congero, who was **fired in March** as executive director of the nonprofit.

All of the paperwork is now with the El Dorado County District Attorney’s Office. No one from the office would say when a decision would be made whether to press charges against anyone.

Congero started with the South Lake Tahoe nonprofit in December 2013. It is believed the alleged embezzlement began the following summer and escalated as time went on. She has since left the state.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. competes in ‘hotly contested’ federal drone program

By Nicole Raz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

State officials are hoping to get Nevada one of five guaranteed spots in a federal drone program.

The Federal Aviation Administration sees the program as a way to speed innovation in integrating drones with national

airspace. Nevada officials see the program as another way to solidify the Silver State as a key hub for the drone industry.

In response to a White House executive order, the FAA developed an Unmanned Aircraft System Integration Pilot Program. It aims to have state, local and tribal governments partner with private-sector drone entities to test advanced drone operations, like flying over people or flying a drone outside an operator's direct visual line of sight.

Read the whole story

Burning Man wants permit to grow to 100,000 people

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

Despite complaints from some critics that Burning Man is already too big, the organization may make their main event even bigger.

As Nevada Bureau of Land Management officials review how the annual, weeklong arts festival has affected the surrounding environment and communities since it moved to Nevada in 1990, Burning Man is proposing that the BLM allow the event to grow to 100,000 people in the future.

BLM officials and Burning Man organizers met with locals this week from Gerlach, Reno and Lovelock, the three communities most affected by Burning Man, to hear their concerns about growth.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· There will be fundraiser Dec. 9 for Tina Pearce, who was in a horrific car accident this fall. It will be at 7pm at Divided Sky in Meyers. A donation of $10 will be collected at the door.

· Douglas County is hosting a public workshop concerning the Waterloo Lane Reconstruction Project. It will be Dec. 14 from 5:30-6:30pm at the Douglas County Community Center in Minden in the Ceramics Room.

· The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority is seeking applicants for the Bicycle Advisory Committee. There are three open positions for two-year terms. Deadline to apply is Jan. 19 at 5pm. For an application, call 530.542.6003 or email eapalazzo@cityofslt.us.

· Daron Rahlves of Truckee, one of the most decorated male downhill skiers in U.S. history, had a portion of the notorious Birds of Prey in Beaver Creek, Colo., named after him this month. A section just below the Brink is now called Rahlves' Roll.

· Tahoe Donner Downhill Ski Resort opens Dec. 8.

4.1 earthquake strikes

Mammoth area

The Mammoth Lakes area was rocked by a series of earthquakes on Friday, with the highest being 4.1.

It struck at 2:19pm on Dec. 8. The epicenter was less than five miles southwest of South Landing.

The other temblors were 3.7 and 2.9.

At this time there have been no reports of damage.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Latest phone scam targeting grandparents

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office has received more than a dozen reports regarding phone contacts from callers claiming to be a person's grandchild.

The phone number identification accompanying most of these calls is 775.328.3001, which is the front desk number for the sheriff's office.

Typically the scammers identify themselves as a person's grandchild in need of financial assistance because they are in jail or have been involved in an accident. It is not unusual for scammers to use personal information about a potential victim's family members in order to sound credible. This type of information is often easily obtained via the internet or social media.

Unless you are 100 percent sure of whom you are talking with over the phone, never give out personal information and never send money. Gather what information you can and then hang up. Take the time to double-check the story with another family member before proceeding.

Anyone who has suffered a loss as a result of this scam is encouraged to contact the Washoe County Sheriff's Office at 775.328.3001, ext. 7.

Placer County extends deadline for firehouse ideas

Placer County is giving people more time submit a letter of interest for the redevelopment of the old Tahoe City firehouse properties. The deadline is now Feb. 28.

The lakefront property offers access to recreation and proximity to the Tahoe City town center, transit hubs, bike trails, ski resorts, marinas and residential communities.

The county-owned Tahoe City firehouse properties include three buildings: the former North Tahoe Fire Station 51, Tahoe Community Center building and the former visitor center building.

To review background materials and request for information, go **online**.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Report blasts CalPERS' environmental, social 'activism'

By Adam Ashton, Sacramento Bee

The nation's largest public pension fund is leaving money on the table by favoring environmental and social causes in its portfolio, a business-backed nonprofit argues in a study it's releasing Tuesday on the California Public Employees Retirement System.

The report by the American Council for Capital Formation criticizes CalPERS' sustainable investing strategies, which include engaging with companies to encourage them to address climate change, pressuring companies to diversify their boards of directors and investing in certain funds that nurture companies with those priorities.

The report argues those strategies have not paid off and that CalPERS would do better to focus solely on making money to protect the pensions of 1.8 million California public workers and retirees.

Read the whole story

Sandoval touts Nevada's repayment of federal debt

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

It took nearly the entirety of Gov. Brian Sandoval's two terms as Nevada's governor, but the state has finally paid off a nearly $800 million debt to the federal government.

During the Great Recession, the state saw 175,000 jobs dry up and the unemployment rate soar above 14 percent. The state was forced to borrowed some $773 million from the feds to cover unemployment benefits for out-of-work Nevadans.

Read the whole story