

Stand of Tahoe City trees focus of debate



Christy Hill's cottonwood trees from the lake. Photo/Brent Thrams

By Melissa Siig, Moonshine Ink

At 5:45 one morning in early June, Tahoe Vista resident Brent Thrams parked his truck in front of the grove of cottonwood trees near the entrance to Christy Hill restaurant in Tahoe City. Thrams, who was accompanied by two others, was not there to watch the sun rise over Lake Tahoe or take an early morning jog on the bike path. He was there to protest.

A few minutes later, when an Arbor Care crew showed up to cut the dozen 50-foot cottonwood trees down, Thrams refused to move his truck.

"My intention is to not have you cut these trees down today," he told the Arbor Care foreman. "I'm not moving."

Arbor Care eventually left, leaving the cottonwood trees standing ... for now.

Read the whole story

2 Tahoe sisters found safe in Oregon

By KCRA-TV

Two South Lake Tahoe sisters who were reported missing Wednesday after their parents had not heard from the girls for several days have been found safe, according to the girls' father.

Melissa Lea, 18, and Kalila Lea, 7, were found when people at a grocery store in Prineville, Oregon recognized the sisters, the girls' father, Darryl Lea, told KCRA 3.

There is no cell phone coverage up there, and the sisters told their father they stayed longer than they thought they would after attending the Symbiosis Event in nearby Big Summit Prairie, Ore.

Read the whole story

Homelessness on the rise in Placer County

By Cynthia Hubert, Sacramento Bee

Volunteers counted 146 more people living homeless in Placer

County this year compared to a similar census in 2015.

That translates to a 28 percent increase in the county's homeless population during the past two years. But officials said the numbers may be misleading. The number of homeless people documented two years ago may have been artificially low because of an unanticipated staffing problem on the night of the count, said Leslie Brewer of the Homeless Resource Council of the Sierra.

The numbers come from a single "point in time" tally of homeless people counted by volunteers in late January. The biennial count, required for federal funding, provides a snapshot of life on the streets.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

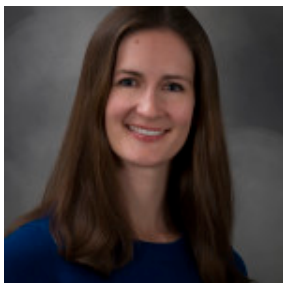
- Hot Spring Spa has reopened its Zephyr Cove store, so that means there are hot tubs models to check out as well as all the supplies to keep it running.
- Bradley Hurley has been hired to be Douglas County's assistant county manager; annual salary will be \$105,000.
- Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., is hosting a veterans' town hall meeting on Aug. 29, 10am-noon at the Douglas County Courthouse in Minden. Reps from several federal agencies will be in attendance.
- Songwriter and guitarist Jonny Lang will be at MontBleu in Stateline on Dec. 2 at 8pm, with doors opening one hour earlier. Tickets are \$35, \$45 and \$55, plus tax and fees.

· Douglas County in partnership with OpenGov has launched what they call a **transparency portal** to increase government accountability and improve access to public information.

Tips for how to deal with childhood bullying

By Tracy Protell

As children get ready to go back to school, I understand bullying is one of the last things parents want to worry about. However, bullying is a salient and, unfortunately, common occurrence. It can take place on school grounds, after school, and through electronics (cyberbullying).



Tracy Protell

Bullying is defined as a repetitive and deliberate use of physical force or emotional aggression intended to harm another person. Examples, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, include repeatedly making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, or excluding someone from a group.

Studies show that up to half of children and adolescents report being victims of bullying. Bullying has short-term

mental and physical health consequences as well as an increased risk of long term issues that carry into adulthood. Victims and perpetrators of bullying show increased rates of anxiety disorders, depression, psychosis, drug and alcohol abuse, self-harm, and suicide.

With the prevalence of bullying so high and many avenues for bullying outside of parent or guardian's sight, what can you do?

Tip No. 1: Have open communication. Your children need to feel comfortable coming to you if they feel unsafe or victimized. Regularly ask about their life in a nonjudgmental way and listen without trying to place blame or solve problems. Especially with adolescents, express less emotion. They are more likely to open up if they do not fear your emotional reaction.

Tip No. 2: Monitor media use. Keep a close eye on what is being said or shown to your child through phones and computers. Many parents have lost touch with their children's lives because so much occurs online or through text messages. For some reason, parents do not monitor electronic usage the way they monitor where their children hang out and with who. Know what your child is doing online and with whom.

Tip No. 3: Action is important. The problem may not just "go away." Studies have demonstrated that involvement of school officials, such as principals, counselors, and teachers is an important step. Even when bullying occurs outside of school, problems can be addressed through school discipline systems. Telling a child to fight back or dealing with the child's family directly can backfire, causing more distress and on-going issues. Take your child's complaint seriously to avoid a feeling of re-victimization, and reinforce that bullying is not OK.

Tip No. 4: Teach your children the importance of empathy and

kindness. At an early age, instill in your children that different is not bad and acceptance of other types of families, cultures, and backgrounds makes this life better. Teach your children to respectfully stand up for themselves. Let them know who they can turn to when they experience disrespect, putdowns, threats, and other demeaning words or actions.

There are many supportive people and families in this community. My wish is that every child grows up feeling safe, secure, and appreciated.

Tracy Protell is a pediatrician and child psychiatrist who sees patients at Barton Psychiatry in Stateline and at the Barton Community Health Center.

Tree mortality in Tahoe a growing concern



The orange reflects dead trees in Tahoe in July 2016.
Photo/USFS

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – It was a lively conversation about a deadly situation at Wednesday's Tahoe Region Planning Agency Governing Board meeting.

Trees took up the morning session; specifically dead trees and what is being done about them.

One good winter didn't cure what ails Lake Tahoe's forests – or those throughout the Sierra. Part of the problem is drought, part is beetle infestation – though, those are linked.

The board on Aug. 23 was given an update about the strategic initiative to create a healthy forest in the basin. The board members also approved a permit for Caltrans to thin hundreds

of trees along California's highways in the area.

While there is still more green than orange in the forest here, especially compared to the southern and central Sierra, the number of dead trees is increasing. According to statistics provided by Kevin Conway of CalFire this is the tree mortality rate in the Lake Tahoe Basin:

- 2012 – 1,025
- 2013 – 905
- 2014 – 5,989
- 2015 – 34,947
- 2016 – 126,479.

Statewide more than 100 million dead trees have been identified.

Conway's report said, "We have never seen an event which will so profoundly impact the forest of California and its associated resources including water, wildlife, fire regimes, public safety, forest products, recreation, and their associated economics."

For Calfire, the major issue is the dying trees are fuel for a wildland fire.

Mike Vollmer, TRPA environmental improvement program manager, said the sugar pines have been "extremely stressed by drought." Drought leads trees to be more susceptible to being ravaged by insects like the pine engraver, fir engraver, satin moth, and mountain pine beetle. All but the moth is native to the area.

The moth is most prolific in the Marlette Lake area right now. The hope is nature – aka winter – will kill them off and pesticides would not be needed.

Austin Sass, who represents South Lake Tahoe on the Governing Board, questioned why no money is being allocated to help local residents and businesses to remove dead trees when the fire community admits its priority is public safety. There was no answer from the firefighters in the room.

Caltrans, though, is coming to the aid of some private entities with their plan to remove trees along nearly 68 miles of highway on the California side of the basin. This includes highways 50, 89, 28 and 267.

If a dead or hazardous tree along a state highway poses a public threat and is on private property, Caltrans will remove it for free assuming the property owner grants permission. If the person says no and the tree falls onto state property, they are liable for any damages as well as the removal. (Caltrans has the right of way 100 feet in both directions from the center line.)

The TRPA on Wednesday approved the permit to fell 875 hazardous trees that are more than 14 inches in diameter that the state agency has identified. The completely dead trees don't require a permit, nor do ones less than 14 inches in diameter.

"All trees within this area that are dead, dying, diseased and/or hazardous and can hit the road if they fail are being marked for removal," the report says.

Any tree more than 30 inches in diameter that is identified for removal must also have a second OK by TRPA's forester.

The staff report says, "... due to the current dynamic nature of tree mortality in the Tahoe basin, the exact number of dying trees requiring a TRPA permit can only be known for a short period of time as dying trees become dead trees and new trees are identified as dying. For this reason, the Governing Board is being asked to permit a process and methodology for identifying hazard trees for this project rather than a

specific number of trees.”

Luther Pass will be the first area where Caltrans will work.

One of the costly and time consuming aspects of dealing with these drought-beetle ridden trees is that they are scattered about, as opposed to being in a grove.

Larry Sevinson, Placer County’s rep on the board, asked what will be done with all the wood. There is no definitive answer. That is the conundrum with removing them. Much of it is not salvageable for the lumber industry, as **LTN reported in May**.

“This issue is now being talked about everywhere. It’s a major issue of what to do with the wood when it’s removed,” TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta said. She mentioned how at this week’s environmental summit Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., expressed support for Republican Rep. Tom McClintock’s idea to lift the export ban for wood products going to China. This could open up a huge market.

Tourist survives lightning strike near Donner Summit



A man lost his shoe when struck by lightning in the

Sierra on Aug. 22. Photo/CHP

By Jennifer McGraw, CBS13

An Austrian hiker was struck by lightning Tuesday near Donner Summit and survived. He is now recovering at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento.

Paramedic Matt Calcutt with CHP said he has never seen anything like it, the boulder looked like it had exploded into small desks across the ridge.

Calcutt described the rescue and says the victim's clothes were literally blown off.

Read the whole story

Letter: EDC should deny Meyers gas station

To the community,

One, do we really need another gas station in Meyers? Meyers has about 10 percent of the population of South Lake Tahoe, but 15 percent of the gas stations. The market isn't expanding, so why dilute the existing market?

Two, by diluting said market, the existing businesses in Meyers will see a reduction in revenues, and they will then reduce employee hours/wages. How is this helping struggling locals?

Three, do we really want to give the existing owner a third chance to pollute our groundwater, then declare bankruptcy

when he gets sued by the state again? The taxpayers had to pay for the cleanup of the Beacon gas station. The owners have left that bill on the backs of the people.

Just how foolish are our county representatives?

In December 2001, the *Tahoe Daily Tribune* reported about a 1997 leak at the Meyers Beacon gas station that threatened water supplies. The leak at the Meyers Beacon has been labeled one of the worst spills of that time, and the ***Lake Tahoe News*** **reported in May 2014** that several Lake Tahoe gas station owners are being sued by the state of California for allegedly mishandling underground storage tanks.

The 30-page complaint says the owners, Azad Amiri and Sarbjit Singh Kang were the masterminds behind everything, including using family and friends as “strawmen” as a way to “conceal their actual ownership, operation and control of the real properties.”

The Attorney General’s Office was “seeking a permanent injunction, civil penalties, and other equitable relief to remedy numerous violations observed at the facilities.” The State Water Resources Control Board has been after many of these defendants for years, with fines being levied in the past. I guess permanent doesn’t mean the same as when I went to school.

According to the **latest article in *Lake Tahoe News*** regarding the Meyers location, the state Water Board spent \$1.1 million to clean up the site.

“We worked with the attorney general to request reimbursement and we received a fraction of that amount back. The state is no longer pursuing reimbursement of funds,” Lauri Kemper with the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board told *Lake Tahoe News*.

According to the lawsuit filed by the state, many of the

defendants are residents of the Bay Area and Sacramento. An internet search on those named shows court filings for bankruptcy which included violations of §523(a)(2) false pretenses, false representation, actual fraud, and receivership lawsuits brought by various suppliers and banks as recent as July 2016.

In addition, the suit alleges that defendants Azad Amiri and Sarbjit Singh Kang hired family members to run businesses, used corporate funds as their own, and set up multiple businesses that employed the same employees and drew from the same funds.

The complaint also alleges they: comingled funds and other assets, failed to segregate funds of the separate entities, diverted corporate funds or assets without authority, failed to maintain adequate corporate records, used the corporate entity to procure labor-service-merchandise for another person, manipulated assets between entities, and used a corporation as subterfuge of illegal actions.

Companies with Tahoe ties that have been named include: Ameri Oil Company, Dara Petroleum Inc., Emerald Business Group Inc., Kang Property Inc., Meyers Holding Co., North Tahoe Station Inc., South Tahoe Station Inc., Tahoe 3208 Highway 50 Corp., Tahoe Blue LLC, Tahoe Blue Property Inc., and Tahoe Station Inc.

What is all the more interesting is that a discussion in July on the app named "Next Door" complained about the eyesore that station has been and what can the county do to enforce codes? Supervisor Sue Novasel responded, "We (the county) have been trying for many, many years to get the owner to comply with the law but he has not complied and has, indeed, been avoiding the community's insistence to fix up or sell the property." But she briefly mentioned, "Last time I checked, the owner was still planning to rebuild a gas station with a food mart...." but failed to state that the owner had already started the

formal process with the county to reopen another gas station. The *Lake Tahoe News* article indicated it has been in the works since last fall.

Supervisor Novasel also stated, "The new owner hasn't been responsive to law enforcement or our community – the legal system isn't working to get compliance from this owner." Well, the county planning and development system shouldn't be working to provide this owner the opportunity to do more damage to our area to his financial benefit.

We need better investments that are economically viable and diverse, with sustainable business plans that add to our community. Enough of the outside investments by dubious business groups that look to rape our resources and then run to the bank or use our legal system to shield their ill-gotten gains. Are our representatives asleep at the wheel or cronies working for the establishment?

Jeffrey Spencer, Meyers

Study: Leave national monuments alone

By Christopher Solomon, Outside

More than 99.2 percent of the people who commented on President Donald Trump's national-monuments review were in complete agreement: Leave the monuments alone.

That's the stunning result of a detailed new survey on the comments that the federal government solicited after Trump issued an executive order earlier this year to revisit the

status of 27 national monuments.

The evidence of this tidal wave of support comes a day before Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke is scheduled to make a recommendation to Trump on the fate of the monuments. Many expect Zinke to suggest that one, and possibly several, be greatly reduced in size or even removed.

Read the whole story

2 South Tahoe sisters reported missing in Ore.



Melissa and Kalila Lea

By KCRA-TV

Two South Lake Tahoe sisters were reported missing Wednesday after their parents had not heard from the girls for several days.

Melissa, 18, and 7-year-old Kalila Lea were known to be at the Symbiosis Event in Big Summit Prairie, Ore., for the eclipse, the Crook County Sheriff's Office said. Their parents last heard from the girls on Sunday when they were in Bend, Ore.

Crook County investigators said Melissa's debit card was used at the event on Tuesday.

Read the whole story