

Letter: NTPUD thankful for successful event

To the community,

The North Tahoe Public Utility District would like to thank all the attendees, donors, volunteers and participants that made this year's Snowfest Pancake Breakfast and Dress Up Your Dog Contest a success. More than 240 people enjoyed time with family and friends before the Kings Beach SnowFest Parade and nearly \$1,400 was raised to benefit the district's Friends of the Park Fund. Friends of the Park provides additional financial support to the North Tahoe Regional Park and the Parks Department.

This year the district also adopted the Dress Up Your Dog Contest and we want to thank the six dogs and owners that participated. We had some great entries but those coming out on top were: Best in Show, Free Byrd in his hot rod chariot driven by owner Heather Kranz; Looks Most Like the Owner was Ozzy as a hot dog and his owner Logan Carter as ketchup; Best Costume was Indy as the Dalmadoodle for owners Paul and Laurie Mattioli. Thanks to Hot Diggity Dog and Cat for supporting the Dress Up Your Dog Contest and donating three overflowing baskets of dog toys, treats and gifts for prizes.

Each and every donation is an integral part of this community fundraiser. A huge thanks to our sponsors Old PO Restaurant, Stohlgren Brothers, Inc.; Coffee Connexion; Jason's Beachside Grill; Habeger Produce; Las Panchitas; The Log Cabin; Bella Affair Catering; Safeway; PrintArt/Sierra Mail and North Shore Hardware. All of your donations contribute to put smiles on the faces of the children and adults that come to this event.

Finally, without our volunteers from the board of directors, Recreation and Parks commissioners, district employees, the

middle school volunteers and Dress Up Your Dog judges and emcee, this event wouldn't take place. We thank all of you and appreciate your efforts.

Pam Emmerich, NTPUD

LT Humane Society chief fired; police involved



Lake Tahoe Humane Society intends to remain in business despite alleged internal embezzlement.
Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Humane Society's fired executive director is accused of stealing thousands of dollars from the organization and spending the bulk of the money at a Stateline casino.

Niki Congero was suspended by the three-member board of directors on March 14, with termination coming on March 31.

The board has gone to the South Lake Tahoe Police Department

with documents showing that Congero withdrew money on a regular basis using the agency's ATM card at Dotty's Casino in Stateline, sometimes multiple times in a day and for as much as \$1,000 at a time.

Police officers did not want to make a comment about an ongoing investigation. They have obtained a search warrant and are pursuing the embezzlement allegations.

What first alerted the Humane Society to there being financial issues was a number of overdraft charges from its bank in early March.

Congero had been with the South Lake Tahoe nonprofit since December 2013. It is believed the alleged embezzlement began the following summer and escalated as time went on.

When reached by phone Congero said she would call *Lake Tahoe News* back, but has yet to do so. She has started a new organization called Lake Tahoe SPCA. It claims to be a nonprofit, but is not registered as such with the IRS.

The Humane Society board issued the following statement to *LTN*, "In early March of this year during the routine course of internal checks and balances it came to the attention of the board of directors certain potential irregularities may have occurred concerning our financial status. The board took immediate action to secure the integrity of the organization and initiated an investigative process that included notifying the proper legal authorities. The board is confident that the proper steps have been taken to ensure the future wellbeing of the organization."

The Humane Society believes that at least \$100,000 is missing. That figure could be higher, sources told *Lake Tahoe News*, based on Congero allegedly paying for items at stores and then getting cash back for herself. The organization also has about \$60,000 worth of unpaid veterinary bills, and owes other organizations another \$15,000 or so.

Congero was allegedly using Humane Society funds to pay her own bills. And while at times Congero paid the nonprofit back some money, it was nothing compared to what she took, sources said.

The problem was the board never saw the actual bank statements. Congero would provide summaries. While there had been an outside organization paid to do the bookkeeping, Congero altered the practice to have it so she entered the numbers and categorized them, which she said would save the nonprofit money by spending less on bookkeeping.

The nonprofit has an annual operating budget of \$160,000. Of that, \$50,000 was Congero's annual salary.

Liz Maul, the group's education director, will be let go April 30 because there is no money to pay her. Judy Brown will stay on as the officer manager, and will essentially do the job of three people until the group becomes solvent again.

The Humane Society has had to suspend its spay and neuter program. It wants to get the vet bills paid before resuming that service. The group owns the building it operates out of on Emerald Bay Road, so there is not a threat of being evicted. A loan was recently secured to help with immediate operating expenses.

The board hopes to get its financial house in order and intends to prosecute Congero to the full extent of the law.

This is the organization's 50th anniversary. They are proceeding with a celebration on May 12 from 6-9:30pm at the Hard Rock Café at Harveys. Tickets are \$60 – call 530.542.2857. Other events and activities will go on as well.

Donner Party tragedy becomes a stage musical



"The Donner Party" opens this weekend. Photo/Charr Crail/Sacramento Theatre Company

By Marcus Crowder, Sacramento Bee

If you heard that Sacramento Theatre Company will produce a world premiere musical based on the story of the legendary Donner Party, you might have thought, "Hmm, that's a nervy choice."

The creators of "The Donner Party," which opens this weekend on the STC Main Stage, just want you to keep an open mind and give them a chance. After all, a few years ago an enterprising young man turned the dense literary biography of American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton into an unlikely multiracial hip-hop musical. That turned out OK.

To refresh your memory of local history, the Donner party was a group of pioneers led by George Donner and James F. Reed who in May 1846 set out for Sutter's Fort from Springfield, Ill. The trip by wagon train typically took between four and six months. The Donner-Reed party left a larger body of wagons to

take an untried “shortcut” across the Great Basin, which had been described by writer-adventurer Lansford Hastings.

Read the whole story

Star Guide: 4 morning comets

By Tony Berendsen

For those lucky star gazers willing who rise up early in the morning over the next few weeks there is a celestial treat awaiting. Four comets, all just below naked eye visibility, will be sprinkled across the dawn sky. One short period comet, two long period comets, and one that may never come back again.

Comets originate from areas of our solar system. Some, like the short period comet 41P/Tuttle-Giacobini-Kresak, fall into close orbit around the sun from the Kuiper Belt (a zone of icy objects beyond Neptune: Pluto is a member) and have orbits near the plane of the solar system. Comet 41/P orbits every $5\frac{1}{2}$ years.

Comets also originate from the Oort Cloud; a spherical zone of icy objects in orbit around the Sun. Those comets travel great distances from their home thousands of AU (distance from the Earth to the sun) away, falling into the inner solar system from all directions. For example, Comet C/2017 E4 entered almost perpendicular to the plane of the solar system in between the orbit of the Earth and Venus and will loop around the top of the Sun to exit between the orbit of the Earth and Mars never to return again.



Comet PanStarrs C/2015ER61 can be seen in the early morning.
Photo/Gerald Rhemman

All the comets mentioned in this article are dimmer than 6 magnitude so you will need a binocular or telescope to view them. So what should you look for and where?

Comets such as these look like fuzzy stars through the eyepiece of binoculars. And depending on the size of the telescope can look like a fuzzy star, or a fuzzy star with an elongation (tail). But imaged through a telescope with a camera these comets can become spectacular sights.

Prepare for comet hunting by doing some research on the web about the comets, where they will be, how bright they will be, and load up a star gazing app like SkyPortal to take with you to find your way around the stars.

Here is a list of the comets:

- COMET 41P/TUTTLE–GIACOBINI–KRESÁK
- COMET LOVEJOY (C/2017 E4)
- COMET JOHNSON (C/2015 V20)
- COMET PANSTARRS (C/2015 ER61).

To see the comets, grab your binoculars or telescope and head out on a clear crisp morning (without a moon, away from direct light sources). Mornings can be very cold, and even colder just before the sun comes up, so dress warm and wear heavy shoes and thick socks. I suggest getting started about 3am.

The image accompanying this article of Comet PanStarrs is a superb example of the detail a camera/telescope combination can capture. Gerald Rhemman took the image through a 12 Astrograph (ASA 12" F3.6) from Farm Tivoli, Namibia SW-Africa. He was born in Vienna and has been sky-shooting since 1989 under the clear skies of the Austrian Alps, Canary Islands, and deserts of Namibia.

So, whether you are hunting comets with binoculars, telescope or camera there is a real treat awaiting in the early morning sky. I know, I was out last week looking at them with my telescope and was amazed.

Tony Berendsen runs Tahoe Star Tours. He may be reached at 775.232.0844 or tony@tahoestartours.com.

Fantasy sports firms fold as legislative battle resumes

By Associated Press

BOSTON – The daily fantasy sports industry sharply contracted since the online games offered by companies like FanDuel and DraftKings sparked court and legislative battles across the United States last year.

More than two-thirds of companies that existed this time last year have shuttered, changed focus or joined with competitors, according to the Fantasy Sports Trade Association, the industry's lobbying arm.

Among the most prominent examples is the proposed merger between the industry's two largest companies – Boston's DraftKings and New York's FanDuel. That deal, which was announced late last year, is currently being reviewed by the Federal Trade Commission.

Read the whole story

How the drought changed California forever

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

California's historic five-year drought is officially over, washed away with the relentlessly drenching rains, floods and snowstorms of this winter.

But just as tougher building codes and better emergency planning follow major earthquakes, the brutally dry years from 2012 to 2016 are already leaving a legacy, experts say, changing the way Californians use water for generations to come.

The drought's legacy includes landmark new laws aimed at limiting farmers from over-pumping groundwater; homeowners removing thousands of suburban lawns; voters approving billions in funding for new reservoirs; and vast expanses of forests dying off across the Sierra Nevada.

Read the whole story

Missing plane search centered northwest of Truckee

By Marcella Corona, Reno Gazette-Journal

Authorities in Sierra County are searching for a missing aircraft that was carrying a married couple from Truckee to Petaluma earlier this week.

Mark Richard and his wife, Brenda, departed at about 4pm Monday from the Truckee Tahoe Airport in a small four-seat Socata TB20 Trinidad with tail No. N28070.

They were scheduled to land at the Petaluma Municipal Airport, but they never arrived, according to the Sierra County Sheriff's Office.

Investigators narrowed the search to an area near Yuba Pass Road, between Webber Lake and Jackson Meadow – about 22 miles northwest of Truckee.

CalFire introduces wildfire app for alerts, preparation

CalFire's Ready for Wildfire app is a tool that puts a library of step-by-step checklists in the palm of the user's hand.

It allows homeowners to track their progress while creating defensible space, hardening their homes with fire-resistant construction, assembling an emergency supply kit and creating a family communication and evacuation plan. App users, with the tap of a finger, can check off each step and see their progress as they reach.

While being a great educational tool, the Ready for Wildfire app also provides critical wildfire alerts. Users can sign-up for customized alerts that will send a text or push notification to their device when a CalFire is responding or assisting to a wildfire in their area. Additionally, users can set up alerts for single counties, multiple counties, or statewide. The app lets users enable an alert system to notify them if a wildfire is reported within 30 miles of their device.

Why ski resorts close when

there's still snow



Even with plenty of snow, Heavenly will be closing this month.
Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

The end of ski season is always a bummer.

But it stings even more when the season ends while there's still tons of snow on your favorite ski area.

The West Coast winter of 2016-17 delivered historic levels of snow throughout the Lake Tahoe area and the Sierra Nevada. And much of that snow is still slathered several feet deep over

the slopes of west coast ski resorts from Mammoth to Truckee and between.

So that means we'll spend our mornings skiing and afternoons drinking beers on the deck of our favorite lodge well into the summer, right? Well, not exactly.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Why boomers need a new script for life

By Lawrence R. Samuel

We know the story all too well: Baby boomers, that generation born between 1946 and 1964, experience a childhood heavily shaped by the cultural dynamics of the postwar era, and immerse themselves in the rebellion and hedonism to be had in abundance during the counterculture era. Let's call that familiar tale Boomers 1.0, a version of boomers' individual and collective lives defined by Cold War paranoia, idealism, and youthful joie de vivre. The sequel, Boomers 2.0, covers advanced young adulthood through early-stage middle age. This version of the generation's collective life is dominated by aggressive careering and the hyper-raising of families.

Each of these first two chapters of boomers' lives (while allowing for other ethnic, gender and socio-economic determinants) forms a relatively straightforward narrative that, in many ways, was quite representative of previous generations of Americans. Declaring independence from one's parents and their respective values in an attempt to create something different actually goes back a couple of centuries

in this country, as does the subsequent settling into the domesticity and maturity of midlife.

This is, however, where it gets interesting. Rather than embrace their parents' model of seniority defined by retirement, baby boomers are now considering or pursuing many different options, a version of life I call Boomers 3.0. Instead of heading en masse to retirement communities much like "Del Boca Vista" (the fictional condominium complex in Florida of "Seinfeld" fame), 60-somethings are going back to school, starting new relationships, exploring their creativity, taking new spiritual paths, embarking on "encore" careers, forming new communities, fighting for causes in which they believe, giving their time and money away, and yes, bucket listing. For financial and other reasons, a good number are working and staying in their current homes as long as possible, seeing no compelling reason to do otherwise.

Much is being made about how many baby boomers are financially unprepared for retirement, something all too true for a sizable segment of their generation. But boomers are collectively the richest generation in history and, even though a good number have already scaled back their careers, they are getting still richer. The (currently) strong stock market is making affluent boomers wealthier, with those additional financial resources being used to pursue alternative, sometimes very costly third acts.

Sixty-five million (of the original 76 million) boomer population are still alive and kicking. They range in age from 53 to 71, and each one is approaching or already engaged in his or her third act. Some baby boomers, unwilling or unable to accept that their bodies and minds have gotten older, are clinging desperately to their remaining youth by investing in the wide array of "anti-aging" therapies to be found in the marketplace. But even most of these folks don't take these alleged fountains of youth too seriously.

Still other boomers are admittedly lost when it comes to planning for their third act; they are not interested in the traditional model of retirement, but not at all clear which path they should take. Interestingly, in my research I've found that it is the financially secure who are most likely to be directionless, a result perhaps of having too many options available.

What happened to the very pleasant idea of spending one's third and final act of life enjoying what one had worked so hard and long for during the first and second acts? Why is there no longer a central narrative to Americans' last quarter-century or so of life (roughly age 55 to 80, on average)—replaced by a postmodern jumble of stories going in all sorts of directions? Are baby boomers, as some observers have claimed, the first “ageless” generation in history, rejecting the rules of society as they famously did in their idealistic younger days? Is creating a new paradigm of aging their final hurrah, something perhaps greater in scope and longer-lasting than their countercultural dream of universal peace and love?

In retrospect, the baby boomers' impulse to toss out the Greatest Generation's interpretation of older age makes perfect sense and was entirely predictable. Boomers (the “Me Generation,” remember) were and remain resistant to social norms and expectations, their individualism and anti-authoritarian ways perhaps being their most enduring legacy. It would be easy to suggest that as boomers plunge headfirst into their 70s they are suffering from an acute case of Peter Pan syndrome, refusing to grow up even as their physical selves experience decline and as they more often forget exactly why they came into a room. The looming threat of becoming a victim of Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia is incentive enough to pretend that older age is something that only happens to other people.

Overall, however, I believe that baby boomers' inclination to

take on new challenges and “act young” later in life is a very good thing. Studies show that there is much truth to the cliché, however trite, that one’s age is “just a number” or a “state of mind,” and that one is “only as old as one feels.” (Don’t even get me started on the “70 is the new 50” adage, or other such silly twistings of chronology, not to mention basic biology.) But sitting down to dinner at an “early bird special” to save a couple bucks, or whiling away afternoons playing mahjong, are simply not boomers’ style. (To be fair, retirement communities are a lot more active than they used to be.) Boomers’ third acts of life may indeed be scattered, disjointed, and personally defined, but as a whole they offer an attractive alternative to the going-off-into-the-sunset model that was so popular in the latter half of the 20th century.

Finally, given the widespread ageism in our youth-obsessed society, it’s no surprise that baby boomers will do pretty much anything to avoid being branded as irrelevant and over the hill. It’s also important to note that boomers’ insistence on trying to keep their jobs despite lucrative early retirement offers is actually in the best interests of the country. Millennials may wish boomers would get out of the way so they could take over their prestigious jobs and fat salaries, but millions of 60-somethings delaying Social Security and Medicare payouts is, for the moment at least, averting the economic and healthcare apocalypse (and “generational war” over resources) that many experts are predicting.

Continuing to find meaning and purpose in life is the real goal of Boomers 3.0—a less coherent story than version 1.0 or 2.0, but certainly an intriguing one that will have major social, economic, and political consequences over the next few decades.

Lawrence R. Samuel is the author of “Aging in America: A Cultural History” recently published by University of

Pennsylvania Press. His next book, "Boomers 3.0 Marketing to Baby Boomers in Their Third Act of Life," will be published by Praeger this August.