

Meeting to address Caltrans work in SLT

Caltrans is hosting a meeting April 12 for people to learn about the upcoming project on two miles of Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe.

The primary objective of this \$56 million project from the Y to Trout Creek is to collect and treat highway storm water runoff. The project also will help meet the goals of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's environmental improvement program.

The project will widen the roadway to provide 6-foot shoulders for bike lanes, replace traffic signals, rebuild curb, gutter and sidewalks and improve pavement cross slope. Caltrans also is working with South Lake Tahoe to make improvements at Sierra Boulevard with a signal and left turn lane.

The meeting is scheduled from 5:45 to 7pm at the South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd. A project presentation will start at 6pm.

Allergy season could be a doozy in Tahoe



Each year pollen collects everywhere in Tahoe, including on the lake. Photo/LTN file

By Kathryn Reed

It's coming, and may arrive with a vengeance. We're talking about allergy season.

"The wet weather will bring a lot more vigorous plant growth, which means more pollen and more allergies," Ronald Roth, otolaryngologist at Barton Ear, Nose & Throat, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The one good thing about all the snow is that it could delay the onset of allergies. And if it snows early in the fall, it could be a really short season.

As soon as the snow melts those in the Tahoe-Truckee areas can expect allergies to kick in. They already are in lower locales like Carson City, Reno and the foothills. While those places have some similar triggers that are found in the basin, they also have olive trees, eucalyptus, and grasses.

"A general rule of thumb for the start of allergy season is when it stops snowing in May or June or when flowers start to bloom. I like to say when you start to see your lawn, allergy

season is starting to ramp up,” Roth said.

What strikes first, according to Roth, are allergens that come from “dust on the roads and other areas drying out. After that, in maybe June or July, pine pollen, sage, and other plants will strike.”



Allergy Facts

- There is no cure for allergies. You can manage allergies with prevention and treatment.
- Researchers think nasal allergies affect about 50 million people in the United States.
- Allergies affect as many as 30 percent of adults and 40 percent of children.
- Allergic disease, including asthma, is the fifth leading chronic disease in the U.S. in people of all ages. It is the third most common chronic disease in children under 18.
- In 2012, 11.1 million

people were diagnosed with allergic rhinitis.

- In 2010, Americans with nasal swelling spent about \$17.5 billion on health costs. They have also lost more than 6 million work and school days, and made 16 million visits to their doctor.

- Many people with allergies often have more than one type of allergy. The most common indoor/outdoor allergy triggers are: tree, grass and weed pollen, mold spores, dust mites, cockroaches, and cat, dog and rodent dander.

Source: *Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America*

It's not that the allergens will change because of the snow that fell this winter, it's that it makes for a more intense experience for those who suffer because there is likely to be more of everything that blooms.

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America says, "An allergy is when your immune system reacts to a foreign substance, called an allergen. It could be something you eat, inhale into your lungs, inject into your body or touch. This reaction could cause coughing, sneezing, itchy eyes, a runny nose and a scratchy throat. In severe cases, it can cause rashes, hives, low blood pressure, breathing trouble, asthma attacks and even death."

Roth has a few tips for trying to prevent allergies:

- Use a hepa filter in the house.
- Wash hair at night after a day of exposure to pollen in the air.
- Replace the air filter of a heating and air system.
- For spring cleaning, wear a dust mask.
- Wearing a dust mask outside can help as well, though it may not be practical.

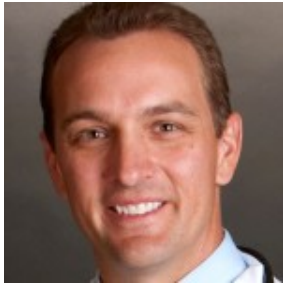
Roth recommends starting with over-the-counter remedies such as Zyrtec (cetirizine) and Claritin (loratadine), while Nasacort (triamcinolone) and flonase (fluticasone) are nasal sprays. These come in children and adult dosages.

When those don't work, it's like time to see an allergist or an ear, nose, and throat doc.

Opinion: Bipartisan overhaul of ACA needed

By Clint Purvance

The Republican Party's decision on March 24 to pull the vote to repeal the Affordable Care Act was met with disappointment and relief. While backers of the newly proposed legislation were disappointed that they could not find sufficient support, residents who depend on the Affordable Care Act's medical protections and insurance options felt relief. Hope continues for a broad bipartisan approach to changing this complex legislation resulting in improved coverage balanced with affordability for our citizens.



Clint Purvance

California policymakers have made a diligent effort to make the Affordable Care Act and healthcare reform work. State legislators have elected to expand eligibility for low-income families and put forth legislation to manage out-of-pocket costs.

One-third of California residents and two-thirds of the state's children depend on MediCal for medical coverage. Individuals eligible for MediCal include the lowest income families and individuals with specific diseases, disabilities, and/or medical conditions.

Currently, 9,500 residents in the South Lake Tahoe area receive MediCal benefits, more than double the number of MediCal participants in 2014. Combined with support from Barton Health's certified enrollment counselors, the South Shore's uninsured population rate has reduced from 26.2 percent in 2012 to 14.7 percent in 2015.

With the increase in MediCal and insured patients in the last four years, Barton Health has seen greater demand for health care services. As an independent health care system, Barton Health has responded to the community's needs by expanding specialty services, including palliative care, psychiatry, urology, and telemedicine. We have recruited additional pediatricians, family medicine physicians, and obstetrician/gynecologists as well as a trauma surgeon, spine specialist, and pain management doctor. Our focus on prevention has grown and we look forward to providing more preventative care options when the Robert Maloff Center of

Excellence opens next winter.

With the Affordable Care Act, the health care landscape has changed. While more wellness and preventative services are covered, insurance companies have restructured putting more financial burden on the patients.

Healthcare systems have responded by making sure patients have access to additional wellness services, insurance coverage, and financial assistance programs. Financial assistance programs may include price estimator tools, point of service pay programs offering discounts for upfront pay, payment plans, and charity programs. These efforts are intended to reduce out-of-pocket health care costs for all patients.

While we are thankful more patients have additional access to health and wellness services in our community, our health system is aware of areas that need attention. We are hopeful Congress will address the insurance market's rising health care premiums and stabilize private insurance rates for residents who pay high out-of-pocket costs.

Barton Health strives to serve the needs of all community members and visitors, with a focus on improved access to care. We are working closely with the California Hospital Association, American Hospital Association, and the American Medical Association to advocate for our patients and find long term, bipartisan solutions. We are listening to input from patients and the community and making changes.

Every person deserves to have options and choices they can afford to live a healthy life.

Clint Purvance is the CEO and president of Barton Health in South Lake Tahoe.

Liberty bills adjusted because of snow covering meters

For Liberty Utilities customers who had meters that could not be read because of the snow, their January and February bills were based on estimated billing. This may have resulted in higher- than-expected bills for those months.

Once an actual read is obtained, Liberty provides an adjusted corrected statement.

Answers to some of the most common question about the estimated billing process are **online**, including examples of where customers will see the estimated and actual reads on statements.

Call 800.782.2506 for more info.

Letter: Drug Store Project a community success

To the community,

“Choices, what are yours?” was the theme of our efforts in keeping our youth drug free. I want to thank the many agencies, service clubs, businesses, and volunteers who provided assistance with the 14th annual Drug Store Project

event on April 4 at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Teaching our youth about the dangers of all drugs; marijuana, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, over-the-counter as well as prescriptive medications, gets more challenging each year as states provide new legislation and products are packaged to entice our minors. This year our 320 sixth-grade students had the assistance of over 200 volunteers to send a clear message that they are valued.

The agencies and groups who provided this program strongly believe that a difference can be made for our kids. Collectively we believe that if youth are provided knowledge about the effects drugs have on the body, the mind, family and social life, productivity, and overall life experiences, many more will choose not to experiment and not to participate in drug use. If we can collectively put off the “age of onset” to experimentation, then we can see a difference for our youth. Less drug use means less demand. Less demand is less costly in lives and in all facets of the economy.

We’re especially proud of the South Tahoe High School Friday Night Live members, themselves past participants in the program when younger, who took their day to emphasize to the younger youth that drugs do not need to be a part of their lives. They can “choose” to stay healthy and safe. We also continue to have the assistance of our California National Guard assigned to the Joint Task Force Domestic Support – Counter Drug and Naval Air Station-Fallon military personnel.

Tahoe Youth & Family Services is the agency under which our program is based. It takes money and people to make this event happen for our youth. The Drug Store Project continues to be supported completely through donations, grants, and in-kind donations from businesses.

I’d like to extend my gratitude to the following entities:

Barton Health, California Conservation Corps, California

Highway Patrol, CalStar, Cal Tahoe JPA, Camelot Party Rentals, Diamond Valley School, El Dorado Community Foundation, EDC District Attorney, EDC Mental Health, EDC Probation, EDC Public Defender, EDC Search and Rescue -Tahoe Team, EDC Sheriff's Office, EDC Sheriff's STAR, EDC Superior Court, Harrah's H.E.R.O.s, John Valverde-photographer, Joint Task Force Domestic Support-CD, Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Resort , LTUSD, Lake Valley Fire Protection District, Lake Valley Firefighter's Association, Naval Air Station-Fallon, Nevada Funeral Services, Optimist Club of Lake Tahoe, Sierra Community Church, Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, South Lake Tahoe Police Officers' Association, South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition, STHS Friday Night Live, South Tahoe Middle School, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Tahoe Douglas Rotary, Tahoe Turning Point, Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Zephyr Cove Elementary and the many amazing community volunteers.

We hope that you and your child openly discuss the dangers of all drugs on a regular basis. Get educated together and know what is happening in your community. We invite every parent of a child who experienced the program to take the time to complete the parent survey **online**. Your input will help our program for future years.

Gratefully,

Lisa Huard, Drug Store project coordinator

Ex-Heavenly worker pleads not guilty

By Scott Sonner, AP

A former worker at the children's ski school at Heavenly Mountain Resort pleaded not guilty Thursday to sexual exploitation of a minor and child pornography charges accusing him of photographing young children in a bathroom at a rural Nevada daycare.

Stephan DeGraffenreid, 26, entered the pleas to four federal counts in U.S. District Court in Reno.

U.S. Magistrate William Cobb set a hearing for April 18 to determine whether he should continue to be held without bail until a trial set for June 13.

Read the whole story

Banking problem for legal pot in Nevada

By Colton Lochhead and Nicole Raz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Following in the footsteps of Colorado, Washington and other states which have legalized recreational marijuana, Nevada is bracing for an influx of cash – cash that will have no bank to call home.

Because federal law prohibits banks and credit unions from depositing marijuana money, the state's legal marijuana

industry has a banking problem.

Marijuana companies can't get loans or have a company bank account. No banking means businesses can't take debit or credit cards, forcing customers to pay in cash. And when it comes time to pay taxes and licensing fees, some businesses do so with bags of dollar bills in tow.

Read the whole story

Bill would require training for Nev. school board members

By Meghan Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada school board trustees would be required to undergo at least six hours of training in the first and third years of their terms under a bill introduced this week.

Training sessions would include financial management, public record laws and local government ethics, according to Assembly Bill 451.

The Nevada School Boards Association, a nonprofit, offers voluntary training.

Read the whole story

Douglas County achieves fine sediment reduction goal

Douglas County exceeded its requirement to reduce fine sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe.

The mandate was a 10 percent reduction that had an equivalent of 41 credits. One credit is equal to 200 pounds of fine sediment particles. Douglas earned 53 credits.

The total maximum daily load program's first deadline was in 2016. These numbers reflect those results. Each jurisdiction around the lake has goals established by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and/or Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

The overriding goal is to improve the clarity of Lake Tahoe.

Douglas County is required to coordinate with the Kingsbury General Improvement District on road operations, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency on private parcel best management practices compliance, and maintain water quality improvement projects annually to keep credits in place.

The next goal is a 21 percent reduction of fine sediment, or 101 credits, by 2021.

Federal budget would gut SNPLMA

Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., is upset about the proposal to gut the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

On Tuesday he sent a letter to Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Senate Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Lisa Murkowski and ranking member Tom Udall to express his strong concern with the recently leaked budget proposal.

Enacted in 1998, SNPLMA is a program that allows the Bureau of Land Management to sell public land within a specific boundary around Las Vegas and the revenue generated by those sales are invested in important projects in Nevada.

Lake Tahoe has received millions of dollars from SNPLMA for water quality, storm water and fuels reduction projects.

According to Heller's office, "Specifically, the proposal suggests rescinding \$230 million from the program, generated from previous land sales within Clark County. This rescission would prohibit the Department from implementing a variety of important public works, wildfire prevention, and wildlife conservation initiatives throughout Nevada in coming years."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report