Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Jessica

Jessica and her brother, Jack, have been at the shelter for over a month. They are 6-month-old Chihuahua mixes who are sweet little puppies.

Jessica is a bit shy and laid back, Jack is a little more playful. Both are ready to move out of the shelter into homes to begin their lives.

Jessica is spayed, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

Donors enable SLT Library to expand offerings

Shelby Hadjes watches her son, Connor, play at the South Lake Tahoe Library. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's public library is about to be transformed.

Two generous donors are allowing the facility to rethink what it offers patrons in terms of materials and programs, hours of operations, and what it looks like.

An anonymous donor wrote a check for $30,000 with the sole purpose of revamping the children's section.

"We are still examining what is available to us and what possible changes we can make," librarian Katharine Miller told *Lake Tahoe News*. Improving and refurbishing the area in some manner to make it more fresh and flexible are goals.

For 3½-year-old Connor Hadjes he likes things the way they are – plenty of dinosaurs to play with and read about. His mom, Shelby, tries to bring him to the library as much as possible.

"They have good dinosaur books. That's what he is obsessed with," Hadjes said. She, too, likes what is offered today, but is intrigued by how the space might evolve.

While this donation came as a surprise to the library, a large endowment has been promised since the late 1990s. The $150,000 a year that will start arriving this year is from the Jean P. and Stephen D. Myers Trust. The local couple set this up years ago, with payment to start after both died. Steve **Myers passed away** last summer, and Jean Myers in 2008.

Beyond the legacy they will leave at the library, Steve Myers is known for starting the Tahoe Drive-In in 1947, and together the couple bought the Echo Summit Ski Area in 1957. Then they opened a series of retail stores. She was also a renowned stained glass artist.

"Their primary goal was to increase access to the library for the community. That may result in an extension of hours and services we offer," Miller said. "We just have to look at the costs of possible changes and make sure they are sustainable in the long term."

A group is working to come up with ideas on how best to spend this ongoing gift. A decision is likely to be made later this spring, with implementation possible in the summer.

Miller had met Steve Myers before his passing. They spoke a few times about his interest in the library remaining a viable part of the community. Now she is working with a trustee of the estate to ensure Myers' vision comes to fruition.

Opinion: Brown Act stifles public interaction

By Joe Mathews

California's Ralph M. Brown Act, approved in 1953, has become a civic Frankenstein, a gag rule that threatens the very public participation it was supposed to protect.

The act's requirements of advance notice before local officials conduct a meeting has mutated into strict limitations on their ability to have frank conversations with one another. Brown Act requirements that we, the public, be allowed to weigh in at meetings have been turned against us, by way of a standardized three-minute-per-speaker limit at the microphone that encourages rapid rants and discourages real conversation with local officials.


Joe Mathews

In effectively silencing citizens and their representatives, the Brown Act has empowered professionals outside the civic space—lawyers, labor unions and especially developers—to fill the conversation void.

At a UC Irvine conference on the Brown Act in which I participated, speakers discussed how local elected officials and staff members, wary of talking to or even emailing each other and violating the Brown Act rules against unannounced meetings, often communicate through developers, who are much freer to meet and talk.

This is why proposed reforms to limit the influence of developers—Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti just announced a ban on meetings between city planning commissioners and developers—never work. Under California's Brown Act, developers are often the best conduit for local officials to get information to their colleagues.

The fundamental problem with the Brown Act is not that the law changed. It's that the law has stayed too much the same, while California governance has changed radically.

In the 1950s, when the Brown Act was passed, local governments largely ruled via broadly applied laws, policies, and plans. But in subsequent decades, court decisions, state laws, and ballot initiatives like Proposition 13 have limited the power of governments. So to retain some self-determination, local governments have worked around the law, ignoring plans and policies they once followed, and instead embracing ad-hoc decision-making. The most important tool for today's local governments is not the ordinance or the general plan but rather negotiations, through union contracts and developer agreements.

In this era of government by negotiation, the Brown Act is unhelpful when it's not beside the point. First, the act's limits on meetings end up restricting the ability of elected officials to participate fully in such negotiations. Second, the Brown Act covers only public meetings, and thus doesn't get people into meetings where city officials make decisions behind closed doors. All too often the public hears about negotiations only once deals are done, and brought to a council or a board for approval.

Consulted only at that late stage, California citizens understandably respond by opposing their local politicians fervently and uncompromisingly. In this way, the Brown Act encourages the worst sort of NIMBYism.

Many ideas have been raised for changes in the law. But the act has created a regime so antithetical to the goal of public participation that it might be better to scrap it and start over—with a framework providing local governments with more flexibility as long as they pursue policies that enhance public participation. The National Civic League has a model participation ordinance that suggests what such a law could look like.

Who could oppose such sensible changes? Answer: Civic and media organizations are suspicious that reform would limit access; they claim local officials are being overly cautious in limiting conversations because of fear of Brown Act violations. But local governments say the caution is well-advised, given how easy it is to sue for violations of the act, and thus block important projects.

While the debate over the Brown Act continues, the everyday reality of California public meetings grows ever more absurd. On a recent Saturday at my local school board, our city's mayor—one of only a handful of people in attendance—rose to ask questions about the board's management of a newly passed school bond, the largest in our small district's history.

The mayor is a public works lawyer with long experience with bonds, and her questions were fair and straightforward. But the board members wouldn't answer them. Instead, they tried to cut her off after just three minutes, noting that's the limit on public comment. When one board member sought to answer the mayor's questions, the school superintendent interrupted to say that any exchange could be a violation of the Brown Act.

Any law that won't let a mayor and a school board talk freely about their city’s most important construction project at a public meeting is a bad law. Until our local governments move past the Brown Act, Californians will find it hard to have the kinds of conversations that local democracy requires.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Panels: Symptoms should trigger celiac testing

By Rebecca Hersher, NPR

Celiac disease, the autoimmune disorder that prevents people from digesting gluten, affects about 1 percent of the population.

But there’s not enough evidence to recommend screening everybody to find that 1 percent, an advisory panel said.

In people with celiac disease, eating foods with gluten inflames the lining of the intestine and makes it difficult to absorb nutrients. People who are diagnosed with the condition are told to cut gluten out of their diets entirely, which can be difficult and expensive, even as gluten-free products have become more widely available.

Read the whole story

Man saves cub – gives it mouth-to-mouth

By Peter Holley, Washington Post

The bear cub was emaciated, soaking wet and barely breathing, its stuffed-animal-sized body lying face up in a meadow. It would almost certainly die within minutes.

As Corey Hancock stood over the cub on a remote trail near Oregon’s Santiam River Monday evening, the 41-year-old father didn’t see a bear – he saw a baby in distress.

A feeling of panic descended as Hancock realized he had minutes to make a decision. He could watch the cub die in the rain, or he could scoop the animal up, risking the wrath of a raging mother.

After 10 minutes of waiting for any sign of the mother, Hancock chose to act. He wrapped the cub in his flannel shirt and a rainproof sack and ran the mile-and-a-half to the trailhead, where his car was parked. After posting a plea for help on Facebook, he rushed the cub to Turtle Ridge Wildlife Center in Hancock’s hometown of Salem, performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation along the way when it appeared the animal had stopped breathing.

Read the whole story

Former Truckee High School

coach dies in crash

By Marcella Corona, Reno Gazette-Journal

A former Truckee High School football coach was killed in a head-on car crash Saturday outside of Sierraville, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Former football coach Robert Shaffer died at the scene. His wife Lisa Shaffer and his 22-year-old son, Patrick, suffered minor to moderate injuries, CHP said in an incident report.

The crash was reported at about 9:29pm Saturday along Highway 89 just south of Cold Creek Campground in Sierra County, authorities said.

Read the whole story

Is Nevada’s death penalty a ‘broken system?’

By Marcella Corona, Reno Gazette-Journal

In the last 40 years, 160 Nevadans have been sentenced to death.

Only 12 were ever executed.

That’s a key argument proponents of a bill to effectively abolish the death penalty are using now that Assembly Bill 237 is making its initial steps through the Nevada Legislature. In short, the death penalty costs too much and isn’t delivering results.

The future of the state's death penalty is being debated in the Nevada Legislature, and the bill got its first hearing on Wednesday. Supporters argued that a death penalty case costs half-a-million more than a non-death penalty case, and it's rarely used because the state lacks the lethal drugs it needs.

Read the whole story

NIAA delays vote on realignment

By Jim Krajewski, Reno Gazette-Journal

After much discussion, nothing changed.

The Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association's board of control had been scheduled to vote on a proposed new 5A/4A classification at Thursday's meeting at the Silver Legacy in downtown Reno.

But it was decided that more information is needed and the proposal will be brought back at the June meeting. If the board members do not vote on the issue then, it would be brought back at the September meeting.

Read the whole story

Nevada minimum wage stays stagnant

People with minimum wage jobs in Nevada will be stuck at that wage for the next fiscal year that begins July 1.

Since 2006 the Office of the Labor Commissioner has been conducting an annual review of the hourly rate. The group takes the federal minimum wage and cost of living into consideration when making the decision. The federal wage is $7.25 an hour.

Nevada’s minimum wage is $8.25 an hour, but drops to $7.25 an hour if the employer offers qualified health benefits. Rules and rates for overtime for 2017-18 will also remain unchanged.

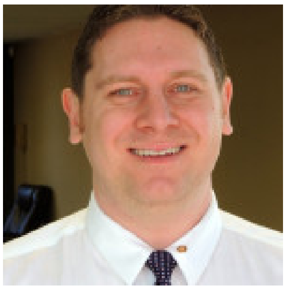
California’s minimum wage is $10.50/hour and will gradually increase to $15 by 2022.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Money Matters: Buying a piece of the American Dream

By Nic Abelow

For many people, buying their first home represents the biggest financial commitment they’ll make. Before making such an important decision, you should consider a variety of factors, starting with whether home ownership is right for you.



Nic Abelow

When considering this question, it may help to view the ownership decision as a lifestyle choice first, and a financial decision second. While over time buying a home can potentially be a good way to build equity, history has shown that like many other investments real estate prices can fluctuate considerably. If you aren't ready to settle down in one spot for a few years, you may want to defer buying a home until you are. But if you are ready to take the plunge, you'll need to determine how much you can afford to spend.

How much house can you afford?

Most people, especially first-time buyers, must take out a mortgage to buy a home. To qualify for a mortgage, the borrower generally needs to meet two industry standard ratio requirements: the housing expense ratio and the total debt ratio.

· The housing expense ratio compares basic monthly housing costs to the buyer's gross monthly income (before taxes and other deductions). Basic costs include mortgage payments, insurance and property taxes. Income includes any steady cash flow, including salary, child support or alimony payments. For a conventional loan, your monthly housing cost generally should not exceed 28 percent of your monthly gross income.

· The total debt ratio is the percentage of income required to service all of your monthly debt payments. Monthly payments on student loans, installment loans and credit card balances, for instance, are added to basic housing costs and then divided by gross income. Your total monthly debt payments, including basic housing costs, generally should not exceed 36 percent.

In addition to qualifying for a mortgage, you will likely need a down payment. Down payment requirements generally vary from a minimum of 3 percent to 20 percent or more depending on individual factors. Down payments greater than 20 percent generally exempt you from buying private mortgage insurance and may help you secure a lower interest rate. Mortgages available to some military veterans and active duty military personnel through the Veterans Administration (VA) may require no down payment.

Closing costs

Closing costs vary considerably, but typically add between 2 percent and 7 percent to your purchase price. Such costs can include, but are not limited to, a home inspection, loan origination fees, upfront “points” (prepaid interest), application fees, an appraisal fee, title search and title insurance, homeowner’s insurance, recording fees and attorney’s fees.

Operating costs

In addition to mortgage payments, there are other costs associated with home ownership. Home association fees, utilities, heat, property taxes, repairs, insurance, services such as trash or snow removal, landscaping and replacement of appliances are some of the more common costs incurred. Check the actual expenses of the previous owners and make sure you know how much you are willing and able to spend on such items.

Once you’ve determined a price range and location, you’re ready to look at individual homes. Remember that much of a home’s value is derived from the values of those surrounding it. In addition to “comparables,” consider the neighborhood, schools and other qualities that may be attractive to future buyers as well as those attractive to you. The more research you do today, the better your decision will look in the years to come.

Nic Abelow is a LPL financial advisor with Abelow, Pratt & Associates Financial Advisors and Wealth Management.