

What's ahead for the Tahoe Pyramid Bikeway

By Janet Phillips, Reno Gazette-Journal

Construction work starts this summer on the next-to-last stretch of the Tahoe Pyramid Bikeway through the Truckee Canyon west of Reno. Engineering work is underway to complete the last steep section in 2018.

When these last four miles are finished, bike riders from Reno will be able to ride to Truckee and on to Lake Tahoe, realizing a dream of many local adventurers and creating another tourist draw for the region.

The Truckee Meadows Water Authority opened to the public its utility maintenance road into the Truckee Canyon at Verdi in 2013. The trail runs along the canyon walls, through a forest and then by the Truckee River starting at the Fleish footbridge.

Read the whole story

S. Lake Tahoe receives state transportation dollars

South Lake Tahoe will benefit from the \$127 million the California Transportation Commission is spending on 49 projects in the state.

The money is being spent on aging roads and bridges, make upgrades to transit and rail systems and to encourage use of

alternative forms of transportation, including biking and walking.

The funding includes \$47.4 million from the State Highway Operation and Protection Program for 14 “fix-it first” projects that will repair bumpy pavement, preserve roads that are in good condition from deteriorating and upgrade bridges to make them safer and stronger.

Locally, South Lake Tahoe will receive \$117,000 for construction of bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements between the intersection of Al Tahoe Boulevard and Johnson Boulevard and the intersection of Al Tahoe and Highway 50.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

New table games have steep hurdles

By Thomas Moore, Las Vegas Sun

When it comes to slots, new skill-based games have generated a lot of industry buzz. But in the world of table games, blackjack and baccarat (and to a lesser extent, craps and roulette) continue to dominate, and experts say that won't change anytime soon.

When it comes to games played on green felt, innovation means adding features to existing games or inventing variations of existing casino stalwarts, not creating entirely new concepts.

It's not that no one is trying to develop new games. According to Jonné Brunette, an agent with the Nevada Gaming Control Board, gaming regulators received 19 new game applications in 2016, of which 12 won final approval.

Read the whole story

Letter: Lauding the women's march

To the community,

One million thanks to all of you who made the Bi-State Women's March Lake Tahoe a huge success.

It was a very special event for our community thanks to all the media coverage, the special care provided by the South Lake Tahoe Police Department, the cooperation of Caltrans, the dynamic organizational committee and more than 530 hardy people who came out to participate during a snowstorm.

It was a sight to behold.

Sincerely,

Vicki Raucci Gonzales, South Lake Tahoe

Snowboarding sensation White returns to X Games

By Austin Colbert, Aspen Times

Shaun White is back.

Though, in a way, snowboarding's greatest star never left.

"Outside of X Games, which is slightly annoying in a sense, is that I won basically every major contest last season, except for X Games," White told the *Aspen Times* in a phone interview from Calgary, Alberta, last week. "I didn't really think too much of it."

White needs little introduction. The two-time Olympic gold medalist (2006 and 2010) has a record 15 X Games gold medals to his name, and is the only athlete to have won gold in both the summer and winter competitions.

There was a time when White trained at Northstar in Truckee.

Read the whole story

Star Guide: Poetry contest for star gazers

"The Stars"

The stars reflected on water.

The ones above stood still.

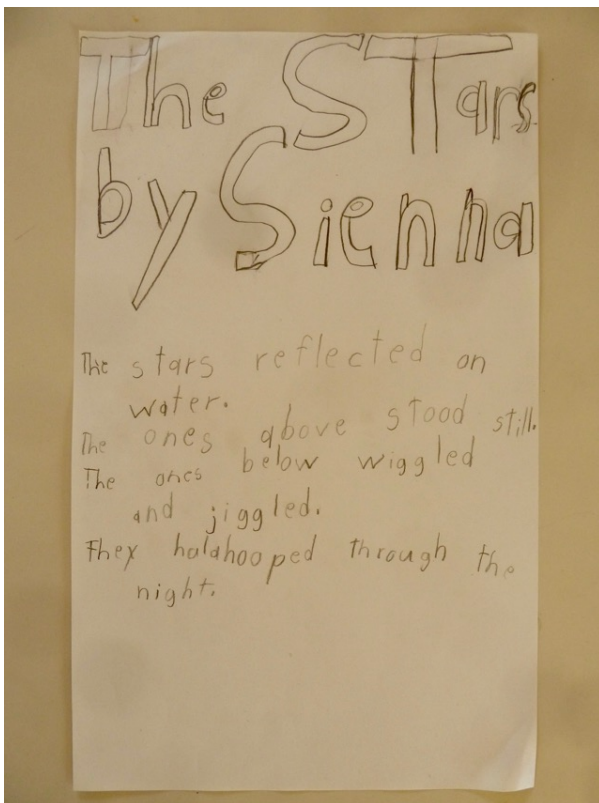
The ones below wiggled and jiggled.

They hulahooped through the night.

– **Sienna Larrucea**

By Tony Berendsen

This week marks the beginning of the 2017 Astro-Poetry contest and a call for poems. I couldn't think of a better way to announce this year's contest than to share "The Stars" by Sienna Larrucea.



She was a first-grader in Mrs. Fisher's class at Loyalton Elementary in Loyalton last year when she submitted a poem that won first place in the K-2 grade division. Her school webpage proudly displays captioned images of students, with my favorite stating, "learn to love, love to learn ... we rise above." I can't help but think she goes to a really great school.

The astro-poetry contest began seven years ago with the hope of inspiring young minds to think about the Earth as a place within the cosmos and share their thoughts through poetry. The contest is a creative exercise many teachers have adopted for writing classes, and many solo students from elementary to high school, private, public, and home school have entered too. Over the last six years we have received over 1,500 poems.

I have read all of the poems submitted. It's one of the many

selfish things I cherish. The poems are from young minds imagining adventures in space, or honoring the beauty seen on a dark starry night, but some of them, like Sienna's poem, capture the youthful curiosity we have all experienced. It is that curiosity carried and nurtured through life that tends to reward our society with the great minds of scientists, doctors, and engineers that shape our future.

The contest rules are simple. All poems must be astronomy related, original, not longer than 20 lines, and only one entry per student. Poems are submitted by email to poems@tahoestartours.com. Include: name, address, phone number, school, and teacher's name. Submit poems in pdf or jpeg only. Poems must be received by midnight April 15 to be considered.

Poems are judged in three divisions: K-2, 3-6, and 7-12 grades. Winning poems will be announced on April 19 by email, and an award ceremony will be April 22 at the Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum in Reno. Each winning poet receives a certificate and the opportunity to read their poem during the ceremony.

The winning poets also receive prizes. Celestron provides first and second place prizes of telescopes and binoculars for each division and Tahoe Star Tours provides tickets to the Dark Skies Cosmoarium at Northstar for third place. Poets need not be present to win.

I believe we are all poets in some way. Most of us don't take the time to write down the amazing moments we experience in life, but the few that do, and the few that decide to share with others document our humanity. I'm so excited to read the poems.

Tony Berendsen runs Tahoe Star Tours. He may be reached at 775. 232.0844 or tony@tahoestartours.com.

Questions about recreational pot in Nev.

By Rachel Crosby, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Even though recreational marijuana is now legal in Nevada, it doesn't seem legal to some locals.

During a public educational meeting on pot recently hosted by the Metropolitan Police Department's Spring Valley area substation, a man in the audience repeatedly asked questions before making a final request.

One of the big questions was: If recreational marijuana is legal, but there are no dispensaries, where does one get weed?

The answer, police said, is at home. You can legally grow up to six marijuana plants for personal use and up to 12 per household until recreational dispensaries set up shop, which could happen as early as March. After that, you can't technically grow pot within 25 miles of a dispensary.

Read the whole story

Entrepreneurs redefining South Lake Tahoe

By Daniel Duane, Bloomberg

Chris McNamara, an experienced rock climber and BASE jumper, was dangling from a cliff near the city of South Lake Tahoe in March 2016 when he had a vision: “It was snowy and super beautiful, and I realized this place ought to be a world capital of outdoor recreation—San Francisco’s cool, alternative mountain city, like what Boulder is for Denver,” he says. “We’ve got skiing and mountain biking. There’s sailing and stand-up paddling. I’m trying to get other entrepreneurs to realize they can do what I did, trade in their commute for a better lifestyle and still pop down to San Francisco for meetings.”

South Lake Tahoe has 21,000 year-round residents, spectacular nature—and a long way to go in the charm department. Tawdry casinos, strip malls, and run-down motels dominate the landscape. Still, it’s just three hours from the Bay Area; gondolas to the immense Heavenly Mountain Resort depart from downtown; and the average home price is \$390,000, compared with \$1.16 million in San Francisco.

McNamara’s vision shouldn’t be that far-fetched: Of all the areas along the lake, South Lake Tahoe has the best combination of affordability and convenience to skiing and beaches. “My inspiration comes from what Tony Hsieh did,” he says, referring to the Zappos chief executive officer’s \$350 million attempt at revitalizing downtown Las Vegas.

Read the whole story

Nev . law enforcement

targeting distracted drivers

Between now and Jan. 30, law enforcement agencies throughout Nevada will be joining forces to cite distracted drivers.

Nevada law states that any use of a handheld electronic device—cell phone, mp3 player, GPS device, etc.—while driving is illegal.

Research has found that using a cell phone behind the wheel makes a driver four times more likely to get into a serious crash. Additionally, when sending or receiving text messaging behind the wheel, a driver's eyes are off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds, equivalent to driving the length of a football field at 65 mph.

Money Matters: How to spend tax returns

By Rick Gross

More than 110 million Americans collected a tax refund – worth an average of just under \$3,000 – after filing their 2015 tax returns, according to statistics released by the Internal Revenue Service.



Rick Gross

If you're one of the many Americans who expect to receive a financial windfall this year, what do you plan to do with the money? It's tempting to treat yourself to a new TV or a pricey vacation. However, if you refrain from spending your refund impulsively, the money presents an opportunity to treat yourself to additional financial security.

Here are five ways to extend the benefits of any refund you receive this year or in the future:

1. Give your retirement savings a boost

While your refund may not seem like a large sum compared to the amount you need to live the life you want in retirement, every dollar you put aside matters. Keep in mind that the money will have a chance to grow, particularly if you are several years or even decades from retirement.

This year, think about using your refund to "max out" your contributions to an individual retirement account. Individuals age 50 or older can set aside \$6,500 per year in an IRA while those under 50 can save up to \$5,500 annually. You may be able to deduct your IRA contributions if you qualify, which may help reduce your 2017 tax bill. You can also put your refund to work in a Roth IRA, potentially qualifying you for tax-free withdrawals in retirement.

2. Save for another long-term goal

If you are saving money for a down payment on a home, a home improvement, or higher education needs, your refund can make a big difference. Consider using your tax refund to establish a separate savings account, or invest the money in its own investment vehicle. Keeping your goal-specific savings separate from your day-to-day accounts will help you focus on reaching the goal because you'll be less tempted to spend the money elsewhere.

3. Expand your rainy day fund

A basic rule of thumb is for you to have at least three-to-six months of income set aside in an emergency fund. This is money that should be left in cash (such as a savings account or a money market fund) in the event an unexpected financial need occurs. A tax refund is a great way to bolster your rainy day fund if it's lacking.

4. Focus on being financially independent

If you have any credit card debt, consider first using your refund to reduce this costly form of borrowing. After that debt is eliminated, you may want to focus on tackling any outstanding student loan balances. If you're fortunate enough to have your consumer debts paid off, think about making an additional mortgage payment. Many Americans make it a goal to pay off their home before they retire, and several lump sum payments can help make this goal more attainable for you.

5. Adjust your tax withholding

If you tend to receive a sizable tax refund each year, a better approach may be to reduce the tax withheld from your paycheck. Rather than giving the IRS a "tax-free loan" while you wait for a big refund, keeping the money may make more sense for you. Apply the extra cash you'll receive in each paycheck toward your most important goals, such as retirement or a child's education. Adjusting your withholding may affect your tax situation, so talk to your tax advisor before making a change.

You want to use your refund where it will have the greatest positive impact on your financial situation. If you need help weighing competing priorities, talk with a financial professional who can give you an objective perspective on how to best divvy up your refund.

Rick Gross is a financial advisor and private wealth advisor

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