

Tax scheme lands EDC woman in prison

An El Dorado Hills woman is going to prison for two years for filing false IRS claims.

Sherry Taggart, 57, was also ordered to pay \$757,412. She had pleaded guilty to multiple charges in September.

According to court documents, in 2010 Taggart joined a scheme initiated in 2008 and operated by her co-conspirator Barbara Antonucci, an unlicensed tax preparer, to obtain false refunds by preparing and filing false claims on behalf of clients with the IRS. The two filed hundreds of false claims with the IRS between June 2012 and March 2014, seeking refunds totaling approximately \$1.4 million.

As a result, the IRS issued more than \$757,000 in illegitimate refunds. In total, including the period in which Antonucci operated the scheme by herself, the IRS issued more than \$1.8 million in illegitimate refunds from more than \$2.5 million illegitimate claims filed by the duo.

Antonucci was sentenced on Dec. 2 to three and a half years in prison.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Multiple pile burnings set

for South Shore

The California Tahoe Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service may continue prescribed fire operations next week if conditions are favorable. Operations may take place near South Lake Tahoe, Tahoe Paradise and Meyers.

To view a map with project locations and details, go **online**.

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, agencies post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2816.

Tahoe funding survives final federal water bill

By Sarah D. Wire and Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times

Over Sen. Barbara Boxer's objections, the Senate voted 78 to 21 Friday evening to pass sweeping water infrastructure legislation that changes how much water is pumped from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to San Joaquin Valley farmers and Southern California.

The bill — co-authored by Boxer — authorizes hundreds of water projects across the country, including new infrastructure to fix lead issues in Flint, Mich., and and millions of dollars for projects connected to the Los Angeles River, Salton Sea and Lake Tahoe.

Earlier in the week, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy

inserted 90 pages of California water policy that drew Boxer's opposition, negotiated over the past year by the state's 14 GOP members, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and a handful of House Democrats.

Now it goes to President Obama for his signature.

The bill would bring \$415 million to the Lake Tahoe Basin across seven years. The money would be used for wildfire prevention, the environmental improvement program, invasive species management, stormwater projects, Lahontan cutthroat trout recover, and other projects.

The original Lake Tahoe Restoration Act was passed by Congress in 2000, three years after President Bill Clinton was here for the initial Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit. The bill brought \$300 million in federal money to the basin in 10 years. Since the 1997 summit more than \$2 billion has been spent in the basin on what officials call environmental projects. This is a combination of federal, state, local and private dollars.

"I'm thrilled that the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act is included in this bill. We've been working to pass an updated Tahoe restoration bill for seven years," Feinstein said in a statement. "This bill authorizes \$415 million to carry on the work of the original bill, improving water quality, reducing hazardous fuels to prevent wildfires, fighting the spread of invasive species and restoring critical habitat throughout the Tahoe basin."

Lake Tahoe News contributed to this story.

Read the whole story

Free sand bags available in S. Lake Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe has sand bags available at no cost year round for residents.

The sand lot is located at the city's public works yard located at 1160 Rufus Allen Blvd., which is next to Campground by the Lake.

Proceed through the gate at the yard and drive to the back of the lot. At the back of the lot is a large sand mound, shovels and bags. Residents fill their own bags; limit 10.

Access to sand bags is available during normal business hours, Monday-Friday 7:30am-4pm.

Letter: Memorial forest felled for Hwy. 28 rerouting

To the community,

A Penny Pine Memorial Tree Plantation which once existed within the 64-acre recreational area in Tahoe City has been devastated forever. Close to 100 garden clubs throughout Northern and Central California planted a Penny Pine Tree Plantation in conjunction with the National Forest Lands – Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit in memory of over 120 individuals including remembrance of the New York City firefighters and police who lost their lives on 9/11.



The planned devastation of the memorial forest for the construction of the Highway 89 bypass highway through 64 acres was never disclosed during public meetings held by the Tahoe Transportation District. It was not until members of the community brought the

planned devastation to the attention of the Tahoe Transportation District that the devastation was even acknowledged. At minimal concern at best.

The community didn't stop there; the request for involvement to preserve or relocate the memorial forest was brought to the attention of the Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Placer County Board of Supervisors, TRPA, Tahoe City PUD, Assemblyman Brian Dahle, Rep. Tom McClintock, California Tahoe Conservancy, Caltrans, U.S. Forest Service, Washoe Tribe and Sen. Dianne Feinstein. Members of the community were extremely disappointed in the lack of involvement on the part of Sen. Feinstein based on her authorization on the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act which proudly acknowledges her stats on restoring fire roads back to the natural environment when the Highway 89 Bypass Project removes a natural forest to construct a highway.

After contacting several of the garden clubs, the following letter was submitted on May 25, 2015, to gain further attention: "My name is Bertina Marcelo. I am currently the president of the South San Francisco Woman's Club. It has been devastating for our members and representatives to learn about the project of taking down our pines to build a highway. The pines where planted through the organization Penny Pines and

represent our deceased members. Our members are very upset that your organization feels that it is more important to build a highway than to respect the conservation of the pines that were planted in memory of our members. We are totally against this highway going up and destroying our 64 acres of beautiful pines that were donated by members and planted with so much love and care. We wish that you come up with a better plan than going through our Plantation of Pines. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Sincerely, Bertina Marcelo, president."

No formal response was ever provided. The Tahoe Transportation District stated that since there were no individual plaques installed on the trees they weren't sure which trees to save.

After reading the article in the Dec. 7, 2016, *Sierra Sun* titled Tree removal set for the Fanny Bridge Project, the noted locations for tree removal included: trees along Highway 89 heading into Tahoe City from Truckee near the Caltrans yard, the Tahoe City Y and area south of Fanny Bridge along West Lake Boulevard. All of the areas but where the trees were actually removed from. When visiting the project site for the Highway 89 Highway Bypass Project, covered up under the name Fanny Bridge Project, it was determined that all of the Penny Pine memorial trees were devastated for the new quarter mile on highway for \$25 million within 64 acres between the Caltrans yard and West Lake Boulevard. All that remains of the memorial is the sign.

Similar to promises made by Placer County that the \$12 million transit center will serve as a "park and ride" facility to reduce traffic congestion at the Tahoe City Y, it still remains to be proven four years after operation if the "park and ride" facility will ever function as promised. On the infrequent days of heavy traffic, the bypass highway through 64 acres will have no effect on the traffic through the main downtown business district. Use of the personal automobile

will be encouraged based on the expanded highway system.

I would like to thank all of the many community members, business owners, Friends of the West Shore, Sierra Club and the League to Save Lake Tahoe who supported my efforts to minimize the impact of this truly unnecessary section of highway through 64 acres.

Hopefully this letter will spark interest within the community to require the project partners to replant the memorial trees. It's heart breaking to see a field of stumps which just a week ago was a plantation of memorial Penny Pine trees on forest land with no acknowledgment to the letter written by the South San Francisco Women's Club.

Jim Sajdak, Tahoe City

SLTFD decorated engine brings good cheer



The annual South Lake Tahoe fire holiday truck begins its rounds tonight. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

There's a certain sound this time of year that brings a smile to kids of all ages – the holiday fire engine making the rounds of South Shore streets.

This annual tradition with South Lake Tahoe and Lake Valley fire departments goes back decades. It's something youngsters look forward to – though some adults seem just as excited.

"There are always kids who are extremely excited to see Santa and then the ones who are scared," South Lake firefighter Danny Vallejo told *Lake Tahoe News*. "For local people like myself and Capt. Tyler Jack who grew up here, this is a tradition we are pretty fond of."

In South Tahoe the decorated vehicle started in the Public

Works Department. Employees would drive around city streets with a little house on the back of a flatbed truck, with Santa in the house.

The Lake Valley tradition dates to the mid-1960s. Fire Chief Tim Alameda remembers getting his candy cane from Santa. That's all the history that department has about the truck.

About 20 years ago the South Lake Tahoe Firefighters' Association took over the responsibility of the city's tradition. For three years they kept things the same as Public Works.

Then the firefighters started decorating a fire engine and driving it around town. Everyone on the decorated truck is volunteering their time.

That same year the house never left Station 2. However, that is where Santa would be. (Three years ago the department stopped staffing Santa's house because the reserve program was disbanded and that job fell to them.)

Santa is now on the fire truck handing out the candy canes. His arrival is hard to miss as Christmas tunes can be heard before the lights are even visible in most neighborhoods.

"This year we are going to be decorating one of our brush rigs," Vallejo said. Various apparatuses have been used throughout the years.

It takes more than 75 strands of lights to illuminate the vehicle. Plus, the reindeer made out of thick wire are all aglow. The truck is wrapped in such a manner that all the compartments can be accessed in case it is called into action.

New this season is the crew on board will be taking pictures of youngsters they meet. Those photos will be posted on the agency's Facebook and Twitter pages as they drive along. The firefighters are hoping people will tag themselves to spread

the cheer a little further.



Firefighters decorate the South Lake Tahoe engine. Photo/Provided

Here is the South Lake Tahoe fire engine schedule:

- Dec. 10 – Tahoe Keys/Venice
- Dec. 11 – Glenwood
- Dec. 12 – Keys Boulevard/state streets
- Dec. 13 – Barton/Tahoe Island
- Dec. 14 – South Y /Tata
- Dec. 15 – Al Tahoe Boulevard
- Dec. 16 – Springwood/Bijou Pines
- Dec. 17 – Sierra Boulevard
- Dec. 18 – Ski Run area
- Dec. 19 – Heavenly Valley
- Dec. 20 – Stateline/Pioneer Trail
- Dec. 21 – Gardner Mountain
- Dec. 22 – Stateline hotels
- Dec. 23 – Main areas
- Dec. 24 – Highway 50.

U.S. life expectancy declines for first time since 1993

By Lenny Bernstein, Washington Post

For the first time in more than two decades, life expectancy for Americans declined last year – a troubling development linked to a panoply of worsening health problems in the United States.

Rising fatalities from heart disease and stroke, diabetes, drug overdoses, accidents and other conditions caused the lower life expectancy revealed in a report released Thursday by the National Center for Health Statistics. In all, death rates rose for eight of the top 10 leading causes of death.

“I think we should be very concerned,” said Princeton economist Anne Case, who called for thorough research on the increase in deaths from heart disease, the No. 1 killer in the United States. “This is singular. This doesn’t happen.”

[Read the whole story](#)

How to tell fake news from the real thing

By Wynne Davis, NPR

Fake news stories can have real-life consequences. On Sunday, police said a man with a rifle who claimed to be “self-

investigating” a baseless online conspiracy theory entered a Washington, D.C., pizzeria and fired the weapon inside the restaurant.

So, yes, fake news is a big problem.

These stories have gotten a lot of attention, with headlines claiming Pope Francis endorsed Donald Trump in November’s election and sites like American News sharing misleading stories or taking quotes out of context. And when sites like DC Gazette share stories about people who allegedly investigated the Clinton family being found dead, the stories go viral and some people believe them. Again, these stories are not true in any way.

Read the whole story

USS Nevada, crew honored anew for Pearl Harbor exploits

By Keith Rogers, Las Vegas Review-Journal

HONOLULU – Resting at the bottom of the Pacific but very much alive in naval history books, the storied battleship USS Nevada received fresh accolades Thursday aimed at ensuring that she and her crew continue “inspiring sailors for as long as there is a United States Navy.”

On a drizzly Hawaiian morning the day after the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, four USS Nevada veterans and a few dozen dignitaries and Nevadans gathered to commemorate a plaque dedicated to the ship and her crew.

The ceremony at Hospital Point – the spot where the Nevada was

intentionally grounded – provided another opportunity to remember their exploits on Dec. 7, 1941, when the crew managed to get the Nevada underway after she was hit by a torpedo and bombs and make a valiant run for the open sea, fighting all the way.

They didn't make it, but the maneuver spared the ship from possible ruin at anchor and inspired every American who saw or read about it, said Sam Cox, a retired rear admiral and director of the Naval History and Heritage Command.

Read the whole story

Flood warning issued for Tahoe-Truckee

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a flash flood watch for the Lake Tahoe Basin, Truckee, Carson City, Minden and the foothills west of Reno from 4am-10pm Saturday.

An atmospheric river will bring a burst of heavy precipitation across the region. Snow levels will be at about 8,000 feet.

Forecasters say the Truckee River along Highway 89 could flood by late morning Dec. 10. Traffic in that area and over mountain passes will be impacted by the heavy moisture.

"Sierra locations can expect about 1 to 4 inches of liquid equivalent while the Sierra Front could see 0.25 to 1 inch, and 0.1 to 0.5 in the basin and range," according to the NWS.

The greatest threat for flooding is near creeks and streams, with mudslides possible on burn scars.

Rain and snow are in the forecast for much of next week.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*