

El Dorado, Placer school employees eligible for mortgage aid

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

The Sacramento-based California Housing Finance Agency has expanded its Extra Credit Teacher Home Purchase Program, making more California K-12 public school employees eligible to receive as much as \$15,000 in down payment assistance.

The down payment assistance comes as a loan, which recipients are not required to pay back until the home is refinanced or sold, or the mortgage is paid off.

Under the ECTP, public school employees in 35 of California's "high-cost" counties – including Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Yolo counties – could qualify for up to \$15,000 or 3.5 percent of the sales price or appraised value, whichever is greater.

Read the whole story

Political divide between Nev.'s urban, rural counties grows

By Ben Botkin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada's political divide between rural and urban regions is

wide.

Nevada voting trends in the 2016 election demonstrated the growing clout of Clark County, which has about 70 percent of the state's population, and the need for future candidates to connect with voters in the state's urban centers.

Though Donald Trump won the presidential election, Hillary Clinton carried the state, with the widest margin of victory in Southern Nevada. Clinton carried Nevada with slightly more than a 2-point lead: 47.89 percent to Trump's 45.53 percent.

Clark County and, to a smaller degree, Washoe County, put Nevada's six Electoral College votes in Clinton's column.

Read the whole story

Truckee's only hostel a place for new friends, adventures

By Alexandra Spychalsky, Moonshine Ink

Gnomes, by nature, are personable creatures. Triscuits are their snack of choice, and they all speak with a British accent, though they insist they are not in fact British. Regular white lights are too harsh for them, so red is the light frequency they prefer, and which makes them most productive. Hence the name of the Redlight hostel, a nod to the eponymous red lights that fill the basement of the building in the heart of downtown Truckee, where a fleet of friendly gnomes reside.

If this story seems far-fetched to you, don't feel alone. Even the owners of Redlight are still workshopping the story behind

the name of their new hostel. What the creative license taken illustrates most is the eccentricity of Redlight's owners, and the kind of stay you'll have if you choose to frequent the hostel.

Chances are, you have driven by the red building, but most likely did not know what it was. That is by design. There is no signage, nothing to advertise the company name or the nature of their business. You can't just walk in, either. You must be buzzed in, meaning you were deemed worthy to enter. And owners, Zach Cowan and Abby Pulos have no plans to change that.

Read the whole story

**Road Beat: 2017 Acura TLX
high value continues**



Acura TLX is a perfect midsize sedan. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Acura brought us the TL in 1996 and it continued through four generations. It was Acura's midsize offering and at one time nearly outsold the class leader in this segment, the BMW 3 series. It's third generation was the second best-selling luxury car in the U.S.

In a conversation with the head of Chrysler design, Ralph Gilles, who headed the team that created the second-generation Chrysler 300 in 2004, once told me that he thought the 2004-2008 third generation TL was his favorite design of all cars at the time. That says a lot.

While the fourth generation might have lost its way, the mid-size TL moniker has been replaced in 2015 by the TLX. It fits in the dimension game as a perfect midsize sedan with a length, wheelbase, width and height of 190, 109, 73 and 57 inches respectively. Interior volume is 107 cubic feet including 13 cubes in the nicely shaped trunk.

While not a spittin' image of the third-generation superb looking TL, it fits into the category of great looking cars. I am not a fan of the aluminum plate in the traditional Acura five-sided grill design which in some applications looks like an eagle's beak from the side, but in the TLX it has been toned down significantly. Acura designers did an acceptable rhinoplasty. Overall the new TLX is eye-catching with its clever use of two character lines, its somewhat edgy sleek shape, great looking window line and proportions and strong, muscular back end. I am a new fan. But there is so much more to talk about besides its subjective quality appearance and it's all good, really good.



Specifications

Price \$31,900 to about \$45,000

Engines

2.4L DOHC, 16 valve, VTEC inline four 206 hp @ 6,800 rpm

182 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,500 rpm

3.5L DOHC, 24 valve VTEC V-6 290 hp @ 6,200 rpm

267 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,500 rpm

Transmissions

Eight-speed DCT (I-4)

Nine-speed torque converter automatic (V-6)

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/FWD/AWD (V-6 only)

Dimensions

Wheelbase 109.3 inches

Length 190.3 inches

Width 73.0 inches

Height 57.0 inches

Track (f/r) 62.8/63.1 inches

Weight 3,492 pounds

Weight Distribution (% f/r)
60/40

Fuel capacity 17.2 gallons

Passenger volume 93.3 cubic feet

Trunk capacity 13.2 cubic feet

Turning circle 39.2 feet

Wheels 17X7.5 inch alloys

Tires 225/55X17 inches (high performance, all season)

Performance

0-60 mph 6.88 seconds

50-70 mph 3.64 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 5.53 seconds

Top speed Way beyond sanity

Fuel economy EPA rated
24/35/28 mpg
city/highway/combined.

Expect 32-33 mpg in rural county driving with some stop and go, 42.5 mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

Acura TLX uses one of two engines, either a 2.4L direct injected VTEC, DOHC 16 valve inline four or a direct injected, VTEC, 3.5L DOHC, 24 valve V-6. My tester had in inline 206 hp at 6,800 rpm and 182 pounds of peak twist at 4,500 rpm. The V-6 cranks out 290 hp at 6,200 and 267 pounds of twist at the same 4,500 rpm. It means that for both these engines peak volumetric efficiency is at 4,500 rpm, the engine speed at which the intake and exhaust are working at their best.

Although all wheel drive is available with the V-6, it is not available with the inline four. However, all models have all wheel steering. More on that later. In my tester, the front wheels are driven through an eight-speed electronic dual clutch tranny. While there is a small torque converter it is mostly locked up as it is only used in taking off from a dead stop for torque multiplication and to help with the VTEC system. The V-6 drives either the front wheels or all wheels via a nine-speed torque converter auto cog swapper.

My tester was a model of decorum with surprising performance from the four-banger knocking off 0-60 mph in just 6.88 seconds. That is as quick as the original second generation V-6. And that stellar performance is backed up by super responsive passing times accelerating from 50-70 mph on level ground and up a six percent grade in 3.64 and 5.53 seconds respectively. This engine flat out gets it done especially with that terrific eight speed dual clutch tranny. Fly by wire throttle response was almost instantaneous and linear. It was a beautiful thing. I will miss this fuel-sipping rocket ship next week.

As to the IDS (Integrated Dynamics System) system which remaps throttle and tranny aggressiveness, I used the Sport mode as opposed to econ, normal and sport-plus which keep the tranny in lower gears to a much higher rpm. Sport was right for me and I even used the econ mode in leisurely driving and for most people the only mode they will notice a difference is in sport+.

Now here is the kicker, the Acura returns incredible fuel economy especially in light of its very high performance and 3,500 pounds of curb weight. EPA rates the Acura at 24/35/28 mpg city/highway/combined. Here is what the Acura did in the real world. On a level highway two way run with the cruise control set at 70 mph, the TLX returned 42.5 mpg. The engine spins just 1,950 rpm at 70 mph. Overall in 350 miles of varied driving with little time spent on a freeway the TLX returned 33 mpg. In a trip from Placerville to Carson City via Highway 50 and up and down both sides of the Sierras (about 220 miles), the TLX averaged 35.5 mpg. Because of two fuel economy computers I was able to track the fuel economy of the TLX from South Lake Tahoe to Placerville. The number was an astounding 47.4 mpg! TLX combines great performance and fuel economy. TLX comes with a large 17.2-gallon fuel tank.

Next on the list is handling and the TLX with its four-wheel electric power steering is fantastic even with its taller 225/55X17 inch rubber mounted on wide 17X7.5 inch alloys. It's accurate and you can subtly feel it helping the rear end when pushed in the corners. Suspension is state of the art MacPherson struts and a multilink system and track is a wide 63 inches. I would prefer 50 or 45 series tires with a lower profile, but maybe Acura is looking for ride quality. But notwithstanding that, this Acura is a true sporting sedan that is simply a blast to do the quick stop with in the twisties. You can actually feel the four-wheel steering work guiding the back end. Steering is beautiful and its attitude when driven hard into the corners remains virtually flat. Yes, Acura handles with the best of them even with front wheel drive which only exhibited minor torque steer only a few times at slow speed in a tight corner at high power settings. Turning circle is a bit large at 39.2 feet

Ride quality is simply smooth and quiet. It is firm but it is anything but harsh, a perfect blend for this butt. TLX does not do the bob and weave, instead It is supple and extremely

compliant. About perfect. The body was bank vault tight and anechoic chamber quiet. There is no road, wind or engine noise unless you get your foot into it and then the inline four actually makes some sweet music. It loves to rev.

Ventilated front and solid rear discs over a foot in diameter make up the binders and they are powerful. Safety acronyms are complete right down to the LKAS (Lane Keep Assist System). If you want a safer motor vehicle, buy an M1A1 Abrams Tank. But it might not fit in your garage, it burns about a gallon of Jet-A for every half mile with a top speed of 45 mph but it sure can pack a wallop. Safe driving starts with an attentive driver. The LED headlights could be used for night tennis matches in a pinch.

Now for more Acura goodness, the interior. My TLX with the standard Tech Package had no options and none are offered nor needed. Inside are sublime perforated leather seating which after four hours in the saddle felt great (both the seat and my butt). Rear seating is spacious, even for three. The balance of the interior is soft touch material on the doors, instrument panel and console. There is nothing even remotely cheap about the Acura, no corners have been clipped and it leaves its occupants with a real feel of quality and luxury without being ostentatious.

Instrumentation is complete with a big tach and speedo left and right flanking the trip computer/info center with the great feature of two independent trip computers. That is well thought out.

Now here is what makes this mid-size sports sedan so inviting, the price. The TLX starts at \$31,900 nicely equipped, plus \$940 for the train and truck from Marysville, Ohio. My TLX with the Tech Package ups the ante to \$35,950 which includes everything, NAV, leather, power everywhere including both front chairs and lane keep assist. There are no other options offered. The V-6 will add about \$3,450. But here is the deal.

Many of your mid-size cars like Camry, Nissan, and so on can reach a sticker of \$35,000 plus. The Acura is a better deal at that point and therein lies the incredible value of Acura. I would buy one and I would go with the inline four. It has great performance without a shred of guilt. I would only buy the V-6 if I needed AWD which stickers for \$41,600 with the Tech Package, otherwise this TLX with the Tech Pack is the way to go, literally and figuratively. I will miss this TLX, it's like a perfect car, great performance, outstanding fuel economy, superb handling and ride, beautifully equipped and a sublime interior for a few bucks less than \$36 large. Such a deal.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Rare Gold Rush era books to be auctioned



One-of-a-kind book
collection for sale.
Photo/Swann Auction
Galleries

By Katie Dowd, San Francisco Chronicle

Collectors and admirers of early California history will be thrilled to see a lot of rare books – most from before the turn of the century – up for auction.

The books cover topics from Gold Rush life to scenic shots of Yosemite before all those tour buses descended.

Twenty-five of the lots up for auction by Swann Auction Galleries are from the estate of California adventurer Timothy Treacy.

Read the whole story

Ski film loaded with Tahoe talent, locations



Olympian Jonny Moseley of Squaw Valley narrates and is featured athlete in the Warren Miller film "Here, There and Everywhere." Photo/Hank de Vre/Warren Miller Entertainment

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Anyone who watches Warren Miller films knows what they're going to get with each new edition.

There will be incredible scenery, amazing athletes and superb production values.

But what most viewers might not know is how much of it is thanks to people and places around Lake Tahoe.

The 67th installment, "Here, There and Everywhere," is no different.

Read the whole story

MontBleu to be transformed into Christmas wonderland



No Place Like Home by Cyndy Brown-Carlton was the 2015 winner of the best themed tree. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Barton Health's eighth annual Festival of Trees & Lights is Dec. 1-4 at MontBleu in Stateline.

All proceeds from the festival will support the expansion of Barton Health's Cancer Wellness Program. The expanded program will address the social, emotional, and functional aspects of a patient's cancer journey through supportive services such as massage, exercise, psychotherapy, and nutrition classes. This program is offered free for community members undergoing cancer treatment.

Children and adults of all ages can support the cause and attend the festival. Barton Foundation volunteers and staff transform MontBleu's convention center into a holiday paradise with trees and wreaths decorated by local artists and

schoolchildren. Attendees may enjoy the Teddy Bear Hospital, a kids' craft area, a Santa photo session, raffle, and live entertainment.

In addition, special events are featured throughout the festival. Seniors, ages 55 and over, may attend the Senior Stroll at no cost on Thursday from 2-4pm. The Teddy Bear Brunch is Dec. 4 from 10am-noon. Special events sell out.

For more information or to purchase tickets, go **online**. or call 530.543.5909.

South Lake Tahoe honors pioneer Springmeyer



Marjorie Springmeyer is remembered by the city of South Lake Tahoe.
Photo/LTN

A memorial for South Lake Tahoe pioneer **Marjorie Springmeyer** has been erected at Bijou Community Park.

Springmeyer died earlier this year at the age of 93.

Her family used to own much of the property in the center of town. Springmeyers' brothers and heirs still have substantial land holdings on the South Shore.

The plaque on the granite rock at the park acknowledges the family's contributions as early settlers.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Incline ski racer makes impression in World Cup opener

By USSA

KITTILÄ, Finland – Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.) overcame Audi FIS Ski World Cup slalom opener nerves, skiing two clean and solid runs en route to her first World Cup victory of the 2017 season. Switzerland's Wendy Holdener grabbed second, 0.67 seconds out, while Slovakia's Petra Vlhova rounded out the podium in third, 0.75 seconds behind Shiffrin.

It was a beautiful, crisp day up in Lapland, with a picturesque sunrise and perfect rock-hard conditions on the race track. Starting lucky No. 7, Shiffrin laid down a smoking first run, finishing 0.72 ahead of 2016 World Cup slalom title holder Frida Hansdotter and Switzerland's Wendy Holdener. The

battle between Shiffrin and Hansdotter ended when Hansdotter straddled on the pitch second run and skied out. Shiffrin knifed the bulletproof pitch and maintained her lead all the way to the finish, earning herself another prize Lapland reindeer and a buddy for her 2013 prize reindeer Rudolph. His name? Sven.

The final American starting in Saturday's slalom and a relative newcomer to the World Cup circuit, Lila Lapanja (Incline Village), had solid top splits that would have had her well into qualification for a second run but struggled moving forward coming on to the pitch, causing her to get low and behind. She'll walk away knowing that she has the speed to hang with the top 15.

Tourism study: South Shore excels at outdoor recreation, lacks quality dining experiences

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Travelers are looking for a deeper connection to their destination than just a Kodak moment. It's as if they want a relationship with the locale and not just a fling.

Being able to deliver what are in many ways intangibles is going to set the South Shore apart from other areas, according to a marketing expert.

In a yearlong survey of visitors (July 2015-July 2016) people

were asked a variety of questions to gauge what brought them here, the experience they had, and the money they spent. Other pertinent information was gathered into a Visitor Profile Study by SMG Consulting of South Lake Tahoe for Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.

Carl Ribaud, principal of the marketing firm, on Nov. 10 highlighted some of the results for the LTVA board.

“I’ve been looking at different destinations to see the role that local culture plays. I asked a set of questions to find out what people thought they really wanted to get out of a place,” Ribaud said.

The tangibles of Lake Tahoe included: recreation, gaming, natural environment, music and food. The subtler attributes people sought were: a friendly and welcoming community, a place where they were comfortable to be themselves and do what they liked, and being in a vibrant, energetic and interesting area.

According to the survey, 86 percent said the area “has a feel I like.”

However, only 65 percent said the area provided a unique experience. Still, 84 percent found the recreation experience they wanted.



A growing number of people are coming to Tahoe to participate in sports that don't cost money. Photo/LTN file

The area that needs most improvement is dining. This also generated the most discussion at Thursday's meeting.

"We are focused on low-cost offering. We are not very risky in what we offer," LTVA Executive Director Carol Chaplin said. "We are meat and potato places."

Ribaudo noted that food more now than ever is a contributing factor in where people travel, and it's not just foodies making this a priority. People are increasing the amount of money they allocate to dining when they travel.

"As a whole we are not seen as having what other destinations have in food and dining," Ribaudo said.

Survey responses included:

- Has the restaurant choices I like – 37 percent
- Has quality restaurants – 37 percent.

What survey takers praised the South Shore for the most (95 percent) was the scenic beauty.

The survey revealed that 19 percent of the visitors are staying in a vacation rental. It used to be closer to 5 percent.

“My assessment is that the hotel-motel experience has fundamentally not changed on the South Shore. These numbers are only going to go up unless we change the housing stock,” Ribaudó said. “We aren’t giving them much choice with the existing lodging structure. It’s 1950’s stock.”

The last time SMG did a study like this for the South Shore tourism bureau was six years ago. The market has changed. Millennials are traveling, household income of travelers has increased, vacation home rentals are surging, and more people are spending time on free recreation like hiking, biking and kayaking.

“We are really becoming a much broader recreation area than we had been in the past,” Ribaudó said. While people are still coming to the ski resorts and renting boats in the summer, other sports are growing in popularity.

This shows that building biking-hiking trail networks – and promoting them – is paying off with getting people here for those endeavors.