

Chamber launching 'go local' campaign

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce will host a go local workshop for retailers on Nov. 3 from 8-9:30am at Tahoe Mountain Lab in South Lake Tahoe.

The event will feature an overview of the business campaign, the benefits, and an audience brainstorming session.

The workshop give retailers the chance to express challenges they experience and how the chamber might better help them face those challenges. Retail consultant Brad Jones will facilitate the event.

For more information on this event, go **online**.

Tahoe not included in federal water legislation

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act is not included in the House's version of the Water Resources Development Act.

Representatives voted 399-25 for the bill, which was smaller than what the Senate had passed. The Senate version included \$415 million for Tahoe. The money for Tahoe would have been allocated over 10 years for forest fuels management, environmental and watershed restoration, stormwater management and other projects.

The overall legislation is designed to address the needs of harbors, locks, dams, flood protection, and other water resources infrastructure.

House and Senate leaders must now compromise on a final bill to send to President Obama by the end of the year. There is a slim chance the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act could be resurrected to be included in what goes to the president.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Profits up at El Dorado Savings Bank

Profits at El Dorado Savings Bank for the third quarter are up from a year ago.

The Placerville-based bank reported Oct. 28 profits of \$2,820,264, which is \$81,557 more than the third quarter of 2015.

Year-to-date profits are up \$9,285,754, compared to \$8,553,749 in 2015.

“The continued stable performance of the investment and real estate loan portfolios have contributed to the strong earnings for the first three quarters of 2016,” CEO George L. Cook Jr. said in a statement.

El Dorado ended the quarter with \$2.10 billion in total assets and savings deposits of \$1.88 billion.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

SLT expected to host women's Amgen bike race



The women cyclists are expected to start in South Lake Tahoe in 2017. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By James Raia Sacramento Bee

The announcement likely will come early next week, but South Lake Tahoe officials expect to host the start of the 2017 women's Amgen Tour of California. Sacramento is expected to be the start of the men's race.

A four-day women's stage race will be held May 11-14, likely from South Lake Tahoe to Sacramento. South Lake Tahoe was the

start of women's race this year and the finish for one of the men's stages.

The men's race will be one day shorter than in 2016, May 14-20. The men are returning to a north-south route, which will not include Lake Tahoe.

Neither the Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG), which owns the event, nor the title sponsor would confirm the status of various cities.

But South Lake Tahoe and Sacramento officials confirmed they bid to host a stage.

Elk Grove, which has never been part of the event, has bid on a women's stage.

Folsom, the site of the men's individual time trial and women's team time trial this year, did not bid for a stage in 2017.

Davis, which usually seeks a stage, won't participate in 2017, focusing instead on the 100th anniversary of the city's incorporation and other civic milestones.

Santa Rosa and Monterey, which hosted stages this year, won't be involved in 2017, according to city spokespeople. Morro Bay, which hosted a stage start this year, and San Jose, which has been part of the event in nine editions, have bid for 2017.

Participating teams, key individual riders and route mileages usually are announced sporadically a few weeks before the event.

– Lake Tahoe News contributed to this report.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Barton is offering a class for expecting parents on Nov. 3 from 6:30-8:30pm and again Dec. 1 from 6:30-8:30pm at 1077B 4th St., South Lake Tahoe. Cost is \$20 per couple. Sign up **online**.
- Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules from Caltrans for the coming week.
- Washoe County Sheriff's Office received a \$120,000 grant from the Nevada Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety to support the sheriff's office participation in Joining Forces traffic safety campaigns during the coming year.
- Tahoe City Rotary is hosting free document shredding event Nov. 11, 11am-2pm at the Tahoe City Post Office parking lot. Donations to the club will be accepted.
- Mount Rose won't be opening for skiing on Halloween after all. It's been too warm to make snow. No new opening date has been set.

Snowboarder must pay \$263K for crash on slopes

A Colorado jury this month ruled that a snowboarder must pay more than a quarter million dollars for being negligent on the slopes.

Casey Ferguson of Colorado was on a run at Keystone Resort at a high rate of speed when he crashed into a skier from behind. Tom Dubert of Chicago had to miss three months of work because of the injuries from the 2015 collision.

Ferguson was ordered to pay \$263,454.44. That money should be forthcoming from his parents' homeowners' policy.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Letters: Golfers assist with Bread & Broth dinner

To the community,

Oct. 17 was a busy and charitable day for the Edgewood Ladies Golf Club. In addition to hosting a Boys & Girls Club golf tournament, the Edgewood Ladies Golf Club also sponsored a Bread & Broth Adopt A Day of Nourishment. It is definitely a credit to the members of the golf group that they are so involved with helping the community.

Attending their first Bread & Broth dinner, Dena Schwartz and Paula Gansinger replaced their golfing gloves with latex gloves as they helped with packing food give-away bags and serving the 85 dinner guests who arrived at 4pm to enjoy the Italian casserole entrée dinner prepared by the B&B cooks.

"This was a wonderful experience, very impressive!" commented Schwartz. "All the guests were so grateful."

B&B dinner guests look forward to the B&B Monday meals provided every week throughout the year. The tasty and nutritious meals are provided thanks to the funds donated by

the weekly AAD sponsors, such as the Edgewood Ladies Golf Club, and the time and energy generously given by the AAD sponsor crews and B&B volunteers. Providing healthy food and a warm secure place to gather is a gift truly appreciated by the struggling members of our community.

Kudos to the Edgewood Ladies Golf Club.

For more B&B information, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

SLT children's memorial creating unwanted grief

"There is no footprint too small to leave an imprint on this world." – Author unknown

By Kathryn Reed

For those who have lost a child, that individual's footprint has left an impression far deeper than most will ever know.

There are many ways to memorialize a loss. In South Lake Tahoe there is the Children's Memorial at the corner of Highway 50 and Wildwood Avenue. More than 200 plaques have been placed on the tree since October 1994, when the tree was first dedicated.

Driven by the tragic death of her son, Rory, along with his two friends Sandy Haynes and Casey Wells in an automobile accident, Sue Hrbacek-Miller hoped to place, in a public location, the tree that the car struck on the night of Feb. 2,

1991.

Age and weather made the original tree no longer viable so a few years ago a “log” made out of a concrete-polymer material was installed with the idea it would be permanent.



The log has names of children from South Lake Tahoe who have died. Photo/LTN

The process to get a plaque on the tree has been simple and difficult at the same time.

This past summer Kenny Curtzwiler told the City Council he knows of 12 people who have run into issues at the city in regards to getting a name on the memorial. City Councilwoman JoAnn Conner has tried to get the topic on an agenda for months. It is supposed to be on the Nov. 15 agenda.

Lake Tahoe News reached out to Curtzwiler and Conner. Neither could provide *Lake Tahoe News* with names of anyone who supposedly is having an issue with the city.

“I will work on the list, but most of the people who contact me I just refer them over to Nancy [Kerry] by passing on her information and then lose the contacts,” Curtzwiler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* that Curtzwiler provided five names of people who had contacted him in 2013, 2014 or 2015. She said one was for a South Lake Tahoe child and that the mother told her she has yet to fill out the paperwork.

Conner did not speak to *LTN* until confronted at the last council meeting.

"They want to meet with a parent, to share their grief. They don't want to be grilled," Conner said. Many at the city are parents and some have even lost a child.

Conner had no names to provide to *Lake Tahoe News*.

When asked by the council and staff to provide names, she wouldn't. Councilman Tom Davis asked her to provide names to him later so he could help. To this day she has not done so.

The city staff is in a quandary because it cannot help people without knowing who needs help.

Cindy Juarez spoke with *Lake Tahoe News* about her experience in getting her son's name on the tree. Dave Suarez died seven years ago at the age of 42. He had worked in the produce department at Safeway for 15 years and had lived here for more than 20 years.

"With the passion my son had for Lake Tahoe I would really like for him to be a part of [the memorial tree]. At this point I'm not sure it will happen," Juarez said from her home in the Bay Area. "Everyone has been very nice to me, but I felt I spent a week and got nowhere. It wasn't that people didn't seem as if they wanted to help me, but they didn't have solutions."

Lauren Thomaselli is in charge of the memorial tree for the city. She has people fill out a short form, directs them to a shop to get the plaque made and the city for free then

installs the plaque.

In a memo to Kerry, Thomaselli wrote, "We have found that the new owner of Awards of Tahoe is not very easy to get a hold of and does not follow through in a timely manner – but this is more a problem for the family requesting the plaque."

No one from Awards of Tahoe returned *LTN's* call.

That is where the breakdown is for Juarez. While she was up here last week she couldn't get the plaque made. The city doesn't provide another alternative to the one they know is not working. All the plaques on the tree are the same size, same font, same point size, but what those are are not conveyed to people wanting a plaque.

Juarez said she was told to take a picture of one and get a plaque made in the Bay Area. She doesn't have a smart phone to be able to do so.

Just reaching the right person in the city was time consuming, she said. Nothing at the memorial site says who to call. For now, Juarez is at a loss as to how to proceed.

Opinion: EDC's pension house of cards

By Larry Weitzman

It was just reported that El Dorado County's unfunded pension liability will exceed \$300,000,000 by the close of the fiscal year of June 30, 2016.

This number was extrapolated from the recently released

numbers for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, by CalPERS, which stated that EDC's unfunded liability totaled \$282,029,540 and that was a growth in unfunded liabilities of \$51,837,982 from the previous fiscal year. With the poor rate of return for the CalPERS pension system, unfunded liabilities will continue to grow at an alarming rate, and when the numbers come in for June 30, 2016, it will likely exceed \$330,000,000. And it will get worse.



Larry Weitzman

CalPERS pension system is based on an annual rate of return of 7.5 percent. They claim that their 20-year average is 7 percent. But the U.S. never had a national debt of \$20 trillion and a national debt growth rate that has doubled the debt in the last eight years. It went from \$10 trillion to \$20 trillion during that eight-year period. Because of this huge debt, interest rates have been kept at near zero by the Federal Reserve, so the cost of the debt is kept artificially low and the Fed will continue to do so. A 1 percent rise in the interest rate costs the U.S. government \$200 billion annually. With this growing debt and with governments around the world like Japan also with huge national debts, interest rates will continue to remain at near zero levels for the foreseeable future. And therein lies a huge problem for CalPERS.

During the stock market rise from about 2009 to 2014 CalPERS did well, but since then it has really suffered with a 2.4 percent rate of return for fiscal year ending 2015 and a more miserable 0.61 percent for the fiscal year ending 2016. There

is also talk of lowering the annual average estimate of rate of return to 6.5 percent. The main reason the stock market has been bid up to a Dow Jones Industrial Average of about 18,000 is because most investors switched from interest bearing securities to stocks (equities) creating more demand for equities. Now stocks have rates of returns not much higher than interest rates. Many "experts" think a correction is coming. CalPERS rate of return for the last two years looks to be the future.

With interest rates remaining low, CalPERS cost to the taxpayers is going to rise. At a 7.5 percent rate of return, it is projected by CalPERS that the annual cost of pensions for EDC will increase by about \$16 million over six years, but more frightening is that these increased projected pension costs will total more than \$63 million in total additional benefit payments from the county for the next six years. That is more than the cost of the new sheriff's facility. But what if the low rate of return continues? We know interest rates are unlikely to significantly rise in the next few years, what then? Will the rate of return stay below 2 percent and if it does, will contributions rise considerably, perhaps more than double? That \$63 million number could easily exceed \$100 million. And that's with salaries remaining flat for six years.

EDC's contribution rate is already 19 percent for miscellaneous employees and 36 percent for public safety employees. Expect those rates to rise significantly and unfunded liabilities to rise in even greater numbers. New EDC revenues for the six years might not even cover this projected \$63 million in pension costs increases.

It has been estimated that for EDC to leave the CalPERS system it would cost a cash buyout of \$1 billion to currently guarantee all the current pensions and future pensions for current employees. That is a non-starter.

CalPERS likes to put out plenty of spin, like public pensions benefits are not excessive. They are when you consider that we have over 30 retirees receiving pensions in excess of \$90,000 and dozens at over \$100,000 annually. Employee contributions are about equal to Social Security at 6.25 percent. Public safety employees contribute about 9 percent. If they were in the Social Security System which requires a similar employee contribution of 6.2 percent, their benefits would be about a quarter of what they currently receive. Social Security currently maxes out at about \$2,639 a month or about \$32,000 a year and from that there is in most cases a Medicare deduction of a \$1,200 to \$3,000 annually. And that is at age 66. At age 62 that number drops to about \$2,000 a month. There are some retirees in the county that are receiving pensions of over \$200,000 starting at an age of 52, not 66.

Another spin of CalPERS is that police and firefighters don't retire at age 50 at 90 percent of pay. While that may not be exactly true many have 30 years in at age 55 and the majority of EDC retired employees receiving over \$100,000 a year are retired deputy sheriffs and sheriffs. Employees of EDC other than public safety in 30 years can retire at 60 percent, public safety at 30 years receive 90 percent of their highest pay. After 30 years, it doesn't pay to continue working in public safety as working earns no more money than a 30-year retiree after his 9 percent pension contribution deduction.

EDC has a serious problem in funding its pension obligation. And I haven't even discussed EDC's retiree health plan which has a \$75.6 million obligation of which \$62.7 million is unfunded. That means EDC's unfunded benefit obligations will total near or more than \$400 million as of June 30, 2016, which was four months ago. It has grown since and will continue to metastasize at an alarming rate. This is a stage four emergency.

One more nuclear bomb while I am at it. If CalPERS goes broke or runs out of money to pay these exorbitant pensions, guess

who by law picks up the tab. That's right, the taxpayers.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Measurable snow expected in basin on Sunday

Put the rake away because it's time to get out the shovel.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter weather advisory for Sunday from 5am-11pm for areas above 6,500 feet. Expect it to be raining or snowing the better part of Oct. 30.

Snow above 7,000 feet could reach 18 inches, with up to 6 inches down to 6,500 feet, and 2 inches at lake level.

Temps for the next few days will top out in the high 40s, with overnight lows near freezing.

There is a 20 percent chance of showers Halloween night.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report