

Marriott now the world's largest hotel chain

By Scott Mayerowitz, AP

Several of the best-known names in travel are now united in one hotel company.

Marriott International closed Friday morning on its \$13 billion acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, bringing together its Marriott, Courtyard and Ritz Carlton brands with Starwood's Sheraton, Westin, W and St. Regis properties.

In total, 30 hotel brands now fall under the Marriott umbrella to create the largest hotel chain in the world with more than 5,700 properties and 1.1 million rooms in more than 110 countries. That's more than 1 out of every 15 hotel rooms around the globe.

Marriott now eclipses Hilton Worldwide's 773,000 rooms and the 766,000 that are part of the Intercontinental Hotels Group family, according to STR, a firm that tracks hotel data.

"We've got an ability to offer just that much more choice. A choice in locations, a choice in the kind of hotel, a choice in the amount a customer needs to spend," Marriott CEO Arne Sorenson told the Associated Press in an interview Thursday.

Starwood's guest loyalty program – Starwood Preferred Guest – was also a "central, strategic rationale for the transaction," Sorenson said. The program's members are deeply loyal to it, have generally higher incomes and tend to spend many nights on the road.

Starting Friday, members of Starwood and Marriott's two loyalty programs will be able to link their accounts together.

Gold elite members in one program will get gold status in the other. Platinum elite members will get platinum in the other. Marriott silver members will see Starwood's lowest category, Preferred Plus.

Each Starwood point will be worth three Marriott Rewards points.

Starwood put itself up for sale in April 2015. The Stamford, Conn., company had struggled to grow as fast as its rivals, particularly in "limited service hotels," which are smaller properties which don't have restaurants or banquet halls. They are often located on the side of the highway, near airports or in suburban office parks.

To get Starwood, Marriott had to outbid China's Anbang Insurance Group. U.S. and European anti-trust regulators were quick to approve the sale but the Chinese government hesitated, delaying the sale by months.

"We may have been a little too optimistic about how fast we could get this thing closed," Sorenson said Thursday.

Marriott and Starwood – like other hotel chains – own very few individual hotels. Instead they manage or franchise their brands to hundreds of individual owners, often real estate development companies. Those individual hotel owners are responsible for setting nightly room rates. It isn't uncommon for a developer to own a Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt and Sheraton in the same city.

The purchase gives Marriott more leverage with corporate travel departments who often look for one giant chain to house all of their employees. It also gives Marriott more power over Expedia and Priceline, the two giant online travel agencies that sell rooms on behalf of hotel companies in exchange for a commission. The hotel industry has spent the last year trying to get travelers to book directly with them instead of the travel agencies to avoid paying those fees.

There are still many details to work out.

Marriott has thrived as an “asset light” company, owning a handful of hotels. Starwood has been selling off properties, while signing long-term management agreements for those same hotels. As of June 30, it still owned 23 properties. Sorenson said he believes there is a strong market to continue selling off many of those iconic hotels.

“There is always a market for the St. Regis in New York,” he said, adding that other assets in the portfolio have comparable stature. “In great global cities, real estate like that always has a value.”

The new company will keep Marriott’s Bethesda, Md., headquarters but hasn’t announced if it will keep any presence at Starwood’s Connecticut or New York offices.

Then there are the 30 brands. Some have performed better than others but Sorenson said all of them will probably survive the merger.

“I think so. Every one of them has hotels in them,” he noted.

For now, Starwood and Marriott will keep separate loyalty programs. Starwood has a credit card deal with American Express as well as close partnerships with Delta Air Lines and Uber. Marriott has a much larger program with partnerships with Chase and United Airlines.

“Nothing changes immediately. We have to see how those partnerships evolve,” Sorenson said.

Gary Leff, who writes about points and miles at ViewFromTheWing.com, called the three-to-one exchange rate of Starwood points to Marriott points “just right.”

“It’s one of the many reasonable and positive steps that Marriott has taken along the way as it acquires Starwood,” Leff said. “But there’s a whole lot still to happen between

now and the programs actually being combined.”

Author, anthropologist to give talk at LTCC

Lake Tahoe Community College is hosting a talk with author and anthropologist Enrique Martinez Curiel on Sept. 26.

Curiel is the author of “Los que se van y los que se quedan”, or “Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay”. The book is based on a study Curiel conducted that analyzed the formal education of and transition to adulthood in the youths of families who remained living in Ameca, Jalisco, compared to those who instead migrated into communities throughout California.

This is a free presentation that will be delivered in Spanish.

It starts at 6:30pm in the Aspen Room.

SLT council candidate in serious crash

Updated 7:10pm:

South Lake Tahoe City Council candidate Jason Collin was in a serious accident on Kingsbury Grade this afternoon.

The RV Collin and his wife, Natalie, were traveling in with five others collided head-on with a Nissan Pathfinder.

The female driver of the SUV died at the scene. She was from Wellington.

“It looks like the Nissan crossed over into the other travel lane and struck the motorhome head-on,” Dan Lopez, Nevada Highway Patrol trooper, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “At this time we can’t say if alcohol or drugs were a contributing factor, but we will be investigating that.”

The Collins were headed down Kingsbury Grade toward the Carson Valley just after 1pm Sept. 23. Their children were not in the vehicle, according to a family friend.



The wreckage from the accident that killed one person and injured five. Photo/NHP

Jason Collin was airlifted to Renown Medical Center in Reno with non-life threatening injuries. Reports are that one of his legs sustained the most serious injury. Natalie Collin was taken to Barton Memorial Hospital where she was treated for a broken finger. She has been released.

Three people were transported by air ambulance, two by ground

ambulance to area hospitals, according to Douglas County sheriff's deputies. People had to be extricated, according to officials. Names of the others involved in the crash have not been released.

Lopez said one of the injured – not Collin – is in serious condition, but does not have life-threatening injuries.

Kingsbury Grade was closed in both directions. It was expected open about 7:30pm Friday. The accident was 1½ miles from the top of the summit.

Witnesses are asked to contact NHP at 775.687.0400.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Caltrans going after illegal tree cutters

Caltrans is warning people it is illegal cut or remove trees and shrubs along state highways.

The agency will take legal action against individuals and businesses that cut trees and/or bushes within the state's right-of-way without the necessary permits.

Violators face a \$10,000 penalty for each tree and \$1,000 for every shrub damaged on state property. State law allows for damage awards to be doubled or tripled.

Letter: Heavenly stellar at Bread & Broth

To the community,

The lift maintenance crew from Heavenly Mountain Resort sent six outstanding volunteers to crew at Bread & Broth on Aug. 29.

Led by lift maintenance manager Kevin Higgins, Ryan Albertson, Jen Menzel, Jeff Reid, Kelli Renzi and Vinny Valdez arrived at Grace Hall at 3pm and spent the next 3½ hours helping the Bread & Broth volunteers with the Monday evening dinner.

This energetic crew assembled food giveaway bags, setup and served at the dessert and drink table, ladled out a Moroccan chicken themed dinner and stayed until 6:30pm helping with the dining hall and kitchen area cleanup. Outdoing themselves, Higgins was in charge of the dishwashing and Valdez did everything from serving, drying dishes and taking out the trash. This was a five star crew.

"This was truly an eye-opening experience seeing the need for food in our community. Very eye-opening," commented Reid. "Glad I had this experience."

B&B truly appreciates the help and spirit of giving that Heavenly Mountain Resort and this great group of sponsor volunteers demonstrated in their efforts to help those in need.

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

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Federal education law could be chaotic for Nev.

By Neal Morton, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction Steve Canavero warned members of a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee Wednesday that proposed rules to implement a new federal education law could create chaos and confusion as Nevada schools try to help at-risk students.

Canavero, whose department oversees about 460,000 students, also testified during a nearly two-hour congressional hearing that a new accounting method in the draft regulations threatens a recently approved plan to drive more control over budget, instruction and staffing decisions to individual school communities.

The hearing centered on the U.S. Department of Education's proposed rules for the Every Student Succeeds Act, which President Obama signed into law in December.

[Read the whole story](#)

Bear trap set near Kahle playground



A bear trap at Kahle Community Center is causing controversy. Photo/Toogee Sielsch

A bear trap has been placed at Kahle Community Center by the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

An employee at the Stateline recreation facility said a bear has been wandering through the playground area close to young children. The trap was placed on Sept. 21.

Chris Healy with NDOW said the bear has been getting into dumpsters at the restaurants below the park.

“Bear will be tagged and given onsite aversive conditioning in hopes of altering the behavior,” Healy told *Lake Tahoe News*. “People who interfere with this process are actually creating worse/more dangerous bears by stopping us from doing aversive conditioning, which we’ve proven works with our own research. Knowing that this bear was in the area and coming through the park during daylight hours, we wanted to set the trap in order to catch the bear and give it the same aversive conditioning.”

Not everyone using the recreation facility has been happy there is a trap, and have voiced their concerns to Kahle staff.

“The Bear League sees the placing of a baited bear trap in the

middle of Kahle Park on Lower Kingsbury Grade as irresponsible. It also goes against one of the stated goals of the Nevada Department of Wildlife's bear management program to mitigate human/bear interactions," Toogee Sielsch, Bear League board member, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "This baited trap sits within 10 feet of the family picnic cabana, 20 feet from the outside bathroom facility, and 30 feet from the small children's playground."

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- TAMBA has installed 12 signs at Bijou Bike Park that were printed and donated by Heavenly Mountain Resort. Maintenance Mondays are every Monday at 5:30pm until dark to pack jumps, keep the return lines clear and contour the pump track.
- Passport to Dining, benefiting the nonprofit North Tahoe Business Association, is Nov. 10, 6-9pm at North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach. The event features up to 35 tasting stations including restaurants, caterers, breweries, wineries and distilleries as well as a raffle and a silent auction. NTBA will donate a portion of the net proceeds to the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe. Advance tickets are \$90/couple and \$50/person. To purchase advance tickets with cash or check, call 530.546.9000. Day of event tickets are \$110/couple and \$60/person while quantities last.
- TravelNevada was named best public relations campaign by the U.S. Travel Association for its Don't Fence Me In

millennial marketing effort.

- A forum and discussion featuring candidates from the Tahoe City Public Utility District, North Tahoe Public Utility District, Truckee Tahoe Airport District, and the Tahoe Forest Hospital District will be Oct. 4 at 6pm at the Tahoe City Public Utility District, 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City.

- The final Tahoe Games Bike Night of the season is Sept. 30 at Lake Tahoe Golf Course in Meyers. Registration opens at 6pm, races are at 8pm.

Cocktail contest brings awareness to cancer

By Kathryn Reed

If only it were as easy to concoct a cure for cancer, as it is to mix a cocktail to raise funds for the expansion of Barton Health's **cancer wellness program**.

The cancer program is free for people living in the South Shore area; funding comes from donations. The goal is to expand services to include things like massage, exercise, psychotherapy, and nutrition classes. The idea is to recognize the various needs a patient has during his or her cancer journey.

Cocktails for a Cause is Barton Foundation's annual fundraiser; each year – this being the seventh – there is a different beneficiary.

Bartenders from seven South Shore establishments on Sept. 21

came up with a libation featuring Tahoe Blue Vodka. A different spin this year was tying the drink to cancer. Many of the bartenders have a personal connection to the cancer they chose to represent.

A panel of five judges did a blind tasting. They were critiquing originality, use of Tahoe Blue Vodka, taste, presentation and how well the bartender tied it to their cause. Judges were this reporter, Meghan Burke, Mike Peron, Howie Nave and Troy Matthews.



LewMarNels is the 2016 winner of Barton's Cocktail for a Cause contest. Photo/Molly Coolidge

Taking top honors was LewMarNels with Krista's Cure. The South Lake Tahoe restaurant embraced brain cancer in honor of local Krista Carson who is battling the disease. Bartenders for the night were Gary Gramprrie and James Olson.

The drink was not the most attractive, but that's what happens when it is grey to go with the theme. For judges Peron and

Nave this drink topped their list. The banana in the drink made it like a smoothie with vodka, they said.

The blue ribbon made out of a cucumber as garnish on the English cucumber cocktail from Azul Latin Kitchen made it stand out with the theme and presentation. Bartender Hannah Fridholm came in second with her creation that was representing colon cancer awareness.

Third place honors went to Whitney Gielow from the Chart House who came up with a drink honoring melanoma. Some judges thought it tasted a bit like mulled wine. It was one of the least sweet drinks, almost with a dry finish.

The winning cocktail will be featured at the Barton Foundation's gala in December, which is now tied to the Festival of Trees and Lights.

The most congenial bartender of the night award went to Jacob Craig from Cold Water Brewery. This honor was based on his \$313 in tips – the most of all the bartenders. Brewmaster Ryan Parker was at the event. Their cause was esophageal cancer in honor of Parker's wife, Rose, who was diagnosed with this cancer six weeks ago.

Other bars participating were Heavenly, Riva and Boathouse.

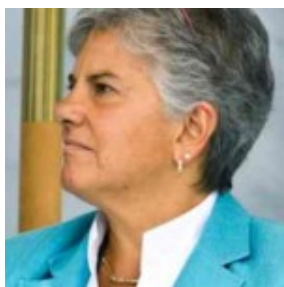
Opinion: Time to build on Tahoe's momentum

By Joanne Marchetta

At the Lake Tahoe Summit last month, we saw the power of what we can accomplish when we work together. Progress over the

last two decades was showcased when President Obama made his first visit to Tahoe and said conservation and restoration efforts like ours are more important than ever as the nation works to adapt to a changing climate and create a more resilient environment.

“When we protect our lands, it helps us protect the climate for the future. So conservation is not just critical for one particular spot, one particular park, one particular lake, it’s critical for our entire ecosystem,” Obama said. “Our healing of Lake Tahoe proves it’s within our power to pass on the incredible bounty of this country to a next generation.”



Joanne
Marchetta

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2000 and the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act are two pieces of federal legislation that have made monumental contributions to Lake Tahoe’s restoration. Together, they helped launch a model for regional collaboration and environmental restoration on the scale needed for Tahoe’s 500-square-mile watershed.

Congress passed the restoration act shortly after former President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore attended the inaugural summit in 1997. Held over multiple days, the summit included dozens of community members, researchers, and local, state, and federal partners focused on the environmental problems then facing Lake Tahoe and how to correct them.

These two pieces of legislation authorized and appropriated several hundred million dollars in federal funding to

jumpstart the Environmental Improvement Program. The unprecedented initiative united all levels of government, nonprofit groups, and the private sector in a shared mission to restore Lake Tahoe's environment and enhance the public recreation opportunities that drive our economy and help millions of people enjoy this special place each year.

Federal funding was matched by state and local agencies and the private sector. Over the last two decades, hundreds of EIP partners have invested \$2 billion into nearly 500 conservation and restoration projects, with another 120 projects ongoing.

These lake-saving EIP projects have been completed all around the Tahoe Basin and were prioritized to have the greatest benefits for our lake, forests, air quality, wildlife, and communities. Projects have restored stream channels, marshes, and wildlife habitat; built parks and new bike and pedestrian routes; protected Tahoe from aquatic invasive species; upgraded hundreds of miles of roads to stop stormwater pollution from washing into the lake; opened shoreline for public access; and cleared hazardous fuels from tens of thousands of acres of forests to improve their health and reduce wildfire risk.

This work was possible only through partnership and collaboration on a level never before seen at Lake Tahoe, and because of it, our environment is healthier than it was two decades ago.

This year's summit again put a bright national spotlight on the work we have done to restore and conserve the jewel of the Sierra. But it also raised awareness about the challenges we continue to face at Tahoe, all of the work that is not done, and how our mission will become more difficult because of a changing climate that threatens to affect everything from the lake's world-famous water clarity to the health of our forests and ecosystems and winter recreation on our mountains.

We must continue the progress we have achieved through the EIP, completing projects that conserve and restore the environment, improve our community, and revitalize our economy, recognizing that the health of each is intertwined. Federal support is critical in this endeavor. And our region received some highly-encouraging news just two weeks after Obama's visit when the Senate passed its version of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2015.

Introduced by Sens. Dean Heller, R-Nev., Harry Reid, D-Nev., Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., the bill would reauthorize the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act and up to \$415 million in federal funding over 10 years for high-priority projects that create healthier forests and reduce wildfire risk, clean up stormwater pollution, restore the lake's water clarity, and fight the spread of aquatic invasive species.

The Senate passed its bipartisan legislation as part of the Water Resources Development Act of 2016, a two-year, \$10 billion national water infrastructure bill. Legislation to reauthorize the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act has been introduced in Congress multiple times over the last decade, but each prior bill stalled in committee. This marks the first time legislation to reauthorize the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act has cleared a chamber of Congress, showing the strong bipartisan support we see for restoring one of our greatest national treasures.

The House of Representatives is anticipated to consider its version of the Water Resources Development Act this fall. We are optimistic versions of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act introduced by Representatives Tom McClintock, R-Calif., Mark Amodei, R-Nev., and John Garamendi, D-Calif., can be included and passed as part of that legislation.

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act and Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act have driven some of Tahoe's biggest

achievements over the last two decades and helped make the Tahoe region a healthier place and a national model for collaboration and partnership. The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act of 2015 is critical to continuing progress and addressing the challenges that lie ahead. The Senate's passage of this legislation is an important milestone and we look forward to continued support in the House to keep our momentum at Tahoe growing.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.