

# The importance of free play for kids

By Katie Arnold, Outside

The other morning after breakfast, my 5-year-old daughter whined, “I’m bored!” Few words have the power to rankle parents more than these two (except maybe “When are we gonna be there?”). It was Saturday and the whole day stretched luxuriously before us. We didn’t have to hustle off to school or pack lunches or fly off in four different directions. We could simply hang around and do nothing.

Therein lay the problem.

I told my daughter what my mother had told me when I was a girl: that being bored meant I just hadn’t thought of something clever to do. Boredom reflected poorly on me, not my circumstances. Then I shooed her and her 7-year-old sister out to the arroyo to play.

The arroyo is a dry, sandy wash that runs a few hundred feet below our house. We’ve found piles of rusty tin cans there, traces of a makeshift homeless camp (long abandoned), and other random cast-offs. Mostly, though, it’s wild little corridor between steep hillsides, lined with piñon and juniper trees and bound by sandy cliffs that are perfect for scooting down on your bottom—a narrow slice of nature a few blocks from downtown Santa Fe.

Child development experts call these kinds of spontaneous, child-directed activities “free play.” A generation ago, when kids were far more likely to wander out the door and goof off in the yard or ride bikes with their friends, this didn’t need special terminology. It was just called play. A seminal 1997

study from the University of Michigan determined that the amount of spare time kids in the U.S. had to play dropped by 25 percent since 1981, and Boston University psychologist Peter Gray has found that it has been declining ever since. In a 2007 report, the American Academy of Pediatrics found that “much of parent-child time is spent arranging special activities or transporting children between those activities... Many parents seem to feel as though they are running on a treadmill to keep up yet dare not slow their pace for fear their children will fall behind.”

**Read the whole story**

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## **Letter: Appreciative of community's support**

**To the community,**

Bread & Broth's Friday night Second Serving celebrated its seven-year anniversary on May 13. Second Serving serves weekly free-of-charge meals to the community at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church. Second Serving is an expansion of Bread & Broth's Monday evening food service at Grace Hall of Saint Theresa's Catholic Church in South Lake Tahoe.

Bread & Broth is a nonprofit, all-volunteer program feeding the hungry in our community for over 25 years; proving a hot meal for those in need, as well as a goodwill gathering place for its volunteers. Second Serving would like to extend a thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers, past and present, for donating their time.

We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to the

following donors for their soup that continued our success these past seven years: Erik and Melodie (Freshies), Rosie Cowen and Glenn Simpson (Blue Angel Café), Sheldon and Dan (Tep's Villa Roma), Scott Craig (Riva Grill), Tim Halloran and Mark Vassau (Nepheles), Nick Ashmore (Cafe Fiore), Steffen Moise (Ridge Tahoe) and Tim Tretton (MontBleu). When you are choosing a place to dine in Lake Tahoe, we hope you will remember these restaurants for their generous donations to help feed our less fortunate and keeping South Lake Tahoe a unified community.

**Diane Weidinger, Bread & Broth**

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## **Nev. program tests drones to sniff out radiation**

**By Ken Ritter, AP**

If there's ever a radiological catastrophe in the U.S. like the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan, the stewards of the former national nuclear weapons proving ground in Nevada expect to be ready to deploy remote-controlled drones to check for contamination.

Nevada National Security Site officials have purchased two unmanned aerial vehicles to sniff the sky and provide an eye from above in the event of an emergency.

The idea, said Jim Holt, president of site contractor National Security Technologies, is to use pilotless aircraft "in situations where manned aircraft may not be used safely."

The airplanes will be tested in coming months over a secure

federal reservation north of Las Vegas with a goal of being ready to be sent elsewhere if needed.

"We're evolving," said Karen McCall, drone program manager for National Security Technologies, the company that manages the area for the U.S. Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration. At 1,360 square miles, it's almost the size of Long Island.

Formerly known as the Nevada Test Site, the area is now used for security and emergency response training, national security and defense experiments, and nuclear weapons stockpile maintenance.

Seven people – including remote-controllers, engineers and mechanics – are training to have the unmanned aerial systems program up and flying this fall, McCall said.

The team already uses a Bell 412 helicopter and a Beechcraft King Air twin-engine airplane based at Nellis Air Force Base for aerial radiological monitoring.

Team members left the aircraft in Nevada but took monitoring equipment to Japan for helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft surveys near the burning Fukushima Daiichi reactors after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The two Sandstorm drones are expected to upgrade gamma ray remote sensing, photos, environmental monitoring and site security.

The drones were acquired from Unmanned Systems Inc., a company based in nearby Henderson, under a one-year, \$240,000 contract that includes training, service, and maintenance.

The turbine-driven propeller aircraft has an 8-foot fuselage, a 15-foot wingspan and weighs 44 pounds. It can carry another 20 pounds of sensors and cameras, company executive Bill Reynolds said.

The company does its testing at a facility in Kalispell, Montana. Reynolds noted that the Sandstorm was certified by the Federal Aviation Administration in 2010.

In recent years, drone programs have developed to spray crops, inspect power lines, collect seismic data and provide an eye in the sky to news crews and police.

Officials noted that Nevada was picked in December 2013 as one of six states for FAA-authorized testing of what officials officially call unmanned aerial systems. Alaska, New York, North Dakota, Texas and Virginia were others. The program in the Silver State is anchored by the Nevada Institute for Automatous Systems.

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## **Chemical may be tool for depression therapy**

A chemical discovered in a UC Davis lab may be a new, innovative tool to control depression. Studies involve an enzyme (soluble epoxide hydrolase or sEH) which is found in many species from bugs to humans.

Karen Wagner, a researcher in the UC Davis Department of Entomology and Nematology, will be talking June 30 at Sierra Nevada College about this enzyme and how it might be a tool for depression therapy.

Research in animal models of depression suggests that sEH plays a key role in modulating inflammation, which is involved in depression. Years of research and discovery around this enzyme led from investigating insect biology to translating the basic science into a potential therapy for man.

**Registration** for this event is required. The program will begin at 6pm, with refreshments and no-host bar from 5:30-6pm at 291 Country Club Drive in Incline Village.

Seating is open at 5:30pm to guests who have preregistered, open seating starts at 5:50pm. Cost is \$5.

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# The solar battle on Nevada rooftops

**By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal**

On May 20, 2015, an exasperated Nevada Legislature washed its hands of the net metering debate, punting its resolution to the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada.

Exactly one year later, the issue surrounding rates for rooftop solar is poised to come full circle as a state task force mulls sending it back to state lawmakers.

A May 26 meeting by the Governor's New Energy Industry Task Force to determine whether existing rooftop solar customers should be grandfathered under older, more favorable rates is the latest in an ongoing drama that has garnered Nevada plenty of national attention – mostly of the negative kind.

The situation is a far cry from the heady days of the Nevada solar experiment. State lawmakers passed several policies through the years to support the budding renewables industry, including its first legislation for net metering back in 1997.

**Read the whole story**

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# Cave Rock tunnel off-limits to some vehicles

Nevada Department of Transportation officials are warning some motorists that their vehicle may not make it through **Cave Rock** tunnel during construction.

Work started earlier this month to secure the rock so it doesn't keep falling on the highway. The tunnel is be lengthened and other work done to solve the problem.

Traffic is being routed through the eastern tunnel. Vehicles wider than 8-feet, 6-inches and taller than 14-feet, 6 inches will not fit. Vehicles larger than this will have to find a route other than Highway 50.

The project is expected to be finished in the fall.

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# Letter: Meyers development needs more scrutiny

**Publisher's note: *This letter was sent to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and is reprinted with permission.***

I am writing to oppose the hearing and potential approval of the subject proposed project as the impacts analysis are inadequate and improper notice of the project to neighboring uses. Unfortunately, I cannot make the meeting on May 25 as I am working in Sacramento with a full schedule of meetings that

day.

My family lives at 2648 Wailaki St., in the neighborhood below the proposed facility known as Tahoe Par 60. Our neighborhood falls just outside the Meyers Area Plan of January 2014. The proposed project is only about 2,500 feet away and is approximately 200 feet higher in elevation from the residential uses in Tahoe Par 60, which is outside the Meyers Area Plan.

This recreational group facility project was previously approved in 1995 by TRPA Governing Board. After 20 years of languishing, residents of the immediate area received no public notice this was being reconsidered. It is inconsistent with California public agency transparency laws to run this application through without notifying impacted residents. Constructive notice by publishing of an agenda in a newspaper without providing actual notice to impacted residents does not meet the intent of the law.

In looking at the recommended action, I find the TRPA Initial Environmental Checklist (IEC) that was completed to be inadequate. Staff prepared a finding of no significant effect. The scale and intensity of the use are determined to be appropriate for the surrounding area without creating conflicts with adjacent land uses. This appears to mean immediately adjacent. However, the neighboring owners outside the Meyers Area Plan must use the same ingress/egress and are not considered when analyzing impacts. No consideration was given to the noise impacts from this proposed project or its proximity and/or elevation to the residences of our community. Noises include, but not limited to, daily noise from playing hockey, such as fans cheering, coaches yelling out instructions, slapping sticks and bouncing pucks, as well as proposed tennis court noises of similar traits will affect the peace and quiet enjoyed by nearby neighborhoods.

The findings mentioned the project will generate 116 daily

vehicle trip ends which they considered a minor increase in traffic by the Code of Ordinances. The new vehicle trips will be mitigated by payment of an air quality mitigation fee. No traffic mitigation has been indicated. This is totally inadequate given it is already too difficult to exit the area via South Upper Truckee Road during peak traffic to get to our daily tasks of school, shopping and jobs. The 2010 peak traffic count for the area is over 15,000 daily trips in the immediate vicinity. The Level of Service (LOS) is already at E for many hours during peak traffic on weekends and holidays. This would add more back-ups, congestion and pollution to our quiet lifestyle chosen for this area. When combined with the proposed traffic roundabout that intends to slow traffic in Meyers on USD 50, this would be a complete traffic nightmare for residents on or near South Upper Truckee Road. The pavement condition will only worsen beyond its current Pavement Condition Index (PCI) of approximately 45 percent with additional traffic, especially if heavy vehicles are included as proposed.

I propose the TRPA table the agenda item until further study and notice of proceedings be made to the affected residents and proper hearing of impacts to those living outside the Meyers Area Plan and proposed mitigations be inclusive of those residents.

The TRPA put this on their consent calendar with barely a word about it. It could have easily slipped through the process. This calls to question the transparency and representation of Lake Tahoe residents by TRPA in other matters in our region.

**Jeffrey Spencer, Meyers**

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# Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Chico

Chico is an 8-year-old rat terrier who likes other dogs. He is friendly and active. For little dogs, 8 years old is not even middle age.

Rat terriers are great little dogs with lots of personality – they are smart and very trainable, and loyal to their families. They do best when they get lots of attention, as they thrive on contact with people. Chico is a nice little boy who was transferred from the Placerville shelter to find a new home in Tahoe.

Chico is neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet. For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

# Year-round hockey academy moving to Meyers

By Kathryn Reed

Meyers is about to be home to the Tahoe Hockey Academy.

The year-round facility for boys and girls in middle or high school is expected to break ground this summer. The building permits from El Dorado County are in hand. The project is on the consent agenda of the May 25 Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board meeting.

“We are looking at initiation on the upper dorm as early as June and the first academic year starting in August,” Mike Dill of Aspen Environmental Services told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Dill works for Tahoe Hockey Academy, the group that is looking to move onto the property to create a year-round sports school.

The existing residence would become a dorm, with another 7,000 square feet added to it. A second two-story building will be 13,193 square feet, which will be part dorm, dining hall, kitchen and exercise room. In all, about 90 youths would live there, along with eight residence assistants.

A tennis court, which has been previously approved and graded, but not built, would be converted into a mini ice rink in the winter for 3-on-3 practices. The ice rink in South Lake Tahoe is where they would have full team practices, as well as games.

"The academy will follow the school year – August to May. Then the facility will operate summer camps for groups of 20 to 25 kids," Dill said. "Basically it's a prep school and prep academy to get them academically ready for college and physically ready to play Division 1 hockey."

The 3,800-square-foot residence was erected years ago. This is a legally existing, non-conforming use. Converting the use to a recreation facility will bring it into compliance.

Some Meyers residents are starting to question why this project seems to be getting approved without the usual scrutiny.

"The previous approvals are part of the parcel's history. It doesn't mean we don't do the same level of review," Paul Nielsen, planner with TRPA, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It's on the consent calendar because until recently there was no known concerns about the project."

When the notice about the project went out to neighbors this month letters started coming in to TRPA. Noise and water supply are two of the main concerns so far.

In 2006, the 16.4-acre parcel known as Echo Creek was permitted to be a recreation group facility for about 200 people. The infrastructure was put in, the lower loop road built, grading for the tennis court is done, with the basketball court already in place. In fact, 80 percent of the grading for the academy is complete, which includes tree removal.

The problem is the owners at the time – Alex Graf and Paul Gardner – could not find a user. Both men have since died and their trusts are left dealing with the parcel at the bottom of Old Meyers Grade.

In 2012, Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care seriously considered relocating there, but a deal could not be reached.

Tahoe Hockey Academy, which is run by a group of investors, is leasing the property, with an option to buy.

Noise, traffic and vehicle miles traveled have been studied.

"We will have full size buses to shuttle kids to tournaments; passenger vans to get to the rink (in South Lake Tahoe)," Dill said.

There will be 44 parking spaces for general use, and nine for employees. The thinking is because of the age of students most will not have a vehicle at the academy.

Dill does not anticipate the academy having any impact on those who walk-run Old Meyers Grade, especially because the academy will not use the street for parking. The gate will stay where it is.

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## **Letter: Vote for Brooks for judge**

**To the community,**

It is with the greatest regret that I must inform the public what the current contested judicial election between Judge Nelson Brooks and Roland Tiemann is really all about. Obviously, there are two people who desire to be judge and the voters must choose. But behind all that is a power struggle for control of the administration of the court.

Judge Steve Bailey desires to be presiding judge of the court. That requires a positive vote by a majority of the current judges. He cannot achieve that now because a majority of the judges, including Judge Brooks, do not support him. So he is

willing to challenge a respected colleague in order to achieve his objective. If Tiemann wins, Bailey will have one more vote for presiding judge.

This is a sorry state of affairs. It has created a serious, negative rift at the court. Do we want our judges to thus engage their ego pursuits and subject the public to the expense and ordeal of a contested election? Is this the kind of conduct we expect of our judges?

I hope not.

Please reject this challenge as the shabby and inappropriate behavior that it is. Stop the power grab. Vote for Judge Brooks.

**Judge Eddie T. Keller (Ret.), Shingle Springs**