Truckee turning into food, wine walk

Wine lovers, food connoisseurs and dedicated shoppers can once again indulge themselves at the annual Downtown Truckee Wine, Walk & Shop.

It includes wine matched with food samples as people shop and stroll in historic Truckee.

The event is Oct. 4 from noon-4pm.

Tickets are $35 in advance, $40 that day.

For more info, email truckeewinewalk@gmail.com.

Editorial: Keep politics out of the pulpit

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Aug. 7, 2014, Los Angeles Times.***

Under federal law, it is illegal for churches and other so-called 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations to "participate in, or intervene in … any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office." But in recent years the Internal Revenue Service has failed to aggressively enforce the law, despite open defiance by religious groups that believe — erroneously — that they have a 1st Amendment right to endorse candidates without losing their tax-exempt status.

That soon may change. The Freedom From Religion Foundation, which had sued the IRS seeking to require it to enforce the law, says it has reached an agreement with the IRS under which the agency has adopted procedures for "reviewing, evaluating and determining whether to initiate church investigations."

IRS investigation of political activity by nonprofits has been complicated by allegations that the agency improperly targeted tea party and other conservative groups that sought tax exemptions; those allegations are the subject of a congressional probe. But that is no reason for the agency to stall on scrutinizing politicking by churches.

Read the whole story

Opinion: The case against chlorinated water

By Josh Harkinson, Mother Jones

The chlorination of municipal tap water is considered one of the 20th century's best public health ideas. The American Water Works Association credits the practice with increasing life expectancy by 50 percent over the past century by virtually eliminating water-borne diseases such as typhoid fever and cholera.

But chlorine in drinking water can cause health risks of its own. And while some of the of those risks, such as reactions with organic compounds that can yield toxic byproducts, are relatively well understood and managed, at least one has been largely overlooked: The effect of chlorinated drinking water on the beneficial bacteria in our guts.

We simply don’t know enough about the microbial ecosystem in the human gut to identify every type of bacteria that’s important, much less how well those bacteria survive when we guzzle mildly chlorinated tap water.

The notion that our bodies’ 100 trillion bacteria act as a crucial internal ecosystem, a sort of sixth human organ, has only recently gained currency among mainstream scientists. Researchers now believe a lack of beneficial bacteria in the gut can trigger certain autoimmune diseases, among them diabetes, asthma, and even neurological conditions such as autism. Those conditions have spread in step with Western society’s war on germs, which has scorched our good bacteria along with the bad, throwing our bodies’ microbiomes off balance in the same way that a slashed and burned rainforest becomes susceptible to invasive weeds.

Read the whole story

Editorial: Changing how Calif. grades its schools

Publisher’s note: ***This editorial is from the Aug. 6, 2014, Los Angeles Times.***

The Academic Performance Index, by which California schools have been judged over the last 14 years, is about to get an overhaul. That’s fine; the index basically boiled down standardized test scores to a single number. As a result, it overemphasized testing in math and English while giving short shrift to whether students were learning to write well or to do research. It downplayed science, history, arts and physical education.

Two years ago, Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation to beef up the API by including some of the important measures of education beyond math and English scores. High schools, for example, would be judged by graduation rates and by how prepared their students were for college or jobs. Whether other measures should be added was left to the state Board of Education; possibilities included how many students take Advanced Placement courses and how many pass the AP tests, adjusted for the demographics of the school. Schools might be judged in part on portfolios of students' work or the depth of their science instruction.

At the moment, the API is on hiatus; the state will not be using it for a couple of years while California schools introduce an entirely new English and math curriculum based on the Common Core standards that have been adopted by about 40 states. Common Core will bring major change, and it would be unfair to judge schools during the early years as students take unfamiliar tests and get used to a new way of learning. The hiatus offers the state a good opportunity to rethink how the API is calculated.

Read the whole story

Music on the beach benefits TAP

Tahoe Arts Project is having an evening of music on the beach on Aug. 21 from 7-9pm.

Pat Ronan, owner of Tahoe Lakeshore Lodge and Spa, is hosting this benefit for Tahoe Arts Project. It will feature the music of Niall McGuinness, Trey Stone and John Shipley.

Bring blankets, low back chairs, food and beverages, but no pets. Soda, water and baked goods will be available for sale and there will be a raffle.

A suggested donation of $10 per person will support Tahoe Arts Project’s mission of bringing professional performing arts into the schools and community of South Lake Tahoe.

The hotel is behind Heidi’s restaurant in South Lake Tahoe off Highway 50.

Call 530.542.3632 for more information.

Are women better athletes than men?

By Amanda MacMillan, Outdoors

Without launching a full-out battle-of-the-sexes competition between you and your wife, it’s hard to say exactly who is the better athlete. But it is true that she may have some ingrained sex-based advantage over you. Specifically, it seems that members of the fairer sex are better at pacing themselves on long runs, at least according to one new study.

Researchers from Marquette and Grand Valley State Universities and the Mayo Clinic looked at nearly 92,000 marathon performances that took place in 2011 and discovered that women were only about a third as likely as their male counterparts to slow dramatically (by 30 percent or more) during the second half of a race.

On average, men ran the last 13 miles 15.6 percent slower than they did the first 13, while women only slowed by 11.7

percent. The difference held across all age groups and experience levels, and remained even after adjusting women's times to address men's greater oxygen intake and typically faster performances.

Read the whole story

$1.6 mil. Truckee property bought with bitcoins



This vacant Martis Camp parcel was paid for in bitcoins. Photo/Martis Camp

By Candace Jackson, Wall Street Journal

A Truckee property sold Thursday for $1.6 million—in bitcoins.

The property is one of just a handful of residential real estate transactions in months that have used virtual currency—and potentially a record in terms of price. The price in bitcoins was 2,739.

The 1.4-acre acre home site has views of the Pacific Crest, a surrounding mountain range. It is located in Martis Camp.

Brian Hull, Martis Camp's director of sales, said the buyer was a "Silicon Valley entrepreneur," but declined to disclose his name. He said the buyer purchased the land through a trust, and plans to build a home on the site.

The idea to pay for the property with bitcoins came from the buyer, said Hull. "When we originally heard the idea of bitcoin, everybody had a little pause," he said. "We weren't educated at how the transaction would go."

Read the whole story

Old S. Tahoe hotel gets much needed upgrades



Chris Nielsen, general manager of the Trailhead, shows improvements to the rooms. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

There is one less hotel in South Lake Tahoe renting by the week or month.

The Vagabond Inn on Highway 50 is now the Trailhead – A Lake Tahoe Lodge.

Owners from China took over at the first of the year, having paid $1.3 million for the property that is walking distance to the state line. The half a million dollar-remodel began after the ski season ended. Of the 34 rooms, five are deluxe. And more improvements are planned.

“I want the entrance and exit off Midway (Road) and I want to get rid of the pool. It’s from 1959,” Chris Nielsen, general manager of the property, told *Lake Tahoe News*. The pool is empty and unusable.



Removing the empty pool near Highway 50 is a goal.

The hotel was originally the Brooks Lodge in 1947. In 1959, it was remodeled to accommodate visitors coming to Lake Tahoe for the 1960 Squaw Valley Winter Olympics. In the 1980s it became a Vagabond – and remained that until June 1.

It had become rundown and was attracting a different clientele than it is today. Now the hotel wants to compete with the

likes of Holiday Inn Express and 968 Park.

Every room has new beds. Nielsen was surprised when the mattresses from 1993 were being snatched up by other hoteliers in the neighborhood.

Gone, too, are the blue floral bedspreads from the 1990s, and 1980s-era televisions.

Tahoe Timber Uniques created all of the lamps. Like its name, each one is unique.

Cody’s Tree Service used locally sourced Jeffery pines to make the furniture, including headboards and towel holders.

The goal was to have the rooms feel like a guest is in Tahoe instead of Anyplace, USA. This was also accomplished with the array of old Tahoe photos on the walls.

Two rooms have a king bed plus a bunk bed. This is designed for families – whether it’s parents with kids, or three generations traveling together.

Nielsen has a ton of ideas about what he would like the property to evolve into. He said it’s just a matter of the investors cutting a check.

“I want to bulldoze the parking lot. I would like to have a restaurant,” Nielsen said standing on the walkway of the second floor.

He knows this would help with the slow off-seasons by being able to attract locals to the property. His vision is to have quick, good food to go that people could order ahead of time and take with them to the beach or wherever.



Bunk beds in two rooms allow for more sleeping options.

“We could have a mobile app where they put in their food order and have it ready when they get here,” Nielsen said.

Nielsen also envisions getting rid of the room closest to the office and possibly putting in a small wine and beer bar with a patio.

To build on the Trailhead name of the hotel, the office is stocked with maps from the U.S. Forest Service about where people can go exploring. Plus, Nielsen has been working in the hotel industry locally and knows what’s expected in terms of being able to direct people to restaurants and sightseeing destinations.

A continental breakfast is served each morning. Dogs are allowed for $20 per night. There is a grassy area out front for them.

The word is getting out about the transformation of the hotel. The Trailhead was sold-out Fourth of July and has been doing steady business all summer.

4 symphony performances in September

Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus concludes its summer season with a four-concert series.

The program includes the “Faure Requiem”, Liszt’s “Hungarian Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra”, and the Tchaikovsky “Violin Concerto in D Major” with featured guest artist Elizabeth Pitcairn playing the legendary Red Stradivarius.

Performances are Sept. 10, 12,* 14, and 16 in the Reno-Tahoe area. Contact TOCCATA for more information online, or call 775.313.9697, or email ToccataTahoe@gmail.com.

* The Sept. 12 performance is part of the Carson Valley Arts Council Concert Series, and tickets ($5-$28) must be purchased here.

Clean energy program available in S. Tahoe

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) allows property owners in South Lake Tahoe to borrow money, usually on a 20-year term, and repay it with a special property tax assessment that won’t require a cash down payment or inhibit the businesses ability to borrow money for operations in the future.

The financing program approved by the City Council creates an assessment lien on the property. It is repaid as semi-annual installments on the property tax bill. The goal is help residents to use clean energy.

Property owners may look up their property online to find out if they qualify.