Smokey Bear turning 70, joining social media



Smokey Bear teaching kids. Photo/LTN file

By Meg James, Los Angeles Times

Smokey Bear turns 70 this summer. But instead of kicking back in retirement – whacking golf balls or sniffing around for early-bird dinner specials – the bear in bluejeans is returning to work to educate people about wildfires.

Last year, there were 47,579 wildfires nationwide, according to the federal government. Typically, 9 out of 10 are caused by humans. Fire danger is expected to be high this summer, particularly in the parched Western states.

So, with the help of local ad agencies, Smokey Bear has been enlisted for a new marketing campaign to remind humans to be more careful.

Handlers of the iconic animal have decided he needed a younger and fresher look. They want him to fit in with the millennial generation of teenagers and young adults.

Read the whole story

Letter: Brown is best candidate for supervisor

To the community,

I met Kevin Brown one day walking out of the Cantina about two months ago.

He greeted me outside suggesting I was the “Mayor of Meyers” as he put it.

Baffled, and never before hearing such a proclamation, I asked him where he got that silly thought. He told me a sheriff’s officer friend of his told him that because my involvement in the Meyers plan.

I wasn’t sure why Kevin would want to talk to me and it wasn’t until after I got in the car that I realized by his card he was a candidate for El Dorado County supervisor.

At that time I was already buried with my own politics in battling the local agencies over the new Meyers Area Plan. I wasn’t sure I wanted to engage another issue.

I met Kevin a few weeks later at Ernie’s Coffeeshop for lunch to hear what he was about. We talked about Tahoe’s local politics and issues and it quickly became evident that this guy was actually intelligent and had done his homework.

• Kevin Brown is already experienced and accomplished with what he has done for his Pollock Pines community. He has served on numerous community boards resolving issues for children, people with disabilities and supporting businesses and economic development.

• He wants to unite our Tahoe communities together for efficient problem solving.

• Kevin wants to ensure our public safety agencies (fire, sheriff, and police departments) are adequately staffed and have the right equipment to serve us.

• He has stated more than once that he wants to fight for us to prosper economically and yet still preserve a rural community environment.

He has already taken some action to assist the Meyers community regarding the new area plan. I'm sure Kevin will be right there fighting for what's right for the city communities as well regarding the loop road and other issues.

Now then, admittedly I was skeptical that anyone living off the hill might not have "our" Tahoe residents' best interests on his agenda. But after a second and third meeting with Kevin I realized his intentions were quite the contrary.

I made a point of listening very closely at the first Meyers supervisor candidate forum a few weeks ago. Kevin was clearly the most balanced with his answers to the questions and seemed well informed with Tahoe issues.

He is most likely to remain just removed enough (and not having political ties in Tahoe) to afford locals the most honest representation for a true benefit to our communities.

Kevin Brown's intention to appoint trusted individuals to the agency boards speaks volumes to me with regards to not allowing himself to be directly influenced by local governing agencies.

To this day – Kevin has never asked me for my vote.

Kevin has a wife of 22 years – Kathy, who works with him at his glass shop business in Placerville. He has three boys and daughter as well.

My judge of character is he’s an intelligent guy that just wants to do the right thing and give back to local communities. He doesn’t come across as a self-motivated political climber.

My intuition has always been pretty darn good – so I’m supporting him and hoping you will too.

Please vote for Kevin Brown for El Dorado County Supervisor June 3.

John Adamski, Meyers

Farm to table dinners at Squaw Creek

Resort at Squaw Creek is hosting three Farm to Tahoe dinners starting May 24 at 7pm.

Each dinner will be served community-style in Six Peaks Grille. Guests will be treated to a variety of dishes from the culinary team at Resort at Squaw Creek, with menu items sourced direct from local farms, as well as by Tahoe Food Hub, Produce Plus, and other local purveyors of regional produce. Each course also will be paired with a 2 ounce wine tasting from a Northern California winery presented by the winemaker.

Additional dinners are July 5 and Aug. 30.

A different menu will be featured each evening. Each dinner is $80/person or $215/person for all three. Reservations are required and may be made by calling 530.583.6300.

Resort at Squaw Creek’s Farm to Tahoe series is part of the

Study of the Seasons culinary initiative by Destination Hotels & Resorts.

Tahoe doc offers tips for a long, healthy life

By Kenneth Spielvogel

How can you live a longer, healthier life? The answer is complicated and simple. “Experts” claim every conceivable option: cleanses, hormones, pills, exercises, diets, the list goes on. The options are dizzying, even to healthcare professionals.

As a physician, I understand people want quick and easy answers.To be frank, consider the facts and what will likely be our demise. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, heart disease and cancer cause nearly half of all deaths. The risk of heart disease and the most common cancers, skin and lung cancer, can be greatly reduced with simple lifestyle choices.



Kenneth Spielvogel

Consider this road map for a longer, healthier life.

If you use tobacco, quit. Tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, and chewing tobacco. Twenty-eight percent of all cancer deaths can be attributed to lung cancer. Quitting isn’t easy. Barton Health offers smoking cessation clinics. CT Scans of the lungs are also available at a reduced rate.

Exercise every day.Yes, every day. Break a sweat, breathe hard, stretch, lift weights, and move your body. Try a new sport: standup paddleboard, climb at the gym, or dance at Zumba.

Don’t know how to start? Seek advice from a physician or professional trainer.

Eat whole foods. Avoid fast food and packaged food with ingredients you cannot pronounce. Eat fruits, vegetables, nuts, fish, chicken, soy, and lean protein. If needed, get help from a nutritionist.

Wear sunscreen and skin protection. Apply a minimum of SPF 30 and reapply every two hours. Hats and long sleeve shirts also provide extra protection.

Wear your seatbelt.

Get regular cancer screenings. Men and women over 50 should have regular colon cancer screenings. Men age 50 to 55 should start getting prostate cancer screenings. Women should have regular breast cancer screenings starting at age 40. If you have a family history, consider earlier screenings.

Check your cholesterol. If you have high cholesterol, decide with your medical provider what therapies are best.

Turn off the electronics. When you look back, you won’t remember your high score in Candy Crush or the celebrity hashtag you followed this week. Spend face-to-face time with friends and family. Embrace your surroundings and the

beautiful place we call home. A fulfilling life will feel like a much longer life lived.

Teach your children and other young people about the steps above. Encourage healthy lifestyle choices before unhealthy behaviors form habits.

Focus on these simple steps. Find support from others like your healthcare provider, family, friends, or personal trainer. Their support is critical for success.

Kenneth Spielvogel is a board certified OB/GYN physician with Barton Women's Health.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Truckee's plastic bag ban for grocery stores and other retail outlets starts June 1.

• The farmers' market at the Tahoe Biltmore in Crystal Bay opens June 6. It will be Fridays from 9am-1pm.

• Friends of Hope Valley's annual work party day is June 7 starting at 9am. Meet at Pickett's junction (corner of highways 88 and 89). For more info, email info@hopevalleyca.com.

• Art created by Sierra House Elementary students is on display in the Children's Room at the South Lake Tahoe Library until May 28.

• Lake Tahoe Historical Society is raffling two one-day tickets for the annual Wagon Train, June 1-8. Each is valued at $70. Raffle tickets are $10 for one or $20 for three. The museum, located next to the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center is open11am-3pm Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The ticket will be drawn May 25 at 3pm.

Kingsbury Grade to reopen Friday

Kingsbury Grade reopens to through traffic May 23 at approximately noon.

The next phase of construction begins May 27 with night work beginning at approximately 9.

The closure of Kingsbury Grade this month has resulted in 5,000 cubic yards of excavation, installation of 2,600 tons of asphalt and 1,800 feet of new curb and gutter.

The $15 million project continues during the summer months through Aug. 29. Nighttime construction-related lane closures and delays are expected. The road will be open with one lane in each direction during daytime hours, weekends and all holidays with no restrictions.

Whittell parents want their concerns addressed

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – A committee consisting of parents and Douglas County School District staff may be formed this fall to investigate and suggest solutions to some of the long-term issues facing Whittell High School.

Superintendent Lisa Noonan, in an update at the May 21 board meeting regarding the school's staffing, said she needed the summer to plan for what she called a study group, which then could be launched at the start of the new school year.

The goal of the group would be to look at how other small schools have dealt with such issues as declining enrollment, budget cuts and reduced curriculum, and find answers for Whittell's ongoing problems.



More than 50 people fill the room May 21 at the Douglas County School District meeting. Photo/Anne Knowles

Enrollment at Lake Tahoe schools has dropped from a high of 942 students during the 1997-98 school year to 385 students this year.

The task force was one of the requests made by the public during a May 9 meeting of the board, where about two dozen teachers, parents and others spoke mostly about a threat to Whittell's music program.

"The launching pad is the conversation next week," Noonan said at this week's board meeting. "We need more listening and conversation. We don't have the answers tonight."

Noonan has scheduled a meeting with parents at 4:30pm May 27 at the high school, prior to a 6pm awards ceremony there, to talk further about their concerns.

About 10 parents and teachers spoke at the May 21 meeting, most reiterating the same worries voiced at the previous meeting.

Kelly Gardner, for example, said parents were very excited about meeting with Noonan next week. But she said parents had been blindsided before by unexpected changes and needed to first build trust with the school district.

"I am hopeful you have empathy for our lack of trust and that we need commitment to run our schools from decisions of what is best for our kids and not from an accounts' perspective," said Gardner during public comment. "I look forward to building a truly trusting environment to work toward a plan that works for all the students at the lake."

In a May 6 email to the board and district office staff, Noonan said, "The number of students requesting music for next year was enough to fill one class – which is a 0.20 allocation. Rather than post a job for a 20 percent contract, we added a drama class and will use the music stipends for hiring someone to offer a music club.

"We also increased the fine arts teacher from a 60 percent contract to an 80 percent contract.

“The overall reduction at WHS for next year is a 0.40 allocation.”

During her presentation, Noonan also emphasized that the district budget, which the board approved at the meeting, does not end the discussion.

“The first concern I want to alleviate is when the board sets the budget they report to the state, that is different than my role helping with allocations,” said Noonan. “The board is never asked to approve at a granular level.”

Noonan said deciding how to spend the money allotted is an ongoing process and a school’s master schedule of classes is a “living, breathing document.”

The passed budget freezes most spending categories, except for an additional $25,000 for testing of 11th-graders, $4,450 for software, $50,000 for special education and $577,125 for salaries and benefits.

There are eight employee groups and the district has negotiated contracts with all of them except for the largest group, teachers.

Several teachers spoke during public comment and two held up homemade protest signs saying, among other things, “Negotiate Don’t Arbitrate,” and “Transparency, Honesty, Question the Budget.”

Noonan, during her update, asked that a task force of parents and staff not overlap with or negate the work of school performance plans, which are required by law and address some of the same issues in the short-term.

Board President Tom Moore said that the board could not yet approve the proposed committee because it was not an item on the board’s May 21 agenda.

USFS work impacting Tahoe Rim Trail



The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit began a mastication project this week on the North Shore off of Fairway Drive near Tahoe City.

The project involves using a masticator, which is a large lawn-mower type of heavy equipment that runs over debris and chops it up into smaller pieces. Flying debris from equipment is common. Large chunks of woody material can be thrown up to 500 feet.

A short portion of the Tahoe Rim Trail crosses through the project area. There will be a one- to three-day period where the equipment will be working near the trail.

For public safety, hikers will be diverted to an alternate route along Mt. Watson Boulevard (Forest Road 73) during this phase.

Project work is expected to take approximately six weeks to complete and work will occur on weekends. No work will occur

on Memorial Day.

Nev. fires Xerox, joins federal health exchange

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada will abandon its state-run health exchange, sever ties with software contractor Xerox and switch to the federal system for one year to enroll its residents in health care, a state board voted Tuesday.

The Silver State Exchange's board of directors proclaimed it had "no confidence" in staying with Xerox, citing the company's inability to fix 1,500 technical glitches in the current exchange. Xerox had a $75 million contract with the state and has spent $12 million of that money, according to the state.

Xerox executives testified at the May 20 meeting and lobbied the board to keep the company on the project. But they did not sway the decision.

"The current system is intolerable and is not the best we can do," said Lynn Etkins, the board's vice chair.

Read the whole story

Drugs, mental health issues common with SLT criminals

By Brian Uhler

In the last two months, we shared information about crime in general and about DUI, domestic violence and public intoxication. This month, we will give you information about drug use and mental health.

From January through April:

Reported drug events 37.

Mental health detentions 34.



Brian Uhler

Barton Hospital conducts an annual “needs assessment” where they examine the community as a whole from a health perspective. It is of no surprise to us at the SLTPD that the top item on Barton’s list is substance abuse and the second item is mental health.

Regarding drugs, we recently learned that there was a statewide assessment which characterized the drug problem in El Dorado County as being twice as bad as all other counties in California. Of course, drug abuse leads to all kinds of crime problems – particularly property crimes. Some people have the strange belief that drugs should not be a police concern, but only be a matter of public health. If you happen

to be in this group, consider the following:

- One statistical report found that jail inmates convicted of robbery (56 percent), weapons violations (56 percent), burglary (55 percent), or motor vehicle theft (55 percent) were most likely to have reported to be using drugs at the time of the offense.
- Another report found that 76 percent of jail inmates who had a mental health problem were dependent on or abused alcohol or drugs, compared to 53 percent of inmates without a mental health problem.
- In another study, over 30 percent of state prisoners reported that they committed their property crime specifically to get money for drugs.

In short, drug abuse and crime are closely correlated. It seems reasonable to assume that lowering the use of drugs in our community would have a positive effect on crime.

On mental health issues, SLTPD staff members receive special training to ensure such events are handled with sensitivity and care for the affected person. This training includes working with officers and dispatchers so they can effectively recognize those with mental disabilities and sensibly intervene to restore peace when such a person is in crisis.

The El Dorado County Health Department has made significant improvements in the last year, working more closely than ever with law enforcement. A grant was recently approved which helps bolster the connection between the Health Department and law enforcement responders.

Brian Uhler is chief of the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.