Americans increase produce consumption

By Tim Carman, Washington Post

As Congress debates whether to trim the food stamps budget as part of the massive Farm Bill reauthorization, lawmakers might want to consider this striking statistic from a new W.K. Kellogg Foundation survey: Three-quarters of Americans say they support a national program that would double Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or food stamp) benefits at farmers markets.

“It’s a wonderful sign of the increasing level of empathy,” says Gail Christopher, vice president for program strategy for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. It’s an acknowledgment, she adds, that “the health of others could have an impact on their lives as well.”



Seasonal farmers markets help Tahoe-ites eat more fresh veggies-fruit. Photo/LTN file

The Kellogg survey of 800 American adults unearthed some other, arguably, surprising statistics about the country’s attitudes about fresh fruits and vegetables – and the people

who harvest them. Approximately 88 percent of respondents would strongly or partly agree to pay $1.50 more per month if it guaranteed that farm workers would be paid a fair wage.

What's more, 70 percent of respondents said they have purchased fresh produce from a farmers market or stand in the past year (although only 14 percent use this source as their regular outlet for fruits and vegetables). And more than 68 percent of those surveyed say they eat more whole grains, fruits and vegetables than they did five years ago.

These findings would appear to underscore the success of various organizations, progressive school districts, environmentalists, activist chefs, good food advocates and writers, and first lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign in spreading the gospel about local produce, fresh fruits and vegetables and more healthful diets. The message is clearly sinking in with the American public.

Read the whole story

Placer County accused of violating deputy's employment rights

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

Attorneys representing the Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association have filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging the county violated military employment rights.

The suit alleges that following an 18-month tour of duty, Army Stg. Kevin Brady returned to his position as a deputy sheriff

for the county.

“Instead of rewarding his service to his country, the county was holding him back from being eligible to apply for specialty assignments and promotions in violation of federal law,” according to a press release from the sheriffs’ association. The suit was filed by Attorney B.J. Pierce of the Mastagni Law Firm.

The county did not have an immediate comment on the matter.

Bomb squad deactivates grenade found on South Shore

A suspicious device found on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe ended up being a grenade.

Members of El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department’s Explosive Ordinance Detail used an X-ray device to determine the item that was located inside a black bag near the end of Sierra Boulevard and Barbara Avenue was live.

“They used a disruptor to render the device safe,” Deputy Damian Frisby told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s a small charge that shoots a projectile into the device that basically blows it apart so it doesn’t cause explosion.”

No one had to be evacuated during the May 25 late afternoon incident. Nearby residents were told to stay away from doors and windows as the device was deactivated.

Frisby said investigators are looking into who placed the

grenade near where Caltrans dumps snow each winter. He does not know if the person who notified authorities may have had anything to do with the incident.

– Kathryn Reed

Spend long weekend building mountain bike trails

TAMBA is putting on two trail days this weekend.

The first is Sunday on the Tyrolean Downhill Trail. Meet at 9am May 27 at the lower Diamond Peak parking lot across from the Big Water Grill. Workers will then caravan to the work site.

Volunteers must wear long pants, long sleeves and sturdy footwear. Bring drinking water and work gloves. A burrito lunch from T's will be provided and Village Ski Loft will be providing a cooler of drinks at the end of the day.

The Reno Pump Track will break ground later May 28 with TAMBA and the Poedunks hosting a community build day from 9am until mid-afternoon.

The location is Panther Valley Park, 650 Link Lane, Reno. There is plenty of room for parking around the corner on Western Drive.

Volunteer to work all or part of the day, every little bit helps. Monday's work day will involve the finishing and dialing in of the multiple tracks and jump lines. Wear Long

pants, gloves, and sturdy shoes (no sandals, Teva’s, Crocs, etc,). We will be using hand tools and most will be provided. But rakes, square shovels, or tampers would be welcome.

Feel free to bring your bikes and helmets for test rides.

Black Rock Bicycles will be providing a barbecue lunch for all volunteers.

The grand opening party is tentatively scheduled for late afternoon on June 22.

85% containment in Topaz Fire

The Topaz Ranch Estates Fire has not grown beyond the 7,500 acres.

Containment is at 85 percent, with full containment expected May 27.

The fire started May 22 when a residential control burn had not been properly extinguished. Officials also said the resident did not have the proper permits for the fire.

Nineteen structures have burned to the ground, includes two houses.

Helicopters, cooler weather and precipitation on Friday helped firefighters gain on the blaze.

The fire remains on the mountain side, west of Smith Valley residences and northwest of Wellington. The fire is about three-quarters of a mile west of Taylor Hill and a mile north of Highway 208.

No injuries have been reported. The cost for fighting the fire

to date is estimated to be $2.5 million.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Cycling fitness lecture

Physical therapist Chris Kozlowski will talk about maximizing bike performance on June 6 from 6-7pm at Kahle Community Center in Stateline.

The event is free.

She will talk about increasing pedaling efficiency, proper bike fit benefits, and bike-specific stretching and exercises.

Survey: Nevada lawmakers favor government transparency

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Sixty state lawmakers and legislative candidates who responded to a survey on government transparency largely favor new laws requiring the Legislature to follow the Open Meeting Law and mandating expanded reporting of spending on legislators by lobbyists.

The survey, sponsored by the Nevada Policy Research Institute and the Nevada Press Association, also saw broad support for imposing a 72-hour time frame so the public can read bills

before they go to a floor vote, subjecting local government negotiations with public employee unions to the state Open Meeting Law and assessing penalties for government officials who violate Nevada's public records laws.

The survey was sent to 153 candidates and eight state Senators who are not up for re-election this year. Forty-one Republicans, 14 Democrats and five minor party candidates responded.

This survey is intended to give the voters a chance to find out where candidates stand on transparency issues including public records, open meetings and campaign finance reforms.

"I think it ought to be a very important issue for voters," said Barry Smith, executive director of the press association. "That's why we do this; so that they know who has it on their priority list."

Advocates of increased transparency in government say the responses suggest that further progress can be made on the issues in the 2013 session of the Nevada Legislature.

"We've been able to move forward with Open Meeting Law, Open Records Law; the campaign finance does show some improvement," Smith said. "That's another thing these surveys showed – there is quite a bit of work to do and there is quite a bit of work the Legislature can do."

Geoffrey Lawrence, deputy policy director at NPRI, said at least 50 of the 60 responses were either in favor of or leaning in favor of the proposals, suggesting there is a good chance for further progress for increased government transparency in the upcoming session.

The new requirements for campaign contribution and expense reports adopted in the 2011 session were part of the 2010 survey, suggesting the effort is having some influence, he said.

“A lot of these other ideas were embodied into bills; they just never passed the Legislature,” Lawrence said. “So hopefully that will happen this time.”

The survey comes just as Republican Assembly caucus leader Pat Hickey, R-Reno, announced several transparency reforms he will seek in the 2013 session. Hickey responded to the survey, indicating support for the various proposals with a “lean yes” on applying the Open Meeting Law to the Legislature. He indicated some flexibility may be required for the proposal, given the 120-day time limit the Legislature has to finish its business.

While most survey responses were supportive without qualification, there were also a few “maybes” and some opposition to the proposals.

Former state Sen. Sheila Leslie, a Democrat who resigned her seat in mid-term to run for the Senate 15 seat now held by Republican Greg Brower, did not favor subjecting collective bargaining negotiations to public scrutiny.

“I don’t think inviting TV cameras into negotiations with public employee unions is in the best interest of government,” she said. “There needs to be more transparency and communication but making everything subject to the Open Meeting Law is not necessarily good government. This is one of those instances.”

Leslie was not alone in expressing concerns about the proposal.

Reno Republican Assembly 31 candidate David Espinosa said: “Negotiations, by their nature, are sensitive matters that an open meeting inclusion would transform into an entrenchment of sides, and an opportunity for grandstanding and demagoguery. I would instead support all efforts to openly disclose the starting positions of both sides of the negotiation, and the final position of each of the representatives of the local

government.”

Lawrence said the issue is more problematic for some candidates and elected officials because of the support they get from public sector labor unions, which generally oppose such proposals.

Others are more bipartisan in nature, such as the proposal to require reporting of spending by lobbyists on lawmakers all year round and not just during each legislative session.

Leslie sponsored the bill in 2011 that would have required lobbyists to report all spending on lawmakers, not just spending during a legislative session. Senate Bill 206 passed the Senate unanimously but died in an Assembly committee without a vote.

Smith said the goal is to keep moving forward with incremental successes.

“To me it should be obvious that open government is a bipartisan kind of thing that people can agree on that that’s what we want,” he said. “There’s not always agreement on exactly how you get there. But as long as people think it’s important and are willing to work on it, then we will move forward with some of these things.”

LTCC graduation

Lake Tahoe Community College graduation at 6pm at the community ball fields.

Elementary track meet at STMS in June

The 8th edition of the South Shore 4-5 Elementary Track & Field Classic is June 5 at at South Tahoe Middle School.

This meet will include girls and boys from throughout the region.

In 2011 more than 500 parents and friends witnessed 400 student-athletes compete, with seven meet records broken.

The event is from 4-8pm. The cost is $4 for adults and free to kids.

CHP offers class for teen drivers

Start Smart is aimed at helping newly licensed and future licensed teenage drivers become aware of the responsibilities that accompany the privilege of being a licensed California driver. The program was created in an effort to preemptively reduce the incidence of teen injuries and deaths resulting from motor vehicle collisions.

Teen drivers and their parents/guardians are invited to attend and participate in a Start Smart class. Recent statistics have shown that in California teenage drivers are injured and are dying in automobile accidents at an alarming rate. Through candid conversations, officers in attendance will address these facts and provide examples of driving tendencies that put young drivers at risk.

The next class is May 29 from 6-8pm at South Tahoe High School library. All classes are free and last approximately two hours.

To reserve a space, call (530) 577.1001.