Opinion: Fortier provides sweet dreams

To the community,

At 3am my muse shook me. She said, “Wake up.” I said, “Why? I’d rather sleep.” Again, she said, “Wake up. Claire’s leaving.”

“Claire, who?” I asked, still in semi-sleep.

“Look sleepy head, wake up, Claire Fortier, the mayor, is leaving,” my muse said.



Bill Crawford

“Oh,” I said, now awake.

So I asked, “Is this Fortier the same Fortier that filed as a candidate for the City Council in 2002?”

“Yes,” my muse replied.

“The same Fortier that after the ballot was printed and sent out dropped out of the race; screwing up the election with hundreds of votes that didn’t count?” I asked.

“You got it,” my muse said.

“Well, what about that?” I said.

“Yes, what about that?” my muse wondered out loud.

Then to myself I said – two out of two ain’t bad and went back to sleep – to sweet, sweet dreams.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Barton docs using state-of-the-art device during surgery

By Rebecca Wass

Same outcome, but without being so invasive. That is one of the overriding benefits of the da Vinci Si Surgical System.

Scott Welker this month performed his first single-incision cholecystectomy (surgical removal of the gallbladder) with the da Vinci at Barton Memorial Hospital.

“With all of the added benefits of less pain, less blood loss, shorter hospital stays and a reduced risk of infections, the single-incision allows us to do cholecystectomies via one incision in the umbilicus [navel], which is nearly invisible after it heals,” Welker said.



Kelly Shanahan is the next doctor who will be using the da Vinci on patients. Photo/Rebecca Wass

The hospital joined 114 medical facilities in California and more than 1,500 healthcare facilities in the United States by purchasing the da Vinci Si Surgical System to meet the surgical needs of its region. Barton Memorial is the third hospital in California to offer single-incision da Vinci gallbladder surgery. The others are UC Davis Medical Center and UC San Diego Medical Center.

The da Vinci Si Surgical System has become widely known as an effective alternative to traditional open surgery and conventional minimally invasive laparoscopy. Approximately

360,000 da Vinci procedures were performed in 2011 around the world.

“The da Vinci is the most advanced form of minimally invasive surgery available,” said Gary Willen, Tahoe Women’s Care gynecologist.

Willen has practiced at Barton Memorial Hospital for nearly 30 years and is a pioneer of minimally invasive surgery, including laparoscopic hysterectomies. With the da Vinci system, Willen is able to perform complex hysterectomies and

other urologic and gynecologic procedures.

“At Barton, we’ve been doing laparoscopic surgeries for a long time,” Willen said. “The da Vinci allows us to perform surgery on some of the most difficult cases. This is not only an innovative option for gynecological and general surgical procedures, but an opportunity for Barton to offer the best technologically advanced care for patients, which is not typical for a small community.”

During a da Vinci surgical procedure, the surgeon sits at a control console near the patient, and an assisting physician is at the patient’s bedside. The surgeon sees the operative field through a video monitor and is able to manually control several robotic arms that replicate every movement of the surgeon’s hands.

In addition to single-incision gallbladder surgery, Welker also specializes in da Vinci surgical procedures made through multiple small incisions, such as hernia repair, anti-reflux, colon and stomach surgery, and other advanced procedures.

Recently added to the da Vinci surgical team was gynecologist Kelly Shanahan from Emerald Bay Center for Women’s Health. Shanahan will be performing hysterectomies and other complex gynecologic procedures. Drs. Michael Enrico, Gregory Eyre, Kris Kobalter and Caroline Habaradas are the next physicians to be trained on this latest piece of innovative technology.

“These technological advancements provide Barton with unparalleled precision, dexterity and control that enables a minimally invasive approach for complex surgical procedures,”

Willen said. “Da Vinci’s been around for a while, and this is the third generation robot, so the advantage is, we have the latest and greatest.”

The precision of the technology makes it ideal for certain delicate or complex surgeries because it makes it easier for

surgeons to avoid surrounding nerves and organs.

“All of the current procedures have been improved through the ability to use the wristed instruments and 3-D vision,” Welker said. “Our operations are much more precise than before. We’ve also noticed less postoperative pain with the da Vinci versus traditional laparoscopic surgery.”

Praise from a patient

When Welker began operating with the da Vinci Si Surgical System in March, his eighth patient, Doug Witt, received three small incisions during his gallbladder surgery and said it was not as painful as he thought it would be.

“I just felt like I had done 80 sit-ups, just like in high school,” Witt said. “I felt like I could have been up and running that night. I wanted to make sure there was someone there to care for me, and the entire medical team was just great.”

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Note: Meet the da Vinci Si Surgical System and team at Barton Memorial Hospital’s open house May 31 from 4:30 to 6:30pm in the Snowflake Lobby.

Rebecca Wass is communications specialist for Barton Healthcare.

Fields committee has full agenda for May 21 meeting

The Fields Advisory Committee of the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority has equity of facilities as its first action item on the agenda.

The meeting is May 21 at 4pm at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Other items for possible action include a workshop on a master plan, review of estimated costs, discussing ways to get volunteers and other funding, and possibly recommending priorities.

Here is a draft of field work being talked about.

Heavenly proposing changes for summer, winter guests

By Kathryn Reed

Riding four-wheelers on what are normally ski runs, more trails to hike on, an outdoor events center – those are just some of the offerings Heavenly Mountain Resort wants to provide guests in the coming years.

The U.S. Forest Service is taking comments until mid-June on the resort's proposed plans.

"A lot of the hiking is just on the roads, which is not the best. We think this will be a big improvement," Matt Dickinson

with Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Heavenly may put in a hiking trail that would eliminate the need to use Tamarack chairlift in the summer. Photo/LTN file

He is overseeing the application process. The Forest Service, as owner of most of the land Heavenly operates on, must make sure proposals fit into the already approved master plan and that the public has time to voice its opinions.

The hiking trail that would go from the base of the Tamarack chairlift to the top where it would intersect with other routes has been in the master plan for years.

Exact alignment of the trail will be determined by Heavenly and Forest Service officials working in cooperation by surveying the land together.

Dickinson also said his agency will walk the route where Heavenly wants to install a surface tow lift so people can better access Player's Terrain Park on Upper Powderbowl run. This would keep skiers-boarders in the park without having to take a chairlift.

To do this means taking out about 60 trees, six of which are more than 24 inches in diameter.

“The Jeep tours will start from the Tamarack Lodge or the top of the lift and go on to the top of Sky chair and possibly down and continue a loop back to the gondola,” Dickinson said.

With the passage in 2011 by Congress of an act that encourages more recreation on Forest Service land in the summer, this allows local land managers to approve more activities that had previously been frowned upon.

“More people visit Tahoe in the summer than the winter. We want to provide a more robust experience, have more attractions up there,” Heavenly spokesman Russ Pecoraro said of the top of the gondola area.

He also said not to expect any of the changes for summer recreation to come this season.

Pecoraro told *Lake Tahoe News* the timing of the Forest Service decision along with when corporate offices determine the capital improvement budget will dictate what is put in the ground this summer. Plus, the short construction season will also play a role.

Concerts at the Tamarack Lodge are being talked about for the future.

A summer pass for the gondola is $59. Still to be determined is if that will include a ride up Tamarack chairlift.

It’s likely the tubing hill for the summer – which operates on a synthetic turf-like surface – will have two lanes instead of one like last summer. Just enough snow still exists that the hill will not be open Memorial Day weekend when the gondola starts spinning again. And there’s not enough snow to tube on.

The gondola will be open next weekend from 10am-4pm each day and then everyday from 10am-5pm starting June 8 and until just past Labor Day.

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Info: For more information on the proposal or how to comment, contact Matt Dickinson at (530) 543.2769 or go online.

Moose Lodge raising money all weekend

The Moose's annual Yard and Bake Sale is May 19-20.

Goods will be for sale between 9:30am and 5pm at 961 Eloise Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

For more info, call (530) 541.1632.

ADA forum

Brian Shinault and Dave Walker, certified access specialists, will talk May 23 about what businesses need to do to be ADA compliant.

The 9-10:30am event will be in the South Room at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

Advance reservations are strongly suggested. Tickets can be purchased in advance for $5 for members of Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce and $10 for non-members. Prices are $5 more at the door.

The forum will cover immediate steps business owners, tenants and landlords must take to lower their risk of a lawsuit and to increase their compliance with these laws.

For more information, contact Shannon McIsaac at (775) 588.1728, ext. 305 or Shannon@tahoechamber.org.

April one of the warmest on record

By Nick Wiltgen, Weather.com

The waning influence of La Niña helped April 2012 to become the fifth warmest April worldwide in 133 years of recordkeeping, and the warmest April on record in the Northern Hemisphere, according to scientists at NOAA's National Climatic Data Center.

The global average temperature of 57.87 degrees F last month was about 1.2 degrees above the 20th-century average. It was the greatest departure from that average since November 2010. The Northern Hemisphere was even farther above average, running a record 1.7 degrees above the 20th-century baseline.

Earlier this month, scientists determined that La Niña had ended during April as water temperatures continued to warm across the equatorial Pacific Ocean. La Niña is typically associated with relatively cooler global temperatures.

Read the whole story

Blitz nets 16 phony contractors on South Shore

Sixteen contractors on the South Shore were accused operating without proper licenses by either the California Contractors State License Board or Nevada State Contractors Board during a simultaneous enforcement operation.

The individuals are accused of contracting without a license and related violations of home improvement contracting law. The sting operations were conducted at a single family home in the Tallac Park area of South Lake Tahoe, while the other was in a vacant business property in a Stateline strip mall.

Investigators on May 16 posed as property owners who were seeking bids for carpentry, painting, and landscaping. Suspects who bid more than the legal limit for labor and materials were issued a notice to appear in Superior Court.

It is against California law to contract for home improvement or construction jobs valued at $500 or more for labor and materials without a state-issued contractor license. In Nevada, it is illegal to contract for such jobs valued at more than $1,000. California law also requires licensees to place their license number in all forms of advertising. Those who work on jobs valued at less than $500 may advertise their services, but those ads must state that they are not a licensed contractor. Nevada prohibits anyone without a trade license to advertise for services. California and Nevada have a reciprocity agreement, which simplifies the application process for contractors licensed in one state who want to seek a license in the other.

Individuals on probation for theft and burglary were among

those who bid on the Lake Tahoe area projects. Michael D. Abbey, who bid on a painting job at the California sting site, was on probation for theft. Tyson McKenrick accompanied Eric James Brown, who bid on cabinetry work at the South Lake Tahoe house. DCA investigators transported McKenrick to jail on a probation violation on a prior burglary conviction.

The following suspects will be arraigned in El Dorado County Superior Court in South Lake Tahoe and will be contacted later about their future court date:

SUSPECT□S NAME	WORK CLASS	VIOLATIONS
Ruben Zavala Gonzalez	Landscaping	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Oscar Rojas Segura	Landscaping	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Juan Manuel Lopez Gomez	Landscaping	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
John Michael Troccoli	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Eric James Brown	Framing and Rough Carpentry	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising *Accompanied by Tyson McKenrick who was arrested for violating probation from a prior burglary conviction*
Juan Carlos Martinez-Munoz	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising

Michael D. Abbey	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising *On probation for theft*
Andrew James Bowen	Framing and Rough Carpentry	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Daniel Allen Brown	Framing and Rough Carpentry	Contracting without a license
John Thomas Saites	Painting	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising
Alonzo Sanchez-Ruelas	Landscaping	Contracting without a license, illegal advertising

The following suspects were cited in the Nevada sting operation:

SUSPECT□S NAME AND BUSINESS	**WORK CLASS**	**VIOLATIONS**
Sean Hilla Amazing Handyman Services	Painting and Carpentry	Contracting without a license
Michael Gonzales	Painting and Carpentry	Contracting without a license, advertising without a license
Edward Polaske Tahoe Technicians	Carpentry	Contracting without a license
Dan Chandler Top-Notch Home Repairs	Electrical and Plumbing	Contracting without a license, advertising without a license
Micky McFarren	Carpet and Carpentry	Contracting without a license, advertising without a license

Community Aquatic Weeds Removal Project

Lake Tahoe residents and visitors are invited to help with the removal one of Tahoe’s most prolific aquatic invasive weeds, Eurasian watermilfoil, during the inaugural Community Aquatic Weeds Removal Project at Baldwin Beach on June 3.

The project is a partnership of the League to Save Lake Tahoe, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and U.S. Forest Service and will occur in conjunction with the Tahoe Native Species Festival.

Volunteers will be placing bottom barriers in a large swale that parallels Lake Tahoe, which is infected with Eurasian watermilfoil. Volunteers will be needed for numerous tasks that will not require entering the swale. Volunteers of all ages and abilities are welcome to participate.

Registration is required. For more information or to sign-up, contact Flavia Sordelet at (530) 541.5388 or events@keeptahoeblue.org.

Nevada dairy industry could grow with manufacturing

facility

By Yun Long, Reno Gazette-Journal

The dairy industry in Nevada is getting a boost with a new dry dairy ingredient-manufacturing facility under construction in Fallon.

Dairy Farmers of America Inc., a national cooperative of about 15,000 dairy farmers, is building the $70 million state-of-the-art facility that will be able to produce dried dairy ingredients, such as whole milk powder.

“It going to be a great thing for Nevada export products,” said Bob Shriver, an economic development consultant for the city of Fallon. “It’s got long-range benefits for the area. Because of this, it could attract a lot of other potential industries and enhance the community of Fallon in general.”

The plant is scheduled to be completed in summer 2013 and employ at least 40 people full-time, mostly in the production area.

The 150,000-square-foot facility will be able to process 2 million pounds of raw milk and make about 250,000 pounds of dried dairy ingredients daily for domestic and global customers. The facility is located on a 31.5-acre parcel in Fallon’s New River Business Park.

“We chose to build an ingredient facility in Fallon because the area is already home to a vibrant dairy industry,” Glenn Wallace, chief operating officer for the company’s ingredient division, said in an email. “We are confident this is a good opportunity for us to put a facility in a place where we can be successful.”

Several factors contributed to the plant’s location, including proximity to major international ports, a dedicated dairy

supply and opportunities for expansion.

Twenty-two dairies are in the Fallon area, but with the completion of the plant, Shriver sees an increase in the number of dairy cattle and more dairymen to fulfill the increasing needs of the plant.

Read the whole story