Kitchen fires are often deadly

Kitchen fires are frequent and preventable. Every year there are millions of kitchen fires in the Unite States. Most of them are small, but fires of this kind kill about 400 people every year.

They can be prevented by practicing the following safety rules: keep stoves and ovens free of grease; do not wear loose clothing when you cook, and make sure young children are always supervised in the kitchen.

The South Lake Tahoe Fire Department urges you to keep your home fire safe.

– Sallie Ross-Filgo, SLTPD

No reason to fear mama bear with cubs

By Cheryl Millham

It is time to dispel some myths about our black bear families.

Mother bears are not dangerous. Nor, are they more aggressive when they have cubs.

Mother bears will not bring their cubs out of the den until they can climb a tree. If a mom feels her baby is in danger, she will send it up a tree for safety. Sometimes she climbs up after them and sometime, she will sit at the base of the tree.

If it is time to nurse her babies, she will climb the tree and position herself with her back leaning against the trunk and straddle a branch. The baby will come to her and climb onto her lap and nurse.

If a dog is harassing her babies and the tree is far off, she might swat the dog. It is her way of telling the dog to stop.

So, if you see a mom with babies (the babies are about 5 pounds at this time of the year), don't let your dog chase them.

Tom and I have been between a mom and her babies many times. She is not dangerous to us. She just wants to get her kids back and, as soon as she gets them close to her, she will send them up another tree.

Such is not the same with a mother grizzly bear. She will attack first and ask questions later. Grizzly bears are very dangerous. I am so happy that we have black bears here and not grizzlies.

Here is a little informational tip. There are no more grizzlies living in California, even though you will see a picture of a grizzly on the California state flag.

So, why am I telling you this information? You guessed it. We have just gotten sighting of mother bears with little, tiny cubs, following her.

Keep your eyes open and you might see a little bit of nature right here in your own back yard. So, enjoy the wildlife

around you. And remember, when you shoot wildlife, use a camera.

Cheryl Millham is executive director of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe.

CTA president to speak at LTCC

California Teachers Association President Dean Vogel will be visiting Lake Tahoe Community College on May 7 for an evening of discussion about the current state of California's public education system.

This is Vogel's first official visit to the Lake Tahoe Basin since becoming CTA president. Teachers, students, school staff and administrators, and all community members interested in the health of public education are welcome to attend the 5-7pm event at the Duke Theatre.

Vogel will begin by sharing the educator's perspective on the problems K-12 schools and community colleges face in California, and how CTA's organizing plan can help to improve public education in our state. He'll also discuss school funding and Gov. Jerry Brown's tax initiatives on November's ballot.

Following his remarks, Vogel will host a Q&A session and an informal reception. Light refreshments will be served.

CTA's Higher Education Director Theresa Montaño will also be available to discuss issues within the California State University system and the community colleges.

This event is being hosted by LTCC's Classified Employees Union and Faculty Association.

Opinion: Barton Auxiliary deserves recognition

By John Williams

In recognition of National Volunteer Month in April, Barton Health would like to take a moment to honor some frequently unsung heroes in the South Lake Tahoe community: The dedicated volunteers who make up the Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

Auxiliary members offer many essential benefits to the hospital and its patients in various capacities. They staff the hospital's front desk; provide assistance in the emergency department; assist in the skilled nursing facility; operate the gift shop in the hospital lobby; and sell thousands of "previously enjoyed" items in the Attic Thrift Store – the largest contributor to the Auxiliary's funds. Auxiliary members are an active, enthusiastic bunch. They host book fairs in the hospital, offer the festive Holiday Faire each November and don't forget those tasty famous Cheese Balls they create and sell each holiday season, along with the Barton Foundation's annual Festival of Trees and Lights.



John Williams

Barton’s Auxiliary began before the hospital was built. The year was 1960 and the vision was that of a community hospital for our mountain township, by 24 Charter Members of the Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary. Three years later, after endless work and fundraising, Barton Memorial Hospital became a reality.

In 2010, the auxiliary celebrated 50 years of giving and of these members, 89 dedicated 29,393 hours to the hospital—saving Barton more than $600,000. Today there are more than 135 members who volunteer their time and talents each year to the Auxiliary’s many endeavors. Barton Memorial’s Auxiliary has given approximately $800,000 in the last three-years to the renovation and expansion of the Barton Community Clinic – expected to break ground on June 4. Since that first year – and to date – the Auxiliary has donated approximately $6 million to Barton Memorial Hospital.

The Auxiliary has been helping to save lives with Sacramento’s BloodSource since 1966, by sponsoring and hosting six Community Blood Drives each year. The blood drives take place at Embassy Suites, between noon and 6pm, the first Monday of every other month. The next blood drive is slated for June 11. In addition, members also assist with year-round with flu and immunization clinics and Barton community health and wellness outreach efforts to help ensure the health status of the South Lake Tahoe community and beyond.

The Junior Volunteer Program has been an excellent opportunity for Auxiliary members to teach the younger generation in our community the value of giving of their time and exposing them to the healthcare environment– where they may find a future career path. Barton Memorial Hospital Auxiliary gave $6,000 in scholarships, in June 2011, to students pursuing healthcare careers at a four-year-university. The awards were based on academic achievement, leadership qualities, participation in

school and community activities.

A lot has changed since 1960 but not the dedication of Barton's Auxiliary members.

May their successes multiply and their spirits unify to celebrate teamwork and volunteerism.

John Williams is president and CEO of Barton Health.

Meyers Landfill bill doubles to $13 mil.; case back in court

By Kathryn Reed

Cleaning up the old Meyers Landfill is costing more than twice what was expected – for a total of more than $13 million. The doubling of the cost has also created another lawsuit between the U.S. Forest Service and El Dorado County.

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors this month approved taking $6.3 million from the General Fund Contingency to pay for the cost overruns.

The April 17 staff report to the board says, "Failure to pay back this temporary loan will adversely impact other services provided by General Fund appropriations."



Meyers Landfill cleanup is costing more than $13 million. Photo/USFS

Gerri Silva, director of environmental management for the county, expects the $6,313,156 to cover everything related to the actual work on the project. By the end of the summer the restoration to the site off Pioneer Trail should be complete.

The Meyers Landfill was used from 1947-71. Twenty years later the feds sued a slew of entities for cleanup costs. Vinyl chloride, a carcinogen produced when household waste breaks down, was the main contaminant under the sealed plot, although methane and other gases posed problems.

Those lawsuits lasted for years and cost the various agencies – mostly public, with a few private companies involved – millions of dollars. Those millions aren't even part of the $13 million to fix the land so it is usable again and deal with the toxins so they don't threaten people or the environment.

The entire disturbed area is more than 20 acres. Originally, the liner was to cover 7 acres, with what's called the plateau area encompassing another 4 acres.

Because debris was found in a larger area than expected, the cost to remediate the site grew. But the county does not

believe it should have to incur the expense because when the federal court case was settled it was the USFS plan that El Dorado County had to follow, with the Forest Service saying what the cost would be and where the cleanup would take place.

Silva said the original budget was $5.5 million, which the county's insurance company covered.

"The Forest Service gave us 100 percent of the remedial design. They included what they thought it would cost, but there was a lot more waste there that had to be relocated," Silva told *Lake Tahoe News*.

To recoup its expenses, the county took the feds to court. (No matter who wins, all of this is taxpayer money.)

The federal court granted the county's motion for construction, enforcement, and modification of the partial consent decree. The Forest Service appealed this to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The next set of court briefs are due May 11.

According to the county, "If affirmed by the Court of Appeals, a hearing will be scheduled to determine the potential amount of the additional construction costs due to the large number of issues, errors, and omissions with the final 100 percent remedial design the county may recover from the U.S Forest Service."

The Lake Tahoe Forest Service office deferred comment to the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. However, because the matter is ongoing litigation, Wyn Hornbuckle declined to answer the following *Lake Tahoe News* questions:

- The cost of the project is more than twice what the Forest Service said it would cost when the agency came up with the design and told the county what to do. How do you account for this?

- How do you expect another agency to pay this when it’s your plans that seem not to be working?

- What does the USFS attribute the cost overruns to?

The county and USFS agree the land could be open to the public in August.

“Everything is contingent on site conditions and how well the vegetation is growing and how the cover system is settling in,” Cheva Heck, spokeswoman for Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, said. “We could reopen Garbage Dump Road as soon as August of this year; once the construction equipment and trailers are off the site. If it takes longer for vegetation to re-establish, the site could remain closed for more than a year. Our intention is to reopen the site to dispersed recreation like biking, hiking, dog-walking and similar activities.”

This will be the third summer contractors have been working on the Meyers Landfill.

South Tahoe city manager offered job in Washington

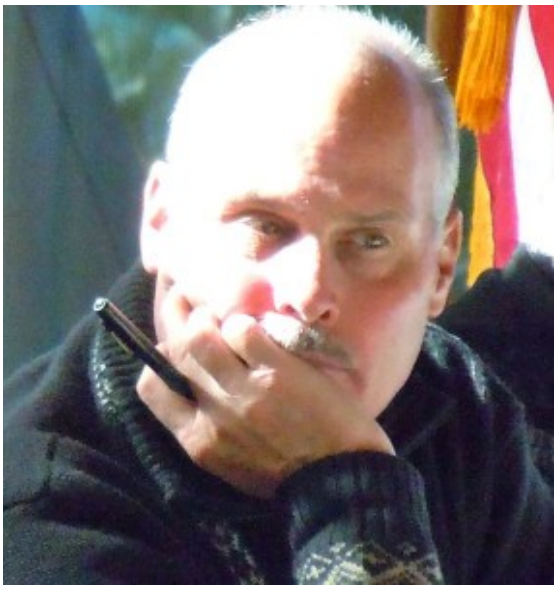
By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Tony O’Rourke has been offered

the same job in Yakima, Wash.

O’Rourke, who signed a three-year contract with South Tahoe that started in August 2010, told *Lake Tahoe News* he will take the weekend to decide about what to do regarding the job offer. He expects to make a decision early next week.

The Yakima City Council voted 7-0 on April 27 to hire O’Rourke.



South Lake Tahoe City Manager Tony O'Rourke has been offered a job in Washington. Photo/LTN

Still to be negotiated are the terms of the contract. It is possible if wages and benefits don’t meet O’Rourke’s liking, he could turn down the offer.

He said he would be talking with South Lake Tahoe’s council this weekend, too.

“A decision will be made soon. I want to be fair to both parties,” O’Rourke said.

There is no penalty per his contract if he leaves South Lake Tahoe early. He is “supposed” to give 90-days notice, but it

is entirely up to the council when it would let him out of the contract.

However, on the flip side, had the council wanted to fire O'Rourke, he would have been entitled to nine months severance pay – 50 percent more than former City Manager Dave Jinkens had in his contract.

O'Rourke, 57, has been looking for another job for several months.

Earlier this month he told *Lake Tahoe News*, "For the long term I need to find a solution to this personal issue."

While he has been a lightning rod in his short tenure in South Lake Tahoe, the council has had his back, collectively agreeing he has done what the city needed.

Nancy Kerry, who earlier this month was officially given the title that puts her second in command and the top city official when O'Rourke is out of town, on Friday night told *Lake Tahoe News* it would be inappropriate to speak about O'Rourke's job offer until she had spoken with him and the council.

Mayor Claire Fortier, who also was not aware of the O'Rourke's job offer until *Lake Tahoe News* called, said, "South Lake Tahoe will be fine. Tony has created a very strong senior management team that is very capable of filling the void until we have the next city manager."

O'Rourke echoed that sentiment.

"We really have an outstanding senior staff," O'Rourke said.

For the council and city as a whole, he said, "What they need now is more civility and consistency. The heavy lifting has been done."

Gym, art classes may be rationed at community colleges

By Erica Perez, California Watch

As constrained budgets and course cuts have made it harder for many students to get the classes they need, the California Community Colleges are taking further steps toward rationing course offerings and focusing resources on students who are pursuing degrees, certificates, transfer or career goals.

Two proposed regulatory changes are headed to the Board of Governors in coming months. One would bar students from repeating the same physical education or arts class more than once on the state's dime.

Another proposal would give enrollment priority systemwide to students who are seeking degrees, transfer, certificates or career objectives – and would bump others to the end of the line, including most students who have racked up more than 100 units, students who stay too long on academic probation and those who veer off their academic plan.

The colleges already took one step toward limiting class repeats in July, when they cut off state funding for students to repeat most courses more than three times. That change

didn’t affect arts or physical education courses, however.

Read the whole story

California’s population growth expected to slowdown

By Rebecca Trounson, Los Angeles Times

California’s population will grow more slowly in the next few decades than it has in the past – and that is good for the state’s still-struggling economy, according to a new USC report.

The study projects that the state’s population, now 37.3 million, will continue to increase at a healthy clip – about 1 percent annually – for years to come. But at least through 2050, we are unlikely to see the boom rates of recent decades, especially the 1980s.

“This is more manageable growth and that’s good news for California,” said Dowell Myers, a USC demography and urban planning professor who co-wrote the report with colleague John Pitkin. “We’re returning to a more normal rate of growth.”

The cooling pace means the state, city and county governments and other entities will have more time to prepare for a bigger population than they did in years past, allowing for more effective planning, Myers and other experts said. That could ensure that new roads and parks, for example, are put in areas where they are most needed and where growth is likely to be sustained, they said.

The researchers said the slowdown will mainly stem from a

sharp drop in immigration to California, part of a nationwide trend detailed in other recent studies.

Although the slower pace of growth may be a net positive for California, it will require revisions to an array of public and private plans, including for schools, water projects, transportation, hospitals, highways and other infrastructure.

“Those of us who’ve been here for a while think of California as a place that’s grow, grow, grow – and go, go, go – but this shows that we’re not that anymore,” Hans Johnson, a demographer with the Public Policy Institute of California, said of the USC study released Tuesday. “We’re now more typical of the rest of the nation.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Bread & Broth thankful for Heavenly’s support

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to Heavenly Mountain Resort volunteers for recently, and yet again, adopting a Day of Nourishment.

Volunteers from the Heavenly team spent their time helping Bread & Broth volunteers serve a hot meal to those in need of one. They served a well balanced, healthy meal to all who came in hungry.

All of our co-coordinators that Monday were delighted the

Heavenly continues to support our Adopt-A-Day of Nourishment through the Bread & Broth program.

Bread & Broth is able to continue its mission of feeding the hungry of South Lake Tahoe in large part because of the generosity of the local community. A $250 sponsorship covers the cost of food and beverages for the approximately 100 people who visit each Monday evening.

To find out how your family or business can Adopt-A-Day of Nourishment, contact Connie Blue at midwest2tahoe@yahoo.com or (530) 544.4945.

Bread & Broth

Tahoe businesses unite to help Zawadisha Fund

Five South Shore businesses are donating a portion of their proceeds in May to the Zawadisha Fund.

“She is Beautiful Lake Tahoe” is about locals honoring themselves or those they care about, while supporting Kenyan women and children as they learn life saving self-defense skills and gain economic independence through micro-loans.

The Zawadisha Fund provides financial and technical assistance to the Kenyan NGO “Dolphin” for their self-defense and AIDS education workshops and has also implemented an innovative micro-loan and savings programs for women in Eldoret, Kenya. The mission is to improve and empower the lives of women and children in Kenya.

For more information, go online or more at our website

www.zawadisha.org contact Julie Lowe at jules@zawadisha.org.

The participating businesses are:

BioSpirit – Massage & More, (530) 541.5511;

Bliss Skincare Studio – Facials & More, (530) 318.8854;

Elevate Wellness Center – Acupuncture, Bodywork, and Nutrition, (530) 541-9355;

Gaialicious – Global Gifts, (530) 542.4244;

LauraNidra Yoga @ Mountain Yoga, May 19, 4-5:15pm Flow Class, all levels welcome.