Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Green Drinks is about bringing like-minded people together in a social setting the last Wednesday of every month at the Divided Sky in Meyers from 6-8pm. (That would be tonight.) This is a monthly gathering of environmentally conscience people. The gathering is open to anyone who works in, cares about, or is even remotely interested in sustainability.

• Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Citrus Heights, is having a town hall meeting on April 30 at the Pollock Pines-Camino Community Center, 2675 Sanders Drive, Pollock Pines at 6pm.

• The 2012 Valhalla Arts and Music Festival schedule is out.

• The Truckee-Grass Valley has been named one of the most mail-efficient areas the state by Catalog Choice's MailStop Index.

• Thirty people died in avalanches in the United States this winter, according to the Colorado Avalanche Information Center.

STHS student's photography singled out

South Tahoe High School student Angelee Brown received first place in the CaliforniaStreaming.org Digital Photography Contest and finalist in the *National Geographic* photography

competition that had more than 1,800 entries.

Brown’s black and white photo of her little sister caught the judge’s attention. The photograph titled “Playing Dress Up” was submitted in the student category.



South Tahoe High student Angelee Brown took this award-winning photo.

Opinion: Loop road project is a dream gone bad

To the community,

Once again the loop road has us going in circles. The first plan for the Park Avenue Redevelopment Area 1 (Stateline) contained not only a loop road, but a satellite city hall with two parking spaces for city customers, and a monorail connecting Stateline to Ski Run. The plan was driven by wishes, wishes that haven’t been fulfilled.

The current loop road plan is a planner’s dream, a dream that

may turn into a nightmare because to do the loop as planned, workforce housing will have to be taken by the agency. Thus, the agency talks of using eminent domain to take property. A problem is the City Council on a vote of 5-0 killed future use of eminent domain in Redevelopment Area 1. Thus, the agency and the city are on a collision course.



Bill Crawford

And the loop road as dreamed of would reroute commercial vehicles through neighborhoods. The planners ignore the traffic of 18-wheelers and other large commercial vehicles. Also, regardless of what happens or doesn't happen, the 18-wheelers , etc., will always be with us. All that the planned loop road would achieve is a bottleneck because the 18-wheelers, etc., have to return to Highway 50 to complete the business of transporting goods and services from A to B. If the dreamers would wake up, they would realize that there is no satisfactory alternative to the present passage of vehicles through the casino canyon. We are hemmed in by the lake and the mountains. That's not likely to change. Not even by dreamers planning.

The message for me is, be what we seem to be. Minus the pretense, the community is a mountain border town locked into lost causes.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

If you could change anything in TRPA’s Regional Plan, what would it be?

USFS wants input on proposed improvements at William Kent near Tahoe City

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is asking for public input on the environmental assessment prepared for the William Kent Best Management Practices Retrofit and Administrative Site Redevelopment project.

The proposed project area is approximately 22 acres and is located one mile south of Tahoe City, and consists of the William Kent Campground, William Kent administrative site, William Kent day-use beach area.

Proposed improvements include installation of BMPs, reconfiguration of the campground circulation pattern, relocation of the kiosk area and the RV dump station and construction of accessible restroom facilities.

In addition, a fire station would be built that would replace the Meeks Bay Fire Station. The existing Meeks Bay Fire Station would be removed and the area rehabilitated.

The William Kent beach/day-use site would be re-contoured, the current slope stabilized, BMPs installed and the storm water pipe on the beach shortened. This would provide increased filtration and reduce sediment before storm water enters Lake Tahoe. An accessible path would be constructed to access the beach from the picnic area.

Work on the campground retrofit portion of the project could begin in May 2014 and would take approximately six months to complete.

Comments are being accepted until May 25. For more information on how to comment and a detailed description of the proposed action, contact Ashley Sommer at (530) 543. 2615 or go online.

CVS in old Bill's casino to open in May; other tenants set for summer move-in

By Anne Knowles

The Stateline site known as Bill's Casino, named for Harrah's founder Bill Harrah and purchased two years ago by Mike Laub, will reopen its doors next month.

After a remodel costing more than $3 million and employing 80 workers, the 40,000-square-foot site is being reborn as a mall.

"Everything is new," said Laub, who bought the property in March 2010 for $5.22 million. "New parking lot, new landscaping, new windows, new heating system. The only thing left is the foundation and the steel."



A portion of the old Bill's casino will open in May, with the remaining tenants who have signed leases moving in during the summer. Photo/LTN

“It’s looking more and more high-end,” said Sam Dufour, owner of Teaz N Pleaz, an adult lingerie shop and one of eight tenants in the new mall. “It will change the face of the area.”

The unnamed mall – Laub told *Lake Tahoe News* he might have a contest to name it – will launch on May 6 with the opening of a CVS store without a pharmacy. According to the Douglas County building permit, the store will be 11,102 square feet.

Michael DeAngelis, a spokesman for the Woonsocket, R.I.-based drugstore chain, said CVS decided to forgo a pharmacy because the Stateline store is expected to attract more tourists and visitors than residents.

Laub said he expects the CVS to employ about 20 people, and for the remaining mall tenants to employ another 60. He said one tenant, the Lucky Beaver Bar & Burger, soon would be having a job fair.

During June, most of the remaining occupants are expected to debut, including Dotty’s Casino, Tahoe Diamond District, Lucky Beaver Bar & Burger, Tahoe Ink, Teaz N Pleaz, and Pilates

Studio Lake Tahoe. An eighth tenant, The Raw Bar, a bar and seafood restaurant, is expected to open in August, according to Laub.

Teaz N Pleaz is adding to its stores in Fair Oaks and South Lake Tahoe with a 1,500-square-foot store in the new mall, which Dufour hopes to open June 1. He characterizes the store as a competitor to Victoria's Secret, but its website also sells sex toys and adult games, along with apparel.

Pilates Studio Lake Tahoe is opening in late June in a 3,000-square-foot space on the third floor of the mall, said Tara Farrah, the studio's owner. Farrah plans to offer private and group classes taught by four Pilates instructors and three yoga teachers. She may also add Zumba, a Latin-inspired dance aerobic program, and hopes eventually to offer outdoor classes on the mall's rooftop.

"I wholeheartedly believe in Pilates," Farrah said. "I had a ski accident years ago, and it saved my life."

Farrah's husband, Pat, will be opening the Lucky Beaver Bar & Burger, a 24-hour gaming bar serving gourmet burgers, on June 15. The county building permit lists it as 3,105 square feet. It feature video-table top gambling, a mini sports book, a grill inside and a fire pit in the back with outdoor seating.

Farrah said there is considerable parking in the back. "It will be a great location for locals and out of towners."

He co-founded Home Depot. On this project Farrah has two partners – Mike Leeper, who ran Bar 24 at Bill's Casino, and Kevin Lane ,who owned the Cedar Room in Round Hill.

Tahoe Diamond District, a jewelry store listed as 1,266 square feet on its building permit, and Tahoe Ink, a tattoo parlor with thousands of square feet, according to its permit, are expected to open in early June, according to Laub.

Finally, a 6,500-square-foot Dotty's Casino is scheduled to open in early June, too. The casino will have 100 slot machines, a bar and a restaurant, said Laub.

Dotty's, which caters to locals and women who don't typically like casinos, was the focus of a push by the Nevada Resorts Association to impose stricter guidelines on slots parlors. In August 2011, the Nevada Gaming Commission amended its regulations to require Dotty's and similar establishments to offer bars seating at least nine patrons and restaurants of at least 2,000 square feet seating for at least 20 customers.

Calls for comment to Nevada Restaurant Service, the corporate name for Las Vegas-based Dotty's, were not returned.

Three storefronts remain vacant in the mall, said Laub: a 4,500-square-foot spot on the first floor that Laub is now negotiating with several potential tenants and two spaces on the second floor that can be flexibly configured for between 1,000 and 3,000 square feet.

"The second floor would be a perfect location for a salon," said Laub.

Originally, Laub planned to build a strip club at the site, but the Douglas County Commissioners nixed the plan.

The site is also known for a safe discovered in its walls during the remodeling. Some believe the safe may be connected to the unsolved murder of Richard Chartand, the original owner of the casino, when it was known as Barney's Casino. He was killed in 1968 by a car bomb, believed to have been planted by the mob.

The Oprah Winfrey Network acquired the rights to reveal the contents of the safe on an upcoming series, but has decided not to use the safe in any show, a spokesman for the TV network told *Lake Tahoe News*.

LTCC hires VP from the K-12 sector

Lake Tahoe Community College has one less vacancy in the front office.

Beginning June 29, Jeff DeFranco will be vice president of Administrative Services.

The board of trustees on April 24 voted on his hiring.



Jeff DeFranco

The title, while new to the South Lake Tahoe college, better reflects what DeFranco will do. This position replaces that of VP of Business Services. That job has been vacant for more than a year. The renaming was done by the board last fall, with a reorg spurred by LTCC President Kindred Murillo earlier this year..

Since July 2008, DeFranco has been director of communications and facilities at Springfield Public Schools in Oregon.

The district, which is near Eugene, has a staff of 1,300 staff, nearly 11,000 students, and an annual budget of nearly

$100 million.

DeFranco believes his experience in difficult fiscal times will help him do his job at LTCC.

“I have been dealing with a very similar reduction environment here in Springfield. I believe community colleges have the capacity to be a real economic driver. When you are dealing with declining state revenue you must be as entrepreneurial as possible and use the power of partnerships to grow the revenue pie,” DeFranco said in a statement.

Murillo said in a statement, “Jeff brings an incredible skill set and energy to our college and community.”

DeFranco has a master’s in educational leadership with an emphasis in higher education administration from the University of Oregon. He earned his undergraduate degree from CSU Chico.

He has also been the sole proprietor of True North Consulting & Leadership for nearly 10 years.

DeFranco, who will be moving to Lake Tahoe with his wife and two children, is familiar with area. His grandfather built a cabin in Meyers in the 1960s, and he would visit every year.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Eldorado National Forest lifts seasonal road closures

The U.S. Forest Service announced Tuesday that the wet weather seasonal closure of designated dirt roads and trails in the Eldorado National Forest has ended, with the exception of 42 routes that remain closed by court order.

Some of the open routes aren’t as dried out as others. Forest visitors are responsible for staying on the routes and not causing resource damage. Travelers may also encounter hazards on the open routes because little maintenance has been completed.

Many high elevation routes are still covered with snow and the Forest Service says drivers should use care not to cause resource damage. In most cases, these routes are located on soils that drain better than lower elevation routes constructed in clay based soils.

Forest visitors can obtain free-of-charge motorized vehicle use maps at all Eldorado National Forest ranger stations and at the forest headquarter’ s office in Placerville.

The U.S. District Court directed the Forest Service to keep the 42 routes seasonally closed until a final court order is issued later this spring.

The Mormon Emigrant Trail remains closed to through traffic due to snow.

SEC sues Stateline man involved in CalPERS scandal

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

The U.S. government sued the two key figures in the CalPERS bribery scandal Monday, targeting the pension fund's former chief executive and a businessman who earned millions in finder's fees from CalPERS investment deals.

The Securities and Exchange Commission's lawsuit steps up the pressure on former CalPERS CEO Fred Buenrostro and his longtime friend, Stateline businessman Alfred Villalobos. It also contains new details about how the alleged fraud was carried out.

According to the suit, the pair cobbled together a series of phony letters bearing the pension fund's logo. The SEC said the letters were used to dupe Villalobos' top client, Wall Street powerhouse Apollo Global Management, into paying him fees totaling $20 million.

It's the latest major legal action against Buenrostro and Villalobos. State officials have already sued the two men, saying Villalobos bribed Buenrostro and others at CalPERS to influence investment decisions. Both have denied any wrongdoing.

The SEC's lawsuit was welcomed by CalPERS, even though it creates fresh momentum for a scandal that has dogged the California Public Employees' Retirement System for more than two years.

"We believe the SEC's action … brings us one step closer to closing this chapter in our history," said Anne Stausboll, who replaced Buenrostro as CEO of CalPERS after he left in 2008.

Buenrostro, 62, was married at Villalobos' Lake Tahoe mansion. He joined Villalobos' firm, Arvco, the day after leaving CalPERS, and state officials said Villalobos, 68, bought him a condo at Tahoe.

Besides damaging the pension fund's image, the Villalobos affair has been costly financially. An investigator hired by CalPERS said last year that some of the pension fund's investment partners probably inflated the fees they charged CalPERS in order to pay Villalobos' commissions.

The SEC suit "is another impressive action by law enforcement authorities and I expect more from them to come," said the CalPERS investigator, Philip Khinda, a lawyer in Washington, D.C.

What comes next is unclear. CalPERS officials have said a criminal investigation into Villalobos and Buenrostro's actions has been under way for more than a year. Stausboll refused to speculate on whether any charges would be filed.

The SEC's lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Nevada, where Villalobos and Buenrostro live. It demands they "disgorge all ill-gotten gains from their illegal conduct," plus interest.

Read the whole story

'No party preference' growing in popularity

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

Congressional candidate Linda Parks isn't one for conventional

choices.



As she tells voters in a recent television ad, her favorite ice cream flavor is not chocolate or vanilla, but the nuts-and-marshmallow-loaded Rocky Road.

And her chosen party preference on the June 5 ballot?

“None.”

“I’ve had longtime supporters tell me, ‘I don’t even know what party you are.’ And I like that,” said Parks, a Ventura County supervisor who has been both a member and, more recently, a punching bag of both the Republican and the Democratic parties. “I like the fact that they can’t peg me as one party or the other.”

Parks is one of 36 candidates with “no party preference” running for state and federal office in California this year, the first time the option is available for primary candidates.

Her candidacy for the 26th Congressional District is getting attention because of the chance she’ll succeed in becoming the first independent elected to the House of Representatives since 2004.

No-party-preference candidates make up just a fraction of the more than 500 people running for state and federal office on the June ballot. But some observers say a win – or even a good show – by Parks or other no-party-preference candidates could pave the way for more independents to run for elected office in California.

“In this climate with the tea party and the Occupy movement and the anti-incumbent sentiment, if it turns out that that does translate into ‘no-party-preference’ candidates winning,

we can expect to see all sorts of people shedding their party affiliation in the future," said Kimberly Nalder, an associate professor in the CSU Sacramento, Department of Government.

The emergence of no-party-preference candidates is a direct result in a voter-approved overhaul of the state's election system. Under the old system, independents eyeing elected office would have to collect voter signatures after the primary for November ballot access. Now, under the top-two primary, independent candidates, described as "party preference: none," run alongside Democrats, Republicans and candidates from minor parties for one of two spots in the November runoff.

Read the whole story