Soroptimist recognize 6 women making a difference

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Jen Gurecki summed up the night the best: "I believe service is the rent you pay for life."

She was one of six women recognized March 8 – on International Women's Day – for her contribution to the South Shore community and beyond.

For years Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra and South Lake Tahoe have given the Violet Richardson Ward, Women's Opportunity and Ruby awards, with this being the second year for the clubs to do so at a joint dinner.

Gurecki and Sue Jackson were recipients of the Ruby Ward, which is bestowed upon women who have worked to improve the lives of women and girls through their professional and/or volunteer lives.

Gurecki started V Day South Lake, which puts on the "Vagina Monologues", and is the force behind the Zawadisha Fund that helps women in Kenya.

Jackson has for years been a tireless volunteer for a variety of entities that cross generations – from Lake Tahoe Boys and Girls Club to Meals on Wheels.

The first awards given out Thursday at Harrah's Lake Tahoe are named after Violet Richardson Ward, the first president of Soroptimist. Girls ages 14 to 17 whose volunteer efforts help others can be nominated.

Kate Albrecht is a junior at South Tahoe High who started the school year getting chemotherapy for Hodgkin's lymphoma. Now

she is back on campus, maintaining a 4.0 gpa and a member of the National Honor Society.

She created a program for young cancer patients to have stuffed bears they can call buddies, who they can talk to, who listen, who give them comfort in ways family members and medical professionals can't.

Morgan Kaufer also received the Violet Richardson Ward Award. She has been active with the Invisible Children Foundation.

"Invisible Children taught me to see, care and react," Kaufer said.

The Women's Opportunity Award is given to individuals who have overcome substantial obstacles. Each received a $2,000 check to continue their education.

For Kim Nesbitt, she overcame a life of domestic violence that included temporarily leaving her children until she could get on solid ground. She regained custody of her two sons, overcame being downsized by El Dorado County and is in school to obtain a degree in business.

For April Torrez, her story is one of survival. She was taking care of her siblings at age 5, at 11 sent to live with her father who was into drugs, by 13 was running away, and at 19 gave birth to her second child.

She is in a healthy relationship, going to school and raising her daughter.

Torrez told the group through tears that getting an education for herself is the only way she will be able to provide her daughter with the life she envisions.

Owners of unleashed dogs in Upper Truckee Marsh to be cited

By Kathryn Reed

While the dog ban at Upper Truckee Marsh is seven weeks away, enforcement of the leash law is being increased starting this weekend.

With the mild winter the area is experiencing, more people are outside playing. That in turn means more dogs running around in sensitive areas and disturbing wildlife.



AJ won't be allowed in the Upper Truckee Marsh area from May 1-July 31. Photo/Kathryn Reed

May 1 begins the second year of the seasonal three-month dog ban on this acreage owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy in South Lake Tahoe. Even dogs on leashes are not allowed at

that time.

The reason is to protect the natural resources in the area, which is the largest wetland habitat in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This is the only one of the nearly 5,000 CTC properties that has this type of closure.

The Conservancy spent nearly a decade monitoring the area. Because people let their dogs run free, the board in July 2010 voted on the seasonal ban.

What will change this year is that more citations and fewer warnings are likely to be issued. This is because El Dorado County sheriff's deputies used 2011 as a year to educate people. Animal control also patrols the area.

Plus, there are signs at the entrances to the marsh alerting people about the rules, so it should not come as a surprise.

Dana Dapolito, CTC associate environmental planner, said data collected from last summer in regards to the habitat is still being analyzed.

But it was pointed out if dogs continue to roam in the marsh-meadow, it is hard to quantify if the ban is helping flora and fauna in the area because it's not a true ban.

The Block hotel changes hands

with plans to reopen

By Kathryn Reed

The Block, the infamous one-time snowboarder hotel near Stateline, is going to open its doors again.

The San Francisco-based owners have obtained a building permit from South Lake Tahoe to renovate the rooms, put on a new roof, and bring things up to code.

A fire damaged the roof in September when heat tape and pine needles came into contact with each other.



The Block hotel in South Lake Tahoe is being renovated. Photo/LTN

“The lobby and a couple of the rooms will be brought up to ADA standards. Overall it is a minor fix it to get the place open,” Hilary Roverud, director of Development Services, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The owners, operating under the name 4143 SLT LLC, did not return multiple calls. The address of the hotel is 4143 Cedar Ave.

The 50-room hotel used to be two hotels. In 2003, they were consolidated into one.

Eneliko “Sean” Smith had owned The Block and Cedar Lodge hotels, but lost both to creditors. BMR Funding LLC took over The Block and First Credit Bank owns Cedar Lodge.

Smith was in and out of court for failing to pay the city the hotel tax.

“We have not been paid the back TOT taxes,” City Attorney Patrick Enright told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Smith is supposed to pay $500 month, but hasn’t paid a dime. The total he owes is $134,000.

It is not known when the new hotel will open or if the name is staying the same.

Owners have called the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, but no one has submitted an application.

“What they would have to pay would depend on what they would propose to do at the hotel. At a minimum there would be an air quality mitigation fee,” Kristi Boosman, TRPA spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She added that the owner mentioned to TRPA staff about putting in bike-pedestrian walkways or electric charging stations in order to reduce those air mitigation fees, but with no paperwork being submitted, the TRPA doesn’t know what the hotel owners want to or will do.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Poet Suzanne Roberts will be at Sierra Nevada College April 13 at 7pm as part of the Writers in the Woods Series. She will be reading from and signing her book. The event is at the Center for Environmental Sciences, Room 139, Sierra Nevada College, Incline Village.

• South Tahoe PUD board members are having a budget workshop March 13 from 2-5pm at the offices at 1275 Meadow Crest Drive.

• Caesars Entertainment for the fourth consecutive year will participate in the World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour on March 31 from 8:30-9:30pm. Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline will participate in shutting off non-essential exterior lighting and marquees for that hour.

• Hotel prices in the Tahoe-Reno area are 22 percent below 2011 rates for this time of year because of the lack of snow, according to Hotwire.

• South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County are putting on a forum March 21 at 3pm to talk about low-cost and no-cost loans for businesses. Click on flyer for more information.

• Here is Caltrans' roadwork schedule for next week in the Sierra and El Dorado-Tahoe.

Opinion: History repeating itself 100 years later

To the community,

Come the November election, a century ago Woodrow Wilson was elected president. A prime issue in the 1912 campaign was the heavy concentration of wealth in the hands of individuals and the trusts. Wilson believed such a condition was a threat to the republic. Today the republic faces such a threat. Plutocrats are on the rise. The prime issue in the 1912 election is alive one hundred years after Wilson's election.

In Steven Saylor's book "Roma" he wrote, "All the issues Americans deal with today in our polarized republic, the Romans dealt with first. Conservative politicians preached patriotism and religious piety and whipped up xenophobia hysteria …. At the other end of the political spectrum, rabble-rousers … exploited the resentment of the struggling classes. Both sides used lawsuits and sexual scandals to drag down their opponents. Doesn't all this sound familiar?"



Bill Crawford

Yes, it does. We have deep social and economic inequality. Today our poor and middle class are getting poorer and the rich have become super rich. And the bloody shirt of war is being waved by political candidates for the office of chief executive and many members of Congress. They love the red herrings.

Saylor reminds us that, “The American republic has so far lasted only about half as long as did Rome’s. Whether it will end with the rise of an all-powerful executive … remains to be seen. There are certainly forces at work leading us in that direction.”

Well, clearly we’ve been warned. Seems it’s time to heed the message.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Girl Scouts – 100 years of creating tomorrow’s leaders

By Kathryn Reed

When Girl Scouts was formed 100 years ago this month, women did not have the right to vote, Title IX was 60 years away, and leadership roles for women were rare.

On March 12 the world celebrates the group of girls who number 10 million in 145 countries. Though the numbers are much greater because there is the saying, “Once a Girl Scout, always a Girl Scout.”

Some well known women who started their leadership training in Girl Scouts are: Hillary Rodham Clinton, Laura Bush, Madeleine Albright, Janet Reno, Sandra Day O’Connor, Joyce Brothers, Katie Couric, Lucille Ball, Grace Kelly, Gloria Steinem, Mary Tyler Moore, Dakota Fanning and Queen Elizabeth II.

While the organization is often only thought about this time of year because of the annual cookie sales, Girl Scouts is much more than a box of Thin Mints.

“The emphasis has always been empowering girls and valuing girls and what they can do,” explained Shelly Martinez. She was a troop leader in South Lake Tahoe while her daughter, Ali, went through grades K-12. Martinez took a four-year break from Girl Scouts and is now helping again.

On the South Shore about 100 girls are divvied up in the 11 troops that stretch from Meyers to Round Hill.

Karen Tucker, who is a service unit coordinator, which means she oversees the individual troops, said there would be more troops if leaders could be found.

It’s one of the least expensive activities available for youth. It costs $12 a year, plus any expense the individual troops have.

“It’s a great place for girls to grow up being girls. It’s a really nice organization. They get to do lot of fun stuff and learn a lot of skills,” Tucker said.

While all are Girl Scouts, there are five divisions based on grade level: Daisy is kindergarten-first grade, Brownie is grades 2-3, Junior is 4-5, Cadets 6-8, and Senior is high school.

The name Daisy comes from Girl Scout founder Juliette Gordon Low whose nickname was Daisy.

At the senior level they are working toward silver and gold awards. A gold is similar to an Eagle Scout for boys.

Projects under way include one teenager creating a movie about the dangers of texting and driving, while another is organizing a band to play at the senior center and other places in town for free.

No longer do girls wear the brown Brownie or green Girl Scouts uniforms. There was a time, in this reporter's lifetime, when that brown dress was regularly worn to school on meeting days.

Today, the girls buy the sashes that are worn on special occasions. They also have all their badges on the sash.

Cookie sales are a big part of what Girl Scouts is about.

"Cookies are definitely a fund raiser, but for me it was also a way for girls to learn skills," Martinez said. "They are out there using leadership, learning how to market a product, setting goals, and knowing how much money they earn per box. They set goals not only for themselves, but also for community service to help others."

Money from the sales funds activities and camp. The North Shore group has a permanent camp, while the South Shore contingency often finds various places to go. Last year it was to Sugar Pine Point State Park on the West Shore and this year they will be in the cabins at the 4-H camp in Stateline.

Cookie sales will continue through March, with girls setting up in front of local grocery stores. Cookie sales have been going on nearly since the beginning. According to the Girl Scouts' website, "The earliest mention of a cookie sale found to date was that of the Mistletoe Troop in Muskogee, Oklahoma, which baked cookies and sold them in its high school cafeteria as a service project in December 1917."

On March 12, Girl Scouts throughout the world will celebrate the 100-year mark. On the South Shore they will be gathering at Embassy Suites at 6:15pm.

For more information about Girl Scouts, call Karen Tucker at (530) 541.1204.

Tropicana Entertainment loses $13.6 million in 4th quarter

By Steve Green, Las Vegas Sun

Tropicana Entertainment Inc. of Las Vegas posted a smaller loss in the fourth quarter than the same period a year earlier, the company disclosed in its annual report this week.

The hotel-casino company controlled by investor Carl Icahn said it lost $13.6 million on net revenue of $146.5 million.



MontBleu's parent company continues to lose money.

Photo/LTN file

That compares to a loss in the year-ago quarter of $20.4 million on net revenue of nearly $155 million.

The loss fell in part because the 2010 quarter included $19.2 million in accounting entries to write down the value of assets vs. just $5.8 million of such charges in the 2011 quarter.

Tropicana said that for all of 2011, net revenue increased for its casinos in Atlantic City and the Midwest, but it was flat for its properties in the South and fell for its properties in Nevada.

Tropicana has two resorts in Laughlin and one in Lake Tahoe – MontBleu. The Tropicana Las Vegas is owned by another company.

Read the whole story

Nevada ready to takeover porn film industry from LA

By Joe Schoenmann, Las Vegas Sun

Angered by an ordinance requiring actors in pornographic productions to wear condoms, some in the adult industry are threatening to move their operations from the “pornucopia” of Los Angeles to Southern Nevada.

The news, first reported last month by the Los Angeles Times, has caused some to speculate on the industry’s future in Las Vegas, which is already seen by many insiders as a welcoming second home.

While these insiders say more studios are likely to move here because of the ordinance, they also note porn's migration was under way long before the Los Angeles City Council's January vote aimed at stopping the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Las Vegas is home to a mega-player, Brazzers, and a newcomer, Bluebird Films. Several performers live in the Las Vegas Valley. And it's not uncommon for the Strip skyline, Lake Mead and surrounding mountains to show up in pornographic movies, insiders said.

Katie Kox, a performer and porn website operator who lives in Henderson, said she expects the ordinance to push more producers to Southern Nevada. She typically flies to Los Angeles for filming but anticipates doing more work locally as the ordinance takes effect.

"I honestly think it's going to affect the Vegas film industry a lot," she said. "A lot of them (performers) already live out here."

Las Vegas and Clark County have both licensed adult motion picture studios, and within the last year, a major porn production company set up shop in Southern Nevada, according to Clyde DeWitt, an attorney who represents porn production companies and has offices in Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

Read the whole story

Nevada education funding

study to proceed

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – A panel of lawmakers is moving forward with a review of the state's 45-year-old formula for funding public education after receiving $125,000 from the Clark County School District to pay for a study.

The New Method for Funding Public Schools interim study was authorized by the 2011 Legislature to look at the "Nevada Plan" the current funding formula adopted in 1967.

But it was contingent upon funding from the Clark County School District, which is seeking the review. The district wants lawmakers to consider revising the formula to assist urban districts with the costs of educating special education students, English-language learners and children in poverty, among other factors.

Lawmakers on the panel voted to hire a consultant through a request for proposals to assist in the review of the formula.

Sen. Greg Brower, R-Reno, a member of the interim study panel, also asked the Clark County School District to provide a list of those who contributed to the district to produce the $125,000 for the study.

"Unless counsel would advise us otherwise I think it is a matter of public record so I think it is important that the committee and those who might be evaluating this study later on know exactly how it was funded and where the funds came from, so …," he said.

Joyce Haldeman, representing the district, said the information would be provided.

‘The Royal Family’

“The Royal Family”, a comedy by George S. Kaufman & Edna Ferber, opens March 23 in the Viking Theatre in the Tahoe Arts & Design Academy at South Tahoe High School. Show dates are March 23, 24, 30, 31 at 7pm and March 25 and April 1 at 2pm.

Tickets are $5 for students and $10 for everyone else. This three-act play is suitable for children age 6 and older.

Information regarding advanced ticket sales will be posted online. Arrive early to purchase tickets at the door.