Heavenly sued by second skier allegedly hit by employee while on the slopes

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

A second skier who was injured when a Heavenly Mountain Resort employee on a snowboard slammed into her has filed a lawsuit claiming the resort's owner is liable for its employee's "unsafe, out-of-control (snow) boarding."

Elisabeth "Elly" Benschop, 54, of Gardnerville was knocked unconscious and suffered a brain injury on Feb. 22 when Heavenly employee Andrea Ramos, 20, of Brazil crashed into her on the resort's Olympic ski run, according to the suit, filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Reno.

Another skier, Kimberly Bland of Florida, filed a similar lawsuit in December, claiming she was injured in January 2011 when Heavenly employee Daniel Barreno crashed into her while he was riding down the Olympic slope on his snowboard.

Russ Pecoraro, director of communications at Heavenly Mountain Resort, declined to comment on the two lawsuits, saying in an email: "Our company policy prohibits commenting on pending litigation."

The suit, filed by Minden lawyer Jay Sullivan, seeks damages topping $75,000 to cover the emergency and medical costs, as well as legal fees and expenses. It claims that the resort has failed to hold liability insurance to cover its foreign employees and has refused to take responsibility for its employees' actions.

"Vail and Heavenly are taking the position that Elly is on her

own against Ms. Ramos, who is scheduled to return to her home country on March 15, 2012," the suit said, "and that Elly should try and collect her thousands of dollars in ambulance, ER and CT scan billings, plus future treatment and disability costs from young Ms. Ramos personally."

Read the whole story

Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus

J.S. Bach's "Passion According to St. Matthew" will be presented by TOCCATA – Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – from March 31 through April 6.

Many consider this to be Bach's greatest masterpiece.

Performances are March 31 at 4pm at Sierra Bible Church in Truckee; April 2 at 7pm at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church in Reno; April 4 at 7pm at St. Theresa Catholic Church in South Lake Tahoe; and April 6 at 7pm at St. Patrick's Episcopal Church in Incline Village.

Tickets are available at the door with cash or check or online with a credit card.

For more information, call (775) 313.9697, or email ToccataTahoe@gmail.com.

El Dorado County asking for input on land use planning

With several high-level planning projects on the horizon, El Dorado County has created a webpage and scheduled a series of community meetings to gather public feedback.

The county is in the process of amending various sections of the General Plan. The General Plan establishes broad policies for how land can be developed throughout the county's western slope.

In addition to the targeted General Plan amendments, the county also aims to comprehensively update the zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance provides guidance for how General Plan policies apply to each specific parcel of land. State law requires that the zoning ordinance be consistent with the General Plan.

Along with the targeted amendments to the General Plan and zoning ordinance update, the county will simultaneously be updating its travel demand model.

The website provides background information on each project, key decision points, frequently asked questions, timelines and contact information for comments and questions.

Six community meetings have been scheduled where county staff will be presenting an overview of the various projects, processes, time lines and additional opportunities for public involvement. All meetings will run from 6-8pm.

Dates and locations include:

March 5 El Dorado Hills Community Services District Pavilion, 1021 Harvard Way, El Dorado Hills

March 7 South Lake Tahoe City Council Chambers, 1901 Airport

Road, South Lake Tahoe

March 12 Pioneer Park Community Center, 6740 Fair Play Road,Somerset

March 15 Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park

March 19 Northside School Gym, 860 Cave Valley Road, Cool

March 22 Union Mine High School Library, 6530 Koki Lane, El Dorado.

Loop road meeting

Tahoe Regional Young Professionals' development and education speaker series kicks off March 15 with Alfred Knotts, principal planner-project manager for the Tahoe Transportation District.

Knotts will present plans associated with the Highway 50 South Shore Community Revitalization Project, a proposed plan that would wipe-out a long-established neighborhood in South Lake Tahoe and in its place put a state highway.

This is locally known as the loop road project.

The idea is to make the Stateline area more pedestrian friendly for tourists, turning the current highway into a city street and the city streets locals use to bypass the casino corridor into the highway, with highway going behind Harrah's and MontBleu.

Knotts will explain how proponents believe the project will

provide safety and environmental improvements, economic vitality, and enhance the community and visitor experience with reduced congestion.

The meeting is from 6-9pm at the Lake Tahoe Airport's Flight Deck Restaurant and Bar.

For more information, email TahoeTRYP@gmail.com.

4-legged deputy joins Washoe County Sheriff's Office

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office is looking forward to welcoming the newest member of its K-9 program, Akim.

Akim will arrive in Washoe County early this month. His partner will be Deputy Corey Solferino. They will work patrol and narcotics.

The sheriff's office acquired Akim thanks to a generous donation from a member of the Honorary Deputy Sheriff's Association who wishes to remain anonymous. Given the importance and effectiveness of the K-9 program, the donor wanted to make sure the sheriff's office would be able to replace K-9 Kraft who passed away unexpectedly last year.



Akim is the

newest member of the Washoe County Sheriffi's Office. Photo/Provided

The donation provided funds for the purchase of a new canine and all travel and training for Akim and Solferino. The donation included a protective vest designed specifically for canines.

Akim is a 17-month-old, sable Czechoslovakian Shepherd. He was born in Prague and brought to the United States to train for a career in law enforcement at the Vohne Liche Kennels in Denver, Ind. Solferino chose Akim as a partner from hundreds of potential dogs.

Solferino said he started by working with a number of different dogs in situations that would potentially show how the dog would react when out on patrol.

Solferino and Akim are scheduled to graduate from their Vohne Liche training March 9.

West Shore biathlon event

Strap on your cross country skis and get ready to live the thrill of Olympic competition.

The West Shore Business Association and Turning Point Tahoe are sponsoring a Citizens Against the Clock event which puts skiers of all ages and abilities on a short cross country ski course followed by an electronic rifle shooting range. The

idea is to provide a safe and family friendly way to experience this Olympic sport.

State Park volunteers will be on hand for March 11 10am-1pm event at Sugar Pine Point State Park on the West Shore.

Turning Point Tahoe will be providing adaptive skiing options.

Each skier will be electronically timed and the results posted. The event is free. There is an $8 per vehicle parking fee.

For more information, call (530) 583.3074.

High-tech skydiving equipment adds to risk

By Abby Sewell, Los Angeles Times

PERRIS – The competition was high-performance and high-risk, and Sean Carey and his 16 fellow skydivers knew it.

They were equipped with special parachutes that allowed a faster and better-controlled descent, and their goal Saturday was to dive toward a shallow pond in an advanced maneuver known as swooping.

One by one, they plummeted toward the surface, executing a last-minute turn to accelerate before leveling off and gliding just above the pond. But Carey, an instructor at Skydive San Diego who had done the maneuver successfully hundreds of times, made his turn too low and crashed into the pond.

Carey was the sixth highly experienced skydiver to be killed

in the last year at Perris Valley Skydiving, one of the largest and most popular facilities for the sport in the nation.

The deaths reflect a divergent nationwide trend: equipment upgrades and safety rules have reduced overall skydiving fatalities among novices — but the smaller, more aerodynamically designed parachutes have allowed more experienced divers to take more risks.

Increasingly, industry veterans said, fatal accidents involve experts attempting advanced maneuvers with high-performance equipment — people like Carey, who according to his employer averaged 1,800 jumps a year and had won previous swooping competitions.

Last December, another experienced canopy pilot, as they are known, died making a landing error while swooping at Perris. The facility temporarily suspended swooping while it conducted a review of safety procedures.

The company's general manager, Dan Brodsky-Chenfeld, said he found that Perris' safety standards were as high as or higher than other facilities' but further tightened requirements.

The facility had already required that before attempting a high-performance maneuver, a skydiver must have made at least 700 jumps. After the December fatality, it added a requirement that skydivers receive special training before attempting swooping.

In the wake of Carey's death, Brodsky-Chenfeld said he is again reviewing the standards.

Read the whole story

Concert at STMS

Lake Tahoe Unified School District's "March Madness" bands in concert is March 7 at 7pm.

The free event is at South Tahoe Middle School.

The concert features 170 middle school and elementary advanced fifth-graders performing for one hour.

Time Management for Busy People: Getting Things Done in 2012

The North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Sierra Human Resources Association are offering "Time Management for Busy People: Getting Things Done in 2012" on March 13 from 9am to noon.

Registration begins at 8:30am at Cedar House Sport Hotel, 10918 Brockway Road in Truckee.

Attendees will learn how to identify timewasters and the reasons why they procrastinate, explore the reality of the demands of their jobs, discover if they are addicted to urgency, get perspective on what matters most in their lives, prioritize what is important and what is urgent, uncover their prime real estate, as well as become skillful in the 50 high-impact tips to beat the clock and time management tools.

The workshop will be lead by Laura Moriarty, president of the

SHRA and co-founder of Tahoe Training Partners, which is a human resources and management-training solutions consulting firm located near Lake Tahoe, California.

Registration is $49 for chamber of commerce and SHRA members and $59 for non-members if registered before March 12. Last-minute registration runs $59 for chamber and SHRA members and $69 for non-members. Seating is limited.

To register and for more information, call Moriarty at (530) 573.0224.

Protection sought for California wolf

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Four environmental groups on Monday petitioned the California Fish and Game Commission to protect the gray wolf under the state Endangered Species Act.

Led by the Center for Biological Diversity, the groups say the migration of a wolf from Oregon on Dec. 28 means the species will eventually establish itself in California.

Any wolves that migrate into California are automatically protected by the federal Endangered Species Act. But the groups want California to take charge of a recovery plan because the state endangered species law is stronger and federal officials remain focused on wolf recovery elsewhere.

Other groups behind the petition are Big Wildlife, Environmental Protection Information Center and Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center.

The commission has 90 days to decide if the petition contains enough information to trigger a status review of the species. It then has nine months to conduct the review.

The wolf known as OR7 traveled as far as the outskirts of Susanville in Lassen County. Then it turned north and now lingers near the Oregon border in Siskiyou County.