Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Ski Run Marina in South Lake Tahoe is hosting a Winter Celebration Feb. 25 from 10am to 5pm.

• As of Feb. 14, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors meetings are online.

• South Lake Tahoe based First Track Productions produced this video for LTVA of the Riglet Park at Sierra-at-Tahoe. If you need more more info, *Lake Tahoe News* wrote about this snowboard training facility for little ones on Feb. 5.

• All in One Auto, a towing company in Ukiah, is planning to open a second location in South Lake Tahoe.

• Here is the Sierra roadwork schedule for Caltrans for next week.

---

4 WHS students rise to top of their class

Publisher's note: ***On Feb. 22 four Whittell High School students were recognized by Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe as being Young Women of Distinction for their accomplishments. The following is what WHS counselor Tricia Fierst wrote about each girl.***

By Tricia Fierst

Thank you Soroptimist for recognizing these wonderful women of Whittell. Whittell is a unique place with a small student body, our students have to fill many roles. All of these women have done just that at Whittell, and they have reached out to our community.

These women have spent the last four years playing sports, being part of school leadership, volunteering at school and the community, learning life skills, and working. I am so glad Soroptimist gives us a venue to recognize them and their accomplishments.



Jillian Dauscher, from left, Nina Jimenez, Megan Mize and Sabrina Swoger

Jillian Dauscher

Jillian Dauscher is the daughter of Ellen and Andy Dauscher. Jillian has a cumulative GPA of 3.688. Jillian has been accepted to Arizona State University and plans to study aviation. Jillian is working toward a pilot license and last summer she flew with her instructor to Wisconsin for the Osh Kosh Air Show.

Jillian is currently taking honors physics and has completed 15 credits through Western Nevada College.

Jillian has been a cheerleader and played varsity soccer at Whittell. In Jillian's spare time, she dances on a competitive dance team and works as a dance teacher at Forever Dance.

Jillian has helped shape not only her school, but also her community. At school, Jillian has been on Whittell's student council all four years. Jillian has spent the last two years as rally commissioner planning events for an entire school. Jillian has also been a member of our Student Issues Committee, which brings problems and concerns to our administration and Jillian communicates well with our administration.

Furthermore, Jillian is our student representative for the Whittell's Parent Booster Committee. Jillian is able to work with many different adults and students to make Whittell the best place for students.

In our community, Jillian has volunteered at local events like the Bijou Bash, Festival of Trees for Barton Hospital, Relay for Life, and Rotary Christmas Party. Last year, Jillian volunteered to help raise money for the Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge that happens at Zephyr Cove. Jillian raised the most money as an individual fundraiser, and she helped Whittell win the school challenge. She had a real passion for wanting to raise the money, and her passion helped others to raise money, too.

I believe Jillian is a unique student because she communicates so well with teachers, staff, and administrators. Jillian is not afraid to stand up for what is right and help others who do not always have a voice. Jillian's student council advisor describes her as compassionate, thoughtful, and hard working. Jillian demonstrated her ability to show compassion this summer as she worked as a camp counselor at Camp Sunrise, a camp for children who have lost a close family member. Jillian's positive outlook will have a long lasting effect on Whittell and will help Jillian be successful at whatever she

decides to do. Jillian has earned the title of Young Woman of Distinction

Megan Mize

Megan Mize is the daughter of Renate and Don Mize. Megan has a cumulative GPA of 4.19. As a senior, Megan is taking two AP classes and one honors class. Megan plans on attending either UNR or the University of Puget Sound and major in early childhood education. Last summer, Megan attended RYLA, a leadership camp, where she worked with other students from the area to advance her leadership abilities.

Megan has taken on many roles at Whittell. If you ask the student body, Megan is usually mentioned for her outstanding athletic ability on the volleyball court. If you ask the teachers, Megan is recognized for her academic prowess. Megan has been on Honor Roll for four years. Megan is a woman, who leads by example.

Megan is involved in Student Council as executive social commissioner, Key Club, and National Honor Society. This year Megan stepped up to take the position as yearbook editor and school newspaper editor. Megan has been recognized for leadership on the court, too, as being named a volleyball co-captain by her peers. She hopes to continue playing volleyball in college.

In the community, Megan has volunteered at local events like Relay for Life and at the Kahle Community Center as a teen volunteer working with elementary school students. Last year, Megan volunteered at many Key Club and National Honor Society events. She has also volunteered at the Valhalla Beach Clean Up and our local food pantry. As a senior, Megan organized a Whittell coat drive. Megan’s willingness to work at local events makes her a role model to our other students.

I think Mr. Hight, Megan’s former math teacher, said it best, “Megan is an outstanding student.” Hight continued, “Megan has

the respect of students and the staff.” Bernadette Esquivel agreed with Hight’s remakes and added, “Megan has really grown into her leadership role at Whittell.”

I believe Megan is a quiet force. Megan leads by example. She understands great leaders cannot say one thing and do another, which explains why she is being recognized as a Woman of Distinction.

Sabrina Swoger

Sabrina Swoger is the daughter of Sally and Brian Swoger. Sabrina has a cumulative GPA of a 4.28. Sabrina is a standout student in academics; she is taking two AP classes and one honors class. Sabrina has taken all the AP and honors classes that Whittell offers.

Sabrina plans on attending Baylor or the University of Pittsburgh and majoring in philosophy or health science. Last summer, Sabrina volunteered in the Caribbean where she worked at a school to improve their community sports facility.

Sabrina is well rounded in her extracurricular activities at Whittell. Sabrina has been active in the choir program, singing in our Black and White Choir for four years and has played clarinet for four years. Sabrina has shown her leadership abilities by serving in school leadership and in her senior year is serving as Executive Counsel vice president. Along with school leadership, Sabrina is the Key Club vice president and a National Honor Society president. Sabrina is involved in the Student Issues Committee on campus. Sabrina also won a local speech contest, and she was a finalist for the district competition.

She has participated in community activities within Key Club and National Honor Society like UNICEF, Special Olympics, Kahle Community Center, and Sabrina has organized four community blood drives and this year organized Whittell’s Relay for Life team. Sabrina’s has great organizational skills

and has been able plan events quickly and efficiently.

Mrs. Samuels, Whittell librarian, describes Sabrina as determined. Samuels believes Sabrina could move mountains with her determination. Her sense of humor, happiness, and positive attitude add the perfect blend to her academic astuteness. She enjoys learning, laughing, and cares for other people. While Mr. Kelly, Sabrina's former AP teacher, says Sabrina's best quality is her inquisitive natural, and he believes that will serve her well though her college and beyond. Sabrina definitely has what it takes to be a Woman of Distinction.

Nina Jimenez

Nina Jimenez is the daughter of Pam and Vic Jimenez. Nina has a cumulative GPA of 4.28. Nina is a standout student in academics; she is taking two AP classes and one honors class. Nina has taken all the AP and honors classes that Whittell offers. Nina plans on attending Georgia Tech or Johns Hopkins and majoring in bioengineering. Last summer, Nina attended Operation Catapult at the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology to further her knowledge.

Nina also has many extra circular activities; she has been active in the school choir program singing in our Black and White choir for four years and playing the violin in our band program. Nina has shown her leadership abilities by serving in school leadership and in her senior year is serving as senior class treasurer. Along with school leadership, Nina is the Key Club president and has served as National Honor Society co-president. Nina has led the school's Christian Club for the last two years. Nina is also a member of our Student Issues Committee. Nina has been recognized by College Board as a National Hispanic Scholar. Nina has been awarded the Gene Upshaw Award and Harvard Prize Book Award. Nina recently placed first in the Fleet Reserve Association Essay contest for her age group.

Nina has participated in community activities within Key Club and National Honor Society and participated in numerous community service projects on her own. She has volunteered her time to help at Barton, Kahle, local fundraising events like Relay for Life and Operation Shoebox, and vacation bible school for her church. Between school activities and Nina's numerous community service activities, she does find to time play volleyball, tutor students in math and science and give violin lessons.

Mr. Hynes, Nina's current AP English teacher, believes Nina Jimenez belongs to the "creme de la creme" of students. He continued by saying, "She is focused, intellectually savvy, and strives to do her best in everything she does." Her goals to succeed will be achieved without doubt or wonderment. She is happy, serious, and has a delightful sense of humor. She is a role model for all of us as well. This is why Nina deserves to be called a Woman of Distinction.

Wildlife photographers becoming conservationists

By Juliet Eilperin, Washington Post

Steve Winter has followed snow leopards through the Himalayas, been trapped in quicksand in the world's largest tiger reserve, in Burma, and been stalked by jaguars in Brazil. As a

National Geographic photographer, that's all just part of his job.

But he also serves as media director for Panthera, a nonprofit group that works on behalf of big cats in the wild. He will soon have dinner with the Honduran president and some of the group's scientists to discuss creating a wildlife corridor for jaguars between the United States and Central America.

"The world needs no more pictures of pretty animals," Winter said. "What the world needs is the story behind these animals and their struggle of being around humans."

Michael "Nick" Nichols, a *National Geographic* editor at large, has been worrying about the decline of the world's lion population for more than a decade and spent years devising equipment to chronicle the animals on the Serengeti. Because they're active at night, Nichols is using infrared lights and sensors. He's employing a miniature German-built helicopter to capture how lions live. "The technology is in place to look at lions in a new way," he said.

Nichols and Winter belong to a new breed of environmental photographers who not only record wild animals and the stunning worlds they inhabit, but also push to preserve them.

Prominent wildlife photographers, including Ansel Adams, have spoken out for conservation in the past. But today's photographers have taken the mission to new heights by changing how they craft their images and by lobbying policymakers in Washington and abroad.

Winter, who speaks about the threats to big cats in *National Geographic* lectures, has met with government officials in Burma, Costa Rica, Cuba and India to discuss species he has photographed. Brian Skerry, an underwater photographer with *National Geographic*, sent his new book, "Ocean Soul," to every member of the Senate Ocean Caucus along with a personal note thanking them for their conservation efforts.

Nature photographer Amy Gulick published a book, “Salmon in the Trees,” that documents the links among wild salmon, grizzly bears and old-growth trees in Alaska’s Tongass National Forest. A copy of it sits on the desk of Harris Sherman, the Agriculture Department’s undersecretary for natural resources and environment. He says it “connects the critical dots between healthy forests and rivers with sustainable salmon fisheries,” and describes it as “a must-read” for understanding ecosystems such as the Tongass.

Once they’ve captured the images, many of these photographers hit the road to advocate for conservation. Alan Rabinowitz and Howard Quigley, scientists who are spearheading the effort to create a wildlife corridor for jaguars, invited Winter to dine with Honduran President Porfirio Lobo so he can show him some of the images of jaguars he has taken in the field. A group from the International League of Conservation Photographers joined with the Sierra Club in 2009 to campaign successfully against mountaintop removal mining in British Columbia’s Flathead River Valley.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Obama falls victim to lure of super PAC

By Robert Reich

It has been said there is no high ground in American politics since any politician who claims it is likely to be gunned down by those firing from the trenches. That’s how the Obama team justifies its decision to endorse a super PAC that can raise and spend unlimited sums for his campaign.

Baloney. Good ends don’t justify corrupt means.

I understand the White House’s concerns. Obama is a proven fundraiser – he cobbled together an unprecedented $745 million for the 2008 election and has already raised $224 million for this one. But his aides figure Romney can raise almost as much, and they fear an additional $500 million or more will be funneled to Romney by a relative handful of rich individuals and corporations through right-wing super PACS like “American Crossroads.”



Robert
Reich

The White House was surprised that super PACs outspent the GOP candidates themselves in several of the early primary contests, and noted how easily Romney’s super PAC delivered Florida to him and pushed Newt Gingrich from first-place to fourth-place in Iowa.

Romney’s friends on Wall Street and in the executive suites of the nation’s biggest corporations have the deepest pockets in America. His super PAC got $18 million from just 200 donors in the second half of last year, including million-dollar checks from hedge-fund moguls, industrialists and bankers.

How many billionaires does it take to buy a presidential election? “With so much at stake” wrote Obama campaign manager Jim Messina on the Obama campaign’s blog, Obama couldn’t “unilaterally disarm.”

But would refusing to be corrupted this way really amount to unilateral disarmament? To the contrary, I think it would have

given the President a rallying cry that nearly all Americans would get behind: “More of the nation’s wealth and political power is now in the hands of fewer people and large corporations than since the era of the robber barons of the Gilded Age. I will not allow our democracy to be corrupted by this! I will fight to take back our government!”

Small donations would have flooded the Obama campaign, overwhelming Romney’s billionaire super PACs. The people would have been given a chance to be heard.

The sad truth is Obama has never really occupied the high ground on campaign finance. He refused public financing in 2008. Once president, he didn’t go to bat for a system of public financing that would have made it possible for candidates to raise enough money from small donors and matching public funds they wouldn’t need to rely on a few billionaires pumping unlimited sums into super PACS. He hasn’t even fought for public disclosure of super PAC donations.

And now he’s made a total mockery of the Court’s naïve belief that super PACs would remain separate from individual campaigns, by officially endorsing his own super PAC and allowing campaign manager Jim Messina and even cabinet officers to speak at his super PAC events. Obama will not appear at such events but he, Michelle Obama, and Vice President Joe Biden will encourage support of the Obama super PAC.

One Obama adviser says Obama’s decision to openly endorse his super PAC has had an immediate effect. “Our donors get it,” the official said, adding that they now want to “go fight the other side.”

Exactly. So now a relative handful of super-rich Democrats want fight a relative handful of super-rich Republicans. And we call this a democracy.

Robert Reich is chancellor’s professor of Public Policy at UC

Berkeley. He has served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. He has written 13 books.

Record highs melting as cold front moves into Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Put away the shorts and bring out the long pants. All the flesh that has been visible in the Lake Tahoe Basin has to do with record highs being set. But winter temps are returning.

South Lake Tahoe was 61 degrees on Feb. 24. This broke the previous record of 59 set in 1995.

Apparently 1995 was a warm February as well because the high on Feb. 23 of 56 degrees tied the record of 17 years ago.



Waves like these near Tahoe City on Feb. 15 will be the norm today on Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn

Reed

Reno by contrast has not been much warmer than Tahoe. The high on Friday was 64 degrees.

But things have already changed with a cold front having started to blow in last night. Today's high in South Lake Tahoe is expected to be 45, then 37 on Sunday and 28 on Monday.

A wind advisory is in effect until 10 this morning for Tahoe, Truckee, Carson City and the Reno areas. This means gusts of 50 mph, with ridgetops being whipped twice as hard.

A couple inches of snow may fall in the basin Sunday night into Monday.

"It's not looking good for any big winter storms coming up," Alex Hoon, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

February has been super dry throughout California and Nevada. It's so bad that water officials have scaled back allocations to farmers and others who rely on reservoir storage from the North State.

Exactly how bad things are will be calculated Feb. 28 at the next snow survey.

Most yards in Tahoe are showing more grass or dirt than snow. People with bikes are coming into town, when normally it's only skiers and snowboarders who are here.

While the Weather Service only has precipitation records for South Lake Tahoe that date to 2000, in that time the average has been 1.93 inches for February. So far this February 0.38 inches have been tallied.

In Tahoe City, where records date to the early 1900s, the normal February is 5.27 inches of precip. To date there have

been 0.31 inches.

Hoon said it is wishful thinking to believe a dry February will bring a wet March. That’s not to say March will be dry, but he said don’t bank on March being a miracle.

A storm is sitting off the coast that is expected to arrive Wednesday that could bring a foot of snow to ski resorts. This would be welcome as most ski areas still don’t have 100 percent of their terrain open.

So You Want to Write and/or Illustrate a Children’s Book. Now What?

Bona Fide Books is offering a two-day session “So You Want to Write and/or Illustrate a Children’s Book. Now What?” at Bona Fide HQ in Meyers on March 22 from 7-9pm and March 24 from 10am-2:30pm.

Writer and illustrator Kristen Schwartz will lead this two-part session aimed toward helping writers and illustrators of children’s, middle grade and young adult books find their footing in the publishing industry. The Thursday session is a Q&A and a breakdown of top tips and tricks for creating and submitting marketable work for younger audiences.

This session is free and open to the public, to be followed by a $75 intensive, personalized class on Saturday. Part two will

include familiarizing writers and illustrators with industry tools and the query process, and working directly with attendees on how to publish their personal projects.

Space is limited. Call (530) 573.1513 to reserve a spot.

Lecture about changing seas

The study of climate change through Earth history has produced a wealth of information on the operation of the ocean-atmosphere system during climate transitions as well as the feedbacks that impact the magnitude and rate of climate change on the planet.

Although the understanding of the science of climate is built on a firm foundation, much confusion exists regarding the potential and rate of change in the modern world.

Howard Spero will explore the basic science of the Earth’s climate system and examine the natural cycles of climate change in Earth history that have been discovered through the study of flacial ice sheets and deep ocean cores during a lecture March 22 at Sierra Nevada College.

Spero will attempt to demystify the realities of phenomena such as ocean (and Lake Tahoe) acidification and the potential for a warmer Earth in the not too distant future.

Spero is a professor and current chairman in the Department of Geology at UC Davis.

A no-host bars opens at 5:30pm, with lecture at 6pm. A $5 donation is requested.

For more info, call (775)881.7560.

Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, Room 139/141 is at 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village.

Nevada to reap 3 times what it expected in Lehman Bros. settlement

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The state Board of Finance was told this week Nevada expects to receive between 30 and 33 cents on the dollar in recovery from a $50 million investment loss when Lehman Brothers unexpectedly filed for bankruptcy in September 2008.

Nevada Treasurer Kate Marshall said the state initially expected 10 to 11 cents on the dollar when the firm filed for bankruptcy protection during the height of the nation's financial crisis.

The estimate used more recently by the Treasurer's Office was a return of 20 cents on the dollar, Chief Deputy Treasurer Mark Mathers told the board, which includes Marshall, Gov. Brian Sandoval and several other appointees.

A 33-cent return would mean more than $16 million being returned to the state in the next two to three years, Marshall said. It does not include additional money that could be returned to the state as a result of separate litigation against a Lehman Brothers subsidiary, she said.

“I’m happy to report that based on the bankruptcy plan that was submitted and approved by a bankruptcy judge last year, based on conversations and analysis we’ve seen from major banks, and the amounts offered by those banks, we are now expecting a recovery rate in the range of 30 to 33 cents on the dollar for those holdings,” Mathers said.

“Based again on the analysis we’ve seen and the comments from folks who trade in these bonds every day, we will see the vast majority of these monies come back in the next two to three years,” he said.

Ninety-nine percent of the creditors approved the bankruptcy plan, Mathers said.

There have been offers to buy the bonds from the state at a rate of 26 to 27 cents on the dollar, but it is more financially prudent to hold on to them and get the higher return, he said.

The $50 million loss has resulted in less income being generated for a number of state programs, but Mathers said those funding reductions will be eased with the anticipated higher recovery on the investment.

The $50 million loss was used as a campaign issue against Marshall in her successful re-election bid in 2010.

Marshall has said there was no warning ahead of time the firm would file for bankruptcy.

Nevada’s Lehman loss was only a part of $3 billion in losses to states, counties and municipalities across the country when

the firm filed for bankruptcy.

After the informational report to the Finance Board, Marshall said her decision to keep the Lehman assets rather than unload them at a “fire sale” proved to be the right decision.

“If you recall when I was at the Legislature right after Lehmans went down there was a big push that I sell everything,” she said. “And I came back and I said I would not do that. That that would be a fire sale; we would lose a significant amount of money. That turned out to be very smart.”

The Board of Finance also has litigation under way with Lehman Brothers Commercial Bank but Marshall could not predict what the state might ultimately see returned from the action.

League to Save Lake Tahoe chief to meet with locals

League to Save Lake Tahoe Executive Director Darcie Goodman-Collins is having a meet and greet reception on March 6 from 6-8pm at the League’s offices in South Lake Tahoe.

The office is at 2608 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

RSVP (530) 541.5388 or events@keeptahoeblue.org.

National group wants U.S. governors to freeze defined benefit pension plan

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – A national nonprofit organization seeking fundamental reforms to state budgeting sent a letter to the nation's governors urging them to follow General Motors' lead and freeze defined benefit pensions for all public employees.

Bob Williams, a former Washington lawmaker and president of State Budget Solutions, sent the open letter, which was in response to General Motors announcement earlier this month that on Sept. 30, 2012, they will freeze the defined benefit pension plans of all salaried workers in an effort to hold down expenses.

GM's announcement will affect 19,000 salaried workers hired before 2001, who will move from traditional pension with guaranteed payments to a 401(k)-type plan with contributions based on salary and bonuses.

"It is time for state government to accurately account for and begin reducing massive deficits," Williams said in the letter. "By freezing defined benefit pensions, you are taking one step closer to truly balancing budgets. Our nation can no longer ignore the realities and push our budget problems onto future taxpayers. Corporate America isn't always right, but eventually they have to acknowledge the light of reality. GM is a beacon that your administration must follow."

Nearly all of Nevada's public employees are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System, which offers a defined benefit plan upon retirement.

Gov. Brian Sandoval supports a change to a defined contribution plan for future state workers, but the issue did not get much attention in the 2011 legislative session. It is expected to come up again in the 2013 legislative session.

Sandoval favors a change to the retirement plan because of a concern about the potential taxpayer liability for the defined benefit plan. The long-term unfunded liability is estimated at about $11 billion, although some assessments using different measures put it at a much higher amount.

Williams said in his letter that a State Budget Solutions' compilation of academic studies shows that the total unfunded pension obligation for state and municipal governments is at least $4 trillion based on common actuarial assumptions.

"Across the country, states have understated their true unfunded pension liabilities because lax government accounting rules allow it," Williams said. "As a result, the plans are severely underfunded and will adversely impact every state budget for decades. Without major reform now, those liabilities will continue to grow."

In a telephone interview today, Williams said one reason for the growing size of the obligation is the unrealistic rates of return assumed by public pension plans. Nevada assumes an 8 percent return, which it has achieved over the life of the plan.

"But over the last 10 years (the nation's public pension plans) only averaged about a 3.5 percent, so once you don't make that annual return then you have to make that up and there is no way the states are," he said.

The private sector is facing the reality that the defined benefit plans cannot be sustained, Williams said.

The day of reckoning is coming, he said.

“I think it’s going to really wake us up when it probably hits either New Jersey, Illinois or California first,” Williams said. “I mean those are the states that just have an unbelievable unfunded pension obligation. But why not take action when you can.”

There has been a growing call nationally to move public pension plans to a state to a defined contribution plan, similar to a 401(k)-type plan, from the current defined benefit plan, where retirees are paid a set amount per month based on salary and years of service.

Nevada PERS officials say the current state plan is actuarially sound, and that the unfunded liability will be covered over time. They also note that the contribution rates required to keep the plan healthy are set by an independent actuary and are fully funded by the Legislature. The Legislature also made several changes to the existing PERS plan in 2009.