Free admission to national parks this weekend

By Keri Oberly, McClatchy Newspapers

National Park Service sites will be open for free Saturday through Monday to mark Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday.

They are just the first of several days this year when admission fees will be waived.

Fees vary at various National Park Service sites. For example, the fee for Yosemite National Park is $20. Tioga Pass – usually closed during the winter due to snow – remains open for easy access to Yosemite National Park from the east.

Read the whole story

LTUSD enrollment leveling

Enrollment at all four elementary schools in Lake Tahoe Unified School District is up from 2010, indicating declining enrollment is stabilizing.

Overall enrollment is down by 20 students – the smallest drop since the decline started in 1996-97.

Free and reduced lunch counts are up from 59.4 percent in 2010-11 to 62.5 percent this school year.

– Lake Tahoe Unified School District

Science program for educators

To events in February are geared toward educators – in the formal or informal sense – who are interested in science education, environmental education or are seeking new activities.

A completely revised, updated, and expanded Project WET Curriculum and Activity Guide was released last fall. This major revision of the 15-year-old original guide began three years ago. It was driven by emerging water issues, new scientific discoveries and breakthroughs, changing educational priorities and reform, and the availability of information technology and social connectivity.

The new Project WET program that is emerging encompasses not only the new guide but also a Web portal, expanded resources and networking opportunities.

The first meeting to learn about is Feb. 9 from 10am-4pm at Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village.

The second meeting is Feb. 16 from 10am-4pm at the U.S. Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

There is no cost for Project WET Guide 2.0 for California educators. The cost is $25 for participants who do not offer programs in California.

Optional lunch costs $6-$10. Cash only.

For more information and/or to register,contact: Dana Olsen, TRCD, (530) 543.1501, ext. 120, dolson@tahoercd.org to

register for the Incline event; or Megan Dee, USFS, (530) 543.2618, mldee@fs.fed.us for the South Shore event.

Registration closes Feb. 3.

Cubs rehabbed at LTWC return to the wild

By Marek Warszawski, Fresno Bee

SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST – Two orphaned bear cubs returned home to the mountains east of Fresno on Tuesday, nearly five months after a poacher killed their mother.

Campers found the two California black bear cubs Aug. 21 near the High Sierra Ranger Station on Kaiser Pass Road crying and suckling on their mother's carcass after she was killed illegally by a bow hunter.

The distraught male cubs were undernourished and underweight for their age at about 30 pounds apiece, so California Department of Fish and Game biologists determined they would not survive on their own. The cubs were captured and taken to Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care in South Lake Tahoe a nonprofit that raises and rehabilitates orphaned and injured wild animals and birds.

Named "The Fresno Brothers," the cubs spent their time in captivity fattening up on a diet consisting mainly of leafy vegetables, watermelon, sweet potatoes and live fish placed in tubs. To prevent them from bonding with humans, handlers avoided contact and placed their food out of sight.

“We want to help these bears survive and return to the population, but in doing so we must be sure they don’t get used to being around people,” DFG Bear Program coordinator Marc Kenyon said. “Once bears are no longer wary of people, they become nuisance bears that are no longer wild.”

Read the whole story

Free flights for kids at Truckee airport

On Jan. 14, the Truckee-Tahoe Chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association is hosting its monthly pancake breakfast and Young Eagles Flights.

Kids 8-17 who attend with their parents can fly for free out of Truckee Tahoe Airport.

Breakfast starts at 8:30am. Flight departures continue until 10:30am, weather permitting.

Winter forecast to arrive in Tahoe next week

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

The winter that didn’t come may be on its way.

Hopefully, anyway.

After a record-making spate of sunny, dry weather kept conditions bone dry through December and half of January, a pattern change in the Pacific could be sending wet weather on its way.



Despite the lack of moisture this winter, the Upper Truckee Marsh on Jan. 10 is still flooded. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It’s still a ways off – probably not until late next week or even next weekend – but forecasters said Thursday that rain and snow could finally make an appearance in the Reno-Tahoe area.

“It’s quite a shift from all the doldrums,” said Shane Snyder, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno.

It would be welcome news for Reno-area residents watching lawns brown under winter sun and water suppliers anxious to build on reserves for the future. Skiers and snowboarders are biting at the bit to take to slopes white with fresh snow while ski resort operators are eager to improve upon a season thus far characterized by costly dryness and mostly barren mountains.

The first hint at expected change comes Sunday as the region is brushed by a storm system forecast to bring cold air and high wind but only a slight chance of showers to the north, Snyder said. Sunday’s system is expected to be more associated with increased fire danger than any real chance at wet relief.

Read the whole story

Drinking more water may be the lifestyle change your body needs

By Mandy Kendall

So, it’s another New Year. A lot of us will make resolutions, and a lot of us will break them. Maybe it’s because we make such high demands on ourselves when there is already so much going on that we get overwhelmed.

During my time as a chiropractor in England I learned that if I wanted to help my patients make lasting changes to their lifestyle, they were far more successful when we made changes in do-able chunks. I liked to call them *Qwik-es*. They were “quick” and “easy” things to do, and were usually practiced for a week, as that’s pretty do-able in most peoples busy lives.



Mandy Kendall

The idea being that after a week, if you noticed a positive change from doing something that really hadn’t taken up much of your time, then there was a good chance you might carry on doing it. Then it becomes a habit and, you never know, you might even be inclined to try another one.

I used to start new patients on something as simple as drinking water. Yes, I know everyone is always droning on about drinking water, but there really are good reasons for all that nagging. Honest! Our bodies are roughly 65 percent water and we use a lot everyday just being alive so we need “topping up”.

For instance a 5 percent decrease in our optimal hydration can result in up to 20 percent lower brain function. Our kidneys are important filters in our bodies, and like any filter, if they are not rinsed through with good clean water, they can get “clogged” and will be much less efficient.

Soft tissues need water to protect our joints and organs, especially the springy shock absorbing discs in between the bones in our spine. Our body’s solid waste material requires moisture to be eliminated from our bodies. If there’s not enough to flush it through, it just sits in our intestines (enough said I think). Water is also a great weight loss kick-starter and when skin is properly hydrated wrinkles get plumped out from the inside too.

So, how much do we need per day? Well you could do very well going with the generally accepted 8 x 8 fluid ounces a day

(and this really should be plain water, not coffee or sodas). However, if you want to get serious, you should take into account your size, activity and where you live. Someone weighing 200 pounds needs more water than someone at 100 pounds.

A good way to estimate this is to drink half your body weight in ounces of water per day. So, if you're 150 pounds, this means you need the equivalent of 75 ounces of water, or about 8 cups. An active body needs more water than an inactive body and being up at altitude also requires more hydration.

If you find it hard to keep track, a very basic guide to your hydration level is the color of your urine. If it is pretty much clear, then you are probably hydrated enough. If it looks more like iced tea, you need to drink less iced tea and more water.

So, maybe you're thinking, "OK, I guess I should be drinking a bit more water, but I just get so busy I forget." Here are a few *Qwik-e* tips to help you out.

Start the day with a big glass of water – Your body will need topping up after a good few hours without, and it will help move things along if you find you're a bit constipated too.

If your day centers on a desk, fill up a large bottle first thing to keep track of how much you are drinking. If you are moving around all day you could set an hourly reminder to pop up on your phone or watch to prompt a drink.

Use hunger pangs as a signal to drink – quite often we think we're hungry when we are actually dehydrated. If you are still hungry five minutes after a glass of water, then at least you know it really is hunger.

Feeling tired? Can't concentrate? Chances are you are dehydrated, so grab a glass of water and have a quick walk or stretch before you decide to get another coffee or soda.

Not quite sure how much water different sized containers hold? Measure 8 fluid ounces at home and see how many mouthfuls it takes to drink it. You can then use that as your measuring guide no matter what size container it is.

So give it a try, you might surprise yourself how much better you feel.

Until next time!

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

Judge gives 'convention center' creditors 1 more month

By Kathryn Reed

How much is the more than 11-acre site on the east end of South Lake Tahoe worth with its rebar and concrete?

That is one issue still to be decided in the ongoing saga known as the failed convention center project. Lake Tahoe Development Company, the Zephyr Cove company that was supposed

to build two hotels and convention center on the Stateline area property, owes El Dorado County $2.45 million in property taxes.



The end of bankruptcy court for the would-be convention center site appears to be nearing. Photo/LTN

Randy Lane, principal for the company that has been languishing in bankruptcy court since October 2009, is challenging the amount owed.

“We are appealing the assessment,” Lane told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We are saying the assessed value of the property far exceeds the actual property value.”

A hearing on that is slated for March.

One of the bugaboos about the bankruptcy is the parcels were never consolidated into one map. Lane still owns nine of the 29 parcels.

Owens Financial, which stands to lose the most at $25 million, if the slate were wiped clean, agreed this week to pay about $400,000 of the back property taxes that are due.

Also at this week's session before the bankruptcy judge in Sacramento, a Feb. 29 date was set for an evidentiary hearing. All parties will have a chance to present evidence for a plan of action and bring any witnesses they want.

The judge could make a decision that day or shortly thereafter.

Lane wants more time to find someone to develop the site. Others want out.

Once the project is no longer tied up in bankruptcy court, the clock starts ticking on the permit issued by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Those permits have value, though no true dollar amount. If they expire, it would mean whoever takes over the rights to the land would have to start from scratch with permitting. That does mean time and money.

But it also would give someone the opportunity to start from scratch and not work within the parameters of what has been approved.

Tahoe tourism agencies back Olympic effort with cash

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Lake Tahoe tourism agencies are doing their financial part to help bring the 2022 Winter Olympics to the region.

On Jan. 12 the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority allocated $25,000 to the bid effort, with the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association having already committed the same amount. Each will be asked to put in another $25,000 next year. (Board member Tom Davis was absent.)

Blaise Carrig, co-president of Vail Resorts mountain division, made a pitch to the LTVA board at the Thursday board meeting. Carrig, who the day before officially became a board member of the Reno-Tahoe Winter Games Coalition, first worked with the team when he worked at Heavenly Mountain Resort.



Blaise Carrig

“It would be a really good legacy project for Reno-Tahoe,” Carrig told the LTVA. “It would bring national and international recognition to the marketplace that Reno-Tahoe could use.”

It will take more than $1 million to put the bid together, so the tourism agencies’ checks are just a start. Nevada has pledged money. Private and public entities are being asked to be part of the process.

The bid would have to be ready to be presented to the U.S. Olympic Committee by March 2013, summer at the latest. The International Olympic Committee picks the host city in 2015. That gives the city and/or region seven years to get everything together.

“When Salt Lake City was awarded the bid, in those seven years it went from 25th to No. 1 for getting funding for

infrastructure," LTVA board member Nancy McDermid said. "This would be one way in seven years to get infrastructure we haven't had."

Roads, transit and venues are all things that would come to the region.

Carrig said venues have been scoped out, but nothing is solidified. Earlier he told *Lake Tahoe News* it is possible Heavenly could create a new run to accommodate the men's downhill.

Without being able to accommodate that event, sources have told *Lake Tahoe News*, no area can host a Winter Games.

Carrig assured the LTVA board the South Shore would be part of the Olympics.

He said the international committee looks for bids that are compact. In large part this has to with the media and how they cover the Games.

While Sacramento was brought up, Carrig sees it more as a gateway to Tahoe-Reno, than a venue site. But with a large arena, having ice events there has not been ruled out. Reno doesn't have a single sheet of ice. The South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena in the past has been talked about as a training area. It has no seating to accommodate anything close to an Olympic event. The next nearest ice is in San Jose where the Sharks play. But the Cow Palace in San Francisco and Oakland arena have had skating events before.

McDermid also questioned Carrig about whether environmental groups had been approached. He said Nevada Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki, who is heading up the Tahoe-Reno coalition, has started those talks.

"Part of the bid is what is the environmental legacy," Carrig said.

“Legacy projects” is a phrase often heard when discussing Olympic bids. It’s what a community is left with after the two weeks. It could be roads, a stadium or less sediment reaching Lake Tahoe. The theory is those legacies would be viewed as a positive by and for the community.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• January is national Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month and most resorts in the Lake Tahoe area have deals.

• Lake Tahoe Community College’s board of education packet is not available online. Meetings are usually the second and fourth Tuesdays at 6pm.

• The Tahoe Maritime Museum in Homewood is open to Tahoe locals for free through May on the second Saturday of each month.

• The Washoe County Sheriff’s Office received a $4,000 donation from the Truckee River Yacht Club to support ongoing efforts by community service work crews to protect trees along the Truckee River from beaver damage.

• General surgeon Scott Welker as of Jan. 16 will see patients at 2175 South Ave. in South Lake Tahoe.