Kinder Kup

The Heavenly Ski and Snowboard Foundation will kick-off the 12th annual Kinder Kup Race Series at Heavenly Mountain Resort on Jan. 22.

The 8am to 2pm event is open to all skiers and snowboarders age 6 and younger. The Kinder Kup series is designed to introduce young athletes to competition in a friendly environment. No previous race experience necessary and all abilities are welcome.

Entry is $20 and includes a World Cup only competitor lift ticket if needed.

The Kinder Kup is a three event series with races Jan. 22, Feb. 26 and March 25. All races take place at Heavenly Mountain Resort on the World Cup chairlift located at the California base across from the Heavenly Tram.

Registration forms are online. Advance registration is recommended.

On-site registration is available the morning of the event at the Heavenly Foundation building from 8am to 9am. Practice begins at 9am, each competitor is allowed two practice runs; the race starts at 10am.

Arrest made in Douglas County

sexual assault case

A Gardnerville man wanted in connection with the sexual assault on a 6-year-old girl was arrested Jan. 4.

Victor Mora Jr. was located at the Carson City Inn Motel in Carson City Wednesday night after Douglas County sheriff's deputies received an anonymous tip regarding his whereabouts.

Mora was booked into the Minden jail on an arrest warrant for lewdness with a minor.

Bail was set at $50,000.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Air races in Reno

The National Championship Air Races are in Reno Sept. 12-16.

For more information, go online.

RAOK: From school mascot to restaurant diner

Pedro Kinner will soon be eating at Echo Restaurant inside Embassy Suites in South Lake Tahoe.



This is because he is *Lake Tahoe News'* latest Random Acts of Kindness winner and Echo donated a $25 gift certificate.

Every day people are doing Random Acts of Kindness, are the recipient of one or witness one. *Lake Tahoe News* is providing a forum for people to share those experiences. Local businesses are supplying the rewards.

It's free and easy to participate – and it's going on all month.

There is no limit to the number of times you can submit an entry. To do so, write about the Random Act of Kindness at the bottom of this story. Winners are picked randomly.

For more details about Random Acts of Kindness and the few rules associated with it, check out this story.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Tahoe Donner Downhill is closed until more snow arrives.

• Matthew MacBever Eastling has applied for a beer and wine license with the ABC under the business name Himmel Haus at the old Christiana Inn on Saddle Road in South Lake Tahoe.

• Placer County is enforcing its rules about where to park – or not as the case may be – even when there isn't snow at Tahoe. Vehicles may be cited or towed if parked in areas with posted signs that say no parking. Snow has nothing to do with enforcement.

• Need a job? The Tahoe Fund is looking for a president-CEO.

• Applicants have until Jan. 13 to apply online to be a Washoe County sheriff's deputy. For questions, contact Margaret Brindzak at (775) 328.6383.

Opinion: Roots of Republican Party crack-up

By Robert Reich

With the Iowa caucuses just days away, the Republican crack-up threatens the future of the Grand Old Party more profoundly than at any other time since the GOP's eclipse in 1932. That's bad for America.

The crack-up isn't just Romney-the-smooth versus Gingrich-the-bomb-thrower. Not just House Speaker John Boehner, who keeps making agreements he can't keep, versus House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, who keeps making trouble he can't control. And not just the GOP establishment versus the Tea Partiers.

The underlying conflict lies deep in the nature and structure of the Republican Party. And its roots are very old.

As political analyst Michael Lind has noted, today's Tea Party is less an ideological movement than the latest incarnation of an angry white minority – predominantly Southern, mainly rural, largely male – that has repeatedly attacked American democracy in order to get its way.

It's no coincidence that the states responsible for putting the most Tea Party representatives in the House are all former members of the Confederacy. Others are from border states with significant Southern populations and Southern ties.

This "no-compromise" right wing of today's GOP isn't much different from the evangelical social conservatives who began asserting themselves in the party during the 1990s, and, before them, the "Willie Horton" conservatives of the 1980s, and, before them, Richard Nixon's "silent majority."

Robert Reich Robert Reich, former U.S. secretary of labor, is professor of public policy at UC Berkeley and the author of "Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future."

Read the whole story

STPUD part of pool that owes $915 million to CalPERS

By Kathryn Reed

South Tahoe Public Utility District says it has no unfunded liability other than the $3 million for sick days employees could claim. But it is part of pool that pays into the state retirement system that is behind more than $900 million in payments.

While the district is current on its payments to PERS, it has not taken steps to cutback what is must pay – something entities throughout El Dorado County have already done.

Because STPUD has fewer than 100 active members in the California Public Employees Retirement System it must participate in a risk pool. The more than 150 cities and special districts in this risk group share the responsibility of the unfunded retirement account.

There are two ways to calculate the unfunded amount. One is to use the market value of the fund and the other is the actuarial number. The latter is what STPUD uses in its financial statement. In doing so, it skews the numbers dramatically to paint a much less bleak picture.

The district's most recent annual financial report for fiscal year ended June 30, 2011, says the collective unfunded liability for PERS as of June 30, 2009, was $466,178,582. Another way of looking at it is the pot is missing 21.8 percent of what it should have. This compares to the prior year when the unfunded liability was $293,817,678 – or missing 16.1 percent.

However, using the market rate assessment the unfunded liability for the pool is $915,908,782 for the same time period, or 42.8 percent deficient.

This means these groups have promised their workers a certain amount of money when they retire, but the money is not there. If everyone comes collecting, it could affect STPUD retirees because their money is part of the pool.

CalPERS essentially has two sets of books. The market value is the true value of the account. But when the stock market crashed and the losses of 2008-09 depleted the fund value, this private entity (CalPERS is not a government agency) said

that loss would be amortized over 30 years. That in essence is the lower, actuarial rate STPUD and other government bodies use because it is smaller.

When it comes to retirement benefits there are three basic choices: 1. nothing, 2. defined contribution upfront, like what most 401(k)s are in the private sector, so employees know what amount the employer is giving toward their retirement, or 3. defined benefit, which is what most public employees have, so then they know the dollar amount they will get when they retire.

The problem for the public agency paying the defined benefit if that at least through PERS there is no control by the member agencies in how the money is invested. When there are losses, the public agencies must make up the difference. When raises are given, that affects what people get in retirement, but is seldom part of the public discourse in terms of what taxpayers are liable for.

Someone may be hired as a public servant. But it's the taxpayers who are doing the lifetime of serving by paying for that employee until they die.

STPUD has been part of PERS since 2003.

"STPUD does not have an 'unfunded liability' as defined by CalPERS. The CalPERS Pool itself is required to account for the unfunded liability," Paul Hughes, South Tahoe PUD's chief financial officer, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "This liability is 100 percent CalPERS' and not the district's."

But the pool is funded by those 150-plus entities, which includes STPUD.

Other entities in the risk pool with STPUD include Diamond Springs/El Dorado Fire Protection District, Lake Valley Fire Protection District, South Placer Municipal Utility District, Squaw Valley Public Service District, Tahoe City Public

Utility District, Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency, Town of Mammoth Lakes, Town of Truckee, Truckee Donner Public Utility District, Truckee Fire Protection District, Truckee Sanitary District, and Truckee-Tahoe Airport District.

For the last fiscal year STPUD's CalPERS contribution was $1,316,604; for fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, it was $1,313,791; and for year ending June 30, 2009, it was $1,204,423.

For the current year, the district pays 16.59 percent of an employee's salary into PERS, while the employee's share is 6.59 percent. Those figures change July 1 to having the district pay 16.804 percent and employees 6.804 percent.

Full member contribution is 8 percent. So, the district is paying a portion of the employees' share in addition to the employer's share.

It's items like these that the STPUD management and board have not even tried to negotiate with staff. The next round of negotiations is expected to start this spring because the current contract expires June 30.

Getting employees to pay their share of PERS is what the city of South Lake Tahoe finally accomplished with its bargaining units. The final agreement was ratified by the City Council Jan. 3, with the last group upping its contribution for this fiscal year and going to pay the full amount starting next fiscal year.

"I like to think No. 1 we have been as conservative as we can. If there are things that can be done to make the plan better relative to the long-term financial stability of the district, that will be looked at," STPUD board President Eric Schafer said.

He said changes to PERS have not occurred because the current contract was signed in 2007 when fiscal matters were more

robust. That was for four years, then extended a year to expire this June.

This fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2012, the district has a $49,733,789 budget. Salaries account for $9,434,757 or 18.97 percent; PERS $1,416,237 or 2.85 percent; and health care $2,749,200 or 5.53 percent.

STPUD's main sources of income are people paying for water and/or sewer operations, property taxes (which were down 6.6 percent last fiscal year and are expected to drop another 1.8 percent this fiscal year), investments, and connection fees.

Service charges accounted for 69 percent of revenue in fiscal year 2010-11 – that is the money people are paying each quarter.

South Tahoe PUD employees have the best PERS retirement plan available. At age 55 they may retire with 2.7 percent of the highest year's salary for every year of service.

Schafer says it's not the absolute best because employees have to pay into it.

The least expensive available is 2 percent at 60.

"The Board of Directors is currently considering a tiered system that would affect new hires. Bear in mind, while that is certainly a possibility, it is a long-range solution that only bears fruit many years from now," Dennis Cocking, STPUD spokesman, said.

A tiered approach is something South Lake Tahoe went to several years ago. El Dorado County went to a tiered structure years ago, too. Some employees are at 2 percent at age 55, while new employees are at 2 percent at age 60. Eldorado Irrigation District, the county's largest water provider, is also tiered.

As it stands now, someone hired today at South Tahoe Public

Utility district would have retirement benefits that are 35 percent higher than someone hired today by South Lake Tahoe.

End of bear hunting season does not make controversy go away

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

The new year ended Nevada's first black bear hunt with 14 bears killed and no sign that controversy over the hunt is near an end.

Nine male and five female bears were killed since the hunt's Aug. 20 start, six bears shy of the maximum that could have

been taken by Dec. 31.

The hunt was approved by the Nevada Wildlife Commission after a series of crowded public hearings and protests and vigils conducted by organized critics. A lawsuit was filed to block the hunt but was rejected by a district court judge in Carson City shortly before the hunt began.

“I think it was very successful,” Carl Lackey, a biologist and bear expert with the Nevada Department of Wildlife, said of the state’s inaugural bear hunting season.

Lackey said a few more bears were killed than he expected and that he was somewhat surprised only two of them were taken in the Carson Range. None was killed in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Of the 14 bears killed, half were taken in the Pine Nut Mountains east of Minden. Two were taken in the Stillwater Mountains near Wellington and three in the Pine Grove Hills in Lyon County.

Read the whole story

‘Miss Representation’

Following its premiere at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, the documentary feature film “Miss Representation” will be screened at the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation Queen of Heart’s lunch Feb. 15 at the Resort at Squaw Creek in Olympic Valley.

Written and directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom, “Miss Representation” exposes how mainstream media contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America. The film challenges the media’s limited

and often disparaging portrayals of women and girls, which make it difficult for women to achieve leadership positions and for the average woman to feel powerful herself.

“Miss Representation” includes stories from teenage girls and interviews with politicians, journalists, entertainers, activists and academics like Condoleezza Rice, Lisa Ling, Nancy Pelosi, Katie Couric, Rachel Maddow, Rosario Dawson, Jackson Katz, Jean Kilbourne, and Gloria Steinem.

While women have made strides in leadership over the past few decades, the U.S. is 90th in the world in terms of women in national legislatures and women hold only 3 percent of clout positions in mainstream media.

The distribution of the film “Miss Representation” will coincide with a social action campaign led by MissRepresentation.org. The campaign seeks to empower women and girls to challenge limiting labels in order to fully realize their potential, and ultimately transform our culture for the betterment of all. A portion of the film proceeds will be donated to women’s leadership initiatives led by partnership beneficiaries that include Girls for A Change, Girls Inc., The International Museum of Women, Step Up Women’s Network, The Women’s Media Center, and The White House Project.

For more information about the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation Queen of Hearts Luncheon and the screening of “Miss Representation”, contact Cathy Dangler at cathy@dangler.us or call (415) 317.7705.

California labor law issues to be discussed

As part of its Chamber EDucation program, the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce and the Sierra Human Resources Association is hosting a legal update for California business leaders and managers Jan. 17 from 9am-noon at Cedar House Sport Hotel, 10918 Brockway Road in Truckee.

Deadline to register is Jan. 13.

Attendees will learn about new laws that take effect in 2012 and how they impact employers, California legislative updates in regard to credit check ban, PDL amendment, commission agreements, California case law updates such as wage and hour, meal periods and harassment, along with U.S. Supreme Court and California rulings about arbitration, discrimination and class actions.

The seminar will also include significant agency regulations, opinions and trends to watch in 2012, and best practices to prepare organization for employment law compliance this year and beyond.

Special counsel Mary L. Guilfoyle of the Miller Law Group in San Francisco will lead the seminar. Guilfoyle has been practicing labor and employment law exclusively for 20 years, representing management in federal and state court in employment litigation matters involving claims of wrongful termination, discrimination, sexual harassment and retaliation.

Registration fees before Jan. 9 are $55/person for chamber and SHRA members and $65 for nonmembers. After Jan. 9, registration is $60 for chamber and SHRA members and $70 for nonmembers.

For more information and/or to register, contact Laura Moriarty at (530) 573.0224 or Kym Fabel at (530) 581.8764.