Buckle Up Slopestyle Jam

Sierra-at-Tahoe’s 6th annual Buckle Up Slopestyle Jam in memory of freestyle athlete Greg Smith that spreads seatbelt awareness is Jan. 21 from 11am-3pm.

Judge invalidates part of California’s greenhouse gas law

By John Ellis, Fresno Bee

A Fresno federal judge on Thursday dealt a setback to California’s landmark global warming law, which went into effect last year with the goal of reducing the state’s greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

U.S. District Judge Lawrence J. O’Neill ruled that California’s Low Carbon Fuel Standard violated the U.S. Constitution’s Commerce Clause.

The standard aims to gradually cut the carbon content in gasoline 10 percent by 2020 and replace up to 20 percent of the total gasoline used annually in the state with renewable fuels such as ethanol.

Several groups – including the Fresno-based Nisei Farmers League and the Fresno County Farm Bureau – filed a lawsuit in December 2009 that challenged the state regulation, saying it violated the Commerce Clause by seeking to regulate farming and ethanol production practices in other states.

A similar suit that involved oil production was filed last year by groups including the National Petrochemical Refiners Association and the American Trucking Association. It was later consolidated with the first lawsuit.

It was clear Thursday that O'Neill's ruling will be appealed. But what will happen to the state's greenhouse gas law wasn't clear – representatives of both sides of the debate were still digesting O'Neill's complicated ruling.

Read the whole story

Learn about geology in the Lake Tahoe Basin

Scott Valentine, Earth science instructor at Lake Tahoe Community College, will talk about "Geology of the Tahoe Basin" a story of earthquakes, glaciers, volcanism and how Lake Tahoe was created on Feb. 29 from 6-7pm.

This is part of the Explore Tahoe Winter Lecture Series.

The event is at Explore Tahoe: An Urban Trailhead, 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

A $5 donation is requested. A $5 flat rate is offered in the Heavenly Village parking garage after 4pm.

For more information, all (530) 542.4637.

CHP officer involved in fatal accident on Hwy. 50

Updated: Jan. 1 2pm.

By Kathryn Reed

A 21-year-old Walnut Creek man died early New Year's morning when he was struck by two vehicles on Highway 50 in Stateline.

The name of the victim is not being released pending notification of next of kin.

A California Highway Patrol vehicle first struck the man. The force sent the person into the westbound lane where he was lodged in the undercarriage of a Reno-Tahoe Transportation van. The man was pronounced dead at the scene.

Officer Joshua J. Varanini was traveling home to Truckee after working New Year's Eve on the South Shore. CHP in the Truckee office could not say whether Varanini would be placed on administrative leave while NHP investigates the accident.

NHP Trooper Chuck Allen told *Lake Tahoe News* that Varanini swerved to try to avoid hitting the victim.

The accident occurred at 12:44am Jan. 1.

Allen did not know if the pedestrian was trying to cross the street or was wandering in the highway. He said the victim appeared to have alcohol in his system.

There is no crosswalk in this area of the four-lane highway east of Kingsbury Grade near Lake Village. And it is dark, with minimal or no lighting.

Other law enforcement news:

The names of the Incline Village residents who were killed Friday walking across Highway 28 have been released. They are husband and wife – 46-year-old Robert C. Mathis and 46-year-old Linda Mathis.

Officers on the South Shore are reporting most of the New Year's Eve revelry in the casino area and at the SnowGlobe Music Festival at Lake Tahoe Community College being uneventful from a law enforcement perspective.

About 30,000 people were in the casino area, down from previous years. This is attributed to the nearly 10,000 who were at SnowGlobe New Year's Eve. (More than 9,500 attended the first night and more than 10,000 the second night.)

Highway 50 in front of the casinos was closed about 10:30pm, as is customary. But the masses did not fill the roadway until just before midnight when people streamed out of the casinos. The road reopened about 12:30am.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies arrested 10 people in casino area on charges of battery, domestic battery, battery on a peace officer, disorderly conduct, trespassing, minor consuming alcohol and civil protective custody. One person was arrested outside the casino core area on driving under the influence charges.

South Lake Tahoe officers arrested two people for public intoxication and El Dorado sheriff's deputies made four public intoxication arrests – all in the Stateline area.

Four people were also arrested at SnowGlobe Saturday night for public intoxication.

"The two nights before there were some drunk cases – nothing really significant or unexpected," South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News* of SnowGlobe. "The

entire three days the crime levels were minimal.”

The promoters of SnowGlobe do face criminal charges for going beyond the time limit of their permit on the second night. Uhler said they have been cited and his department will follow up with the El Dorado County District Attorneys Office.

Important to discard hot ashes properly

One of the most common fires we respond to is a fire caused by hot ashes being placed in a box or bag and stored on the back deck. When you clean the ashes from your fireplace or wood burning stove, make sure to place them in a metal container with a tight fitting lid.

Place the container on a non-combustible surface like your concrete garage floor and leave them in the container for at least one week.

At that time they will be safe to discard in the trash.

– Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

Opinion: Watch out for scams involving foreclosed houses

To the community,

We have encountered a new scam up here, at least new to us, that is probably a byproduct of the foreclosure crises.

Here is how it goes: bad guy/gal(s) find unoccupied home that is in foreclosure. They list the home for rent on a place like Craig's List. If they need to show the home, they break in and boldly do so, sometimes removing notices and real estate signs to obscure that the property is in distress or under the control of another entity. They accept money for first/last/deposit, etc., and then disappear.

The poor wound-be tenant later finds out that his lease/tenancy is a farce.

Thanks to some nice work by El Dorado County sheriff's deputies, we have all three suspects identified in the one we just saw up here, which cost our victim more than $4,000, as to which we will of course seek a restitution order.

This one might be harder than some to detect/defeat. Probably be best to be suspicious of any claimed property manager who does not have an established office, business cards, etc.

A call to California Department of Real Estate or a check with their Internet site can verify whether the person has a license, assuming you really have their true name. If dealing with a claimed owner unfamiliar to the prospective tenant,

probably no harm in writing down license plates, asking for ID and verifying ownership with county records.

Back when not too many homes foreclosed and those that did tended to move fairly quickly to new occupants, this probably would not have been nearly as easy to pull off as it apparently is now. Now, with some foreclosed homes sitting empty for months at a time, combined with an over-heated rental market (in part caused by persons dispossessed from their homes), there appears to be a window of opportunity for these crooks.

Hans Uthe, El Dorado County assistant district attorney

Random Acts of Kindness – tell us what yours are

Lake Tahoe News wants to start off 2012 on a happy, positive, joyful (insert favorite word) note. Mostly, we want it to be a kind note.

With that said, January will be Random Acts of Kindness Month on *Lake Tahoe News*.



We are asking all readers to let us know about a Random Act of Kindness that they did, were a recipient of, or that they witnessed. It could be as simple as opening a door for someone.

Start today by putting a comment at the end of this story. Then, each day a Random Acts of Kindness story will be on *Lake*

Tahoe News announcing who won, why that person won and what was won.

We realize people may be reluctant to promote themselves. We hope you will get beyond that because your kindness deserves recognition and ideally will help foster more kindness from everyone who reads about it.

We also realize you may not want to get credit for receiving or witnessing a Random Act of Kindness. Still, the awareness of it and acknowledgement should be made public so people can see the world is full of goodness. The other thing you can do is ask the people involved if you could post their name and write about the Act. If you want them to be in the running for the prize, first post what the Random Act of Kindness was and say that you want that person to be a contender for the prize. Then you will need to send their email address to info@LakeTahoeNews.net with RAOK in the subject line and details in the body of the email or tell them about Random Acts of Kindness to have them write a comment on *Lake Tahoe News* so they put themselves in the running.

Randomly, one of the people who writes in will be rewarded each day in January.

While Random Acts of Kindness should not necessitate more than a "thank you" from the person on the receiving end, with the help of dozens of local businesses we are going to reward you for your Random Acts of Kindness.

Our goal is the kindness expressed throughout January will continue forever. But this will only be successful if you tell us about the Random Acts of Kindness. If you are shy about receiving a gift, consider donating your gift – if appropriate – to further extend the Random Act of Kindness.

A few rules and things to know:

• Anyone, living anywhere may participate. This includes

people who write for *Lake Tahoe News* or do other work, advertisers, previous contest winners, and people in another country (though you may need to come to Tahoe to get your gift).

• Winners' full names will be published.

• Prizes have already been assigned to specific dates so there cannot even be the perception of an individual or response receiving preferential treatment.

• All negative, irrelevant comments will be marked as spam. Go by the rule – If you can't something nice, don't say anything at all.

Thank you in advance for being part of *Lake Tahoe News'* inaugural Random Acts of Kindness Month.

U.S. population expected to keep growing in 2012

The U.S. Census Bureau projects the Jan. 1, 2012, population in the United States will be 312,780,968.

This would represent an increase of 2,250,129, or 0.7 percent, from New Year's Day 2011, and an increase of 4,035,430, or 1.3 percent, since Census Day (April 1, 2010).

In January, one birth is expected to occur every eight seconds in the United States and one death every 12 seconds.

Meanwhile, net international migration is expected to add one

person to the U.S. population every 46 seconds in January. The combination of births, deaths and net international migration results in an increase in the total U.S. population of one person every 17 seconds.

Learn about Mark Twain and Lake Tahoe

Join author David Antonucci on Jan 12 from 5-7:30pm for a talk on exactly which parts of the Lake Tahoe Basin Mark Twain saw and walked.

Antonucci’s talk will focus on the results of his research for his book “Fairest Picture: Mark Twain at Lake Tahoe”.

After the talk, there will be a meet-and-great session where people may have Antonucci sign their copies of his book.

The cost is $2 per person in advance; $3 that night. The event is at Lake Tahoe Books and Art in the Village Center, 4000 Lake Tahoe Blvd., Ste. 10 in South Lake Tahoe.

There is plenty of free parking, but seating is limited. Call (530) 600.2020 to buy a ticket or for more information.

Ruling clears way for CalPERS fraud suit against Stateline resident

By Marc Lifsher, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – A federal judge has approved a plan to liquidate the estate of Stateline resident Alfred J.R. Villalobos, former board member of the California Public Employees' Retirement System, the state's biggest public pension fund.

The action by a U.S. Bankruptcy Court judge in Reno ended an 18-month bankruptcy proceeding and cleared the way for the state to pursue a fraud lawsuit against Villalobos, who the state alleges plied pension fund officials with luxury trips and gifts to influence investment decisions.

Villalobos, who also served a short stint as deputy mayor of Los Angeles under Mayor Richard Riordan in the 1990s, was paid more than $47 million by private investment fund managers to help them win CalPERS business.

The judge on Friday approved a petition from Villalobos and three companies he controls to pay about $17 million to dozens of creditors, including lawyers, accountants, banks, the Internal Revenue Service and Lake Tahoe gambling casinos.

Read the whole story