T.J. Maxx signs deal to open store in South Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

T.J. Maxx will be opening in South Lake Tahoe this coming spring.

With the old Mikasa-Miller's Outpost building being vacant for more than two years, it has been a long wait for city residents, officials and the landlord for the building at the Y to be filled.



The South Lake Tahoe Y center has been revamped from its boarded-up days and will have a T.J. Maxx in the spring. Photo/LTN file

The discount clothing store filed the necessary paperwork with the city Dec. 29 and the city has sent out a press release saying as much.

However, in an email to *Lake Tahoe News*, Carrie Garfield, T.J. Maxx media relations supervisor, wrote, "We do not have a

lease signed for a new T.J. Maxx store in South Lake Tahoe, so I cannot confirm anything for you at this time."

While this had been the store long-rumored to go in at that location, differences between the out-of-town landowners and tenants got in the way of this happening sooner. One of the issues was the minimum amount of square footage a T.J. Maxx likes to have. The additional 10,000 square feet was obtained by going into the connecting building.

Who the tenant will be in that section has not been disclosed.

The city says it is expected the store will employ about 70 people, with the bulk being part-time positions. City officials would not estimate what this might mean in terms of revenue for local coffers.

The façade of the store is complete, with more interior work to be done. Expect the doors to open in March or April.

Book signing, lecture by author

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.

Court: California can eliminate redevelopment

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

In a significant budget win for Gov. Jerry Brown and lawmakers, the California Supreme Court ruled Thursday the state can eliminate the local agencies that subsidize construction in blighted areas.

The decision strengthens the state's ability to take $1.7 billion from redevelopment agencies for the current budget. It also provides leverage for state leaders to continue using redevelopment property tax dollars to balance future budgets.

The court ruled invalid a second bill that would have reconstituted redevelopment agencies in a different form.

The court called the elimination of redevelopment "a proper exercise of the legislative power vested in the Legislature by the state Constitution."

Read the whole story

Zephyr Cove library closed New Year's Eve

The Douglas County Public Library in Zephyr Cove will be closed Dec. 31 due to budget constraints.

The library will resume its regular schedule Jan. 4 at 11am.

For more information, call (775) 588.6411.

Dory & Cool Water

Dory & Cool Water play at the Beacon restaurant at Camp Richardson on the South Shore starting at 7pm New Year's Eve.

K's Kitchen: Cupcakes for adults

By Kathryn Reed

Eating a leftover cupcake from a 5-year-old's birthday has made me want to keep her parents' cookbook until I've made all of the recipes.



Having neither made cupcakes from scratch nor being proficient in the world of vegan baking, I asked Jen and Bob if I could have the recipe for the cupcakes she made for Scarlett. They said if I liked that one, I really ought to try the margarita ones.

Wow! I'm not sure if it's all the lime or the tequila that's in them that makes them so wonderful, but one really isn't enough.

They are so yummy I'm bringing them to a New Year's Eve party because a dessert is what we are supposed to bring.

Until last weekend, my experience with cupcake baking only involved a box. Now I'm embarrassed by that fact. Not only are these cupcakes scrumptious, but they are easy to make.

The recipe creators have such a great intro that all I can say is get baking.

The recipe comes from "Vegan Cupcakes Take Over the World" by Isa Chandra Moskowitz and Terry Hope Romero.

Mucho Margarita Cupcakes (makes 12)

These cupcakes have a lot going for them – lots of fresh lime juice, pretty green lime zest, and even a shot of tequila. But let's get serious … it's all about the margarita icing. The pale green frosting has a secret ingredient – kosher salt – that makes each bite sweet, tangy, and savory. If salt in a glaze sounds weird or you like your margaritas sans the salted rim, leave it out today, but make it with the salt for the margarita lover in your life tomorrow. The large crystal sugar that decorates the edges is worth finding; the crunch is a treat contrast to the cool, smooth icing.

¼ C freshly squeezed lime juice

1½ tsp finely grated lime zest

1 C soy milk or rice milk

¼ C canola oil

2 T tequila

½ tsp vanilla extract

¾ C granulated sugar

1 1/3 C all-purpose flour

¼ tsp baking soda

½ tsp baking powder

½ tsp salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line muffin pan with cupcake liners.

In a large bowl beat together lime juice, zest, soy milk, canola oil, tequila, vanilla, and sugar. Sift in flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Mix until batter is smooth. Fill liners three-quarters of the way full and bake 20 to 22 minutes until a toothpick or knife inserted through the center of one comes out clean. Transfer cupcakes to a cooling rack and let cool completely before frosting; allowing cupcakes to set for an hour or two helps the flavor to develop fully.

Margarita Icing

¼ C margarine, softened

1 T soy milk or rice milk

3 T lime juice

1 T tequila

Tiniest drop of green food color or food color paste you can manage, optional

2 C confectioners’ sugar, sifted

Generous pinch or 1/8 teaspoon kosher or coarse salt, optional

Blend margarine with a fork until soft and fluffy, then stir in soy milk, lime juice, tequila, and food coloring if using (the effect is just to give the icing a very pale green tint, even lighter than mint green). Sift in 2 cups confectioners’ sugar and blend until creamy and smooth. If it’s a little too liquidy for your taste, sift in the remaining confectioners’ sugar, one tablespoon at a time until a thick but spreadable consistency is reached. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Spread icing on cupcakes, spreading all the way to the edges, then roll just the outer edges of cupcakes in sugar crystals. If this is way too messy, just sprinkle sugar crystals on edges of cupcake by hand.

Fireworks not allowed by individuals in Lake Tahoe Basin

The forest supervisor for the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is cautioning New Year’s holiday visitors to leave their fireworks at home.

“The use of all fireworks is prohibited on all national forests and national grasslands. Regulations are enforced, and violation is punishable as a misdemeanor by a fine of not more

than $5,000, or imprisonment of not more than six months, or both," USFS Supervisor Nancy Gibson said in a statement.

The ban on fireworks is year-round, regardless of weather conditions or holidays.

Opinion: Voting Rights Act still matters

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Dec. 27, 2011, Los Angeles Times.***

Next month the Supreme Court will consider a controversy over congressional redistricting in Texas that will highlight the importance of a crucial part of the 1965 Voting Rights Act: Section 5, which requires states and localities with a history of voting discrimination to "pre-clear" changes in their election practices with the Justice Department or a federal court. In 2009 the court declined to rule on the constitutionality of Section 5, but it could return to the issue. If they are in any doubt about the continued need for it, they should read a recent speech by Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr.

Holder did not confine his remarks to Section 5. He spoke more generally about contemporary threats to the voting rights of minorities, who decades ago took what Holder called "extraordinary risks, and willingly confronted hatred, bias and ignorance — as well as billy clubs and fire hoses, bullets and bombs" — to ensure the right of all Americans to vote. But he emphasized Section 5 and offered an example: In October, the Justice Department forced changes in a redistricting map in a Louisiana parish that had been approved without

participation by African American officeholders and diminished the voting strength of blacks. Another example emerged Friday when the Justice Department used Section 5 to reject a new South Carolina law requiring voters to show photo ID at the polls, saying the law made it harder for minorities to vote.

Read the whole story

Same-sex couples pay more in taxes than heterosexuals

By Blake Ellis, CNN Money

NEW YORK – Same-sex spouses are paying as much as $6,000 a year in extra taxes because the federal government doesn't recognize gay marriage, according to an analysis conducted for CNNMoney by tax specialists.

While marriage provides tax benefits for many heterosexual couples, same-sex families don't enjoy the same perks because they are not allowed to file their federal returns jointly.

The imbalance persists despite increasing acceptance of gay marriage as a legal right. More than 12 states now grant full or partial marriage rights to same-sex couples, and a recent Gallup poll showed – for the first time – that a majority of Americans favor gay marriage.

But not the federal government, which is constrained by the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. Even as more same-sex couples are able to file jointly at the state level, they are still forced to file as single when submitting federal returns to the IRS.

This means they can’t combine their income and deductions to take advantage of lower tax rates. It’s also harder for them to qualify for certain tax breaks because the credits phase out sooner for single filers.

Read the whole story

Grass Roots to expand product line at new location

By Kathryn Reed

Three-foot wide aisles with shelves packed from floor to ceiling are not the ideal shopping conditions – for consumer or storeowner.

That’s why Jon McElroy is moving out of the location Grass Roots has been in since 1973 and moving across the driveway to the old Blockbuster building. With 1,200-square-feet of retail space today, when the new store opens in the spring it will have 4,000-square-feet devoted to natural foods.

“You will be able to see the products,” McElroy said of the new site. “Now you can’t stand back far enough to see what’s on the bottom shelf. And if gets crowded, it is annoying.”



Grass Roots

will be moving almost next door in spring 2012. Photo/LTN

Through the years McElroy and wife Sandra have thought about moving into a bigger place than their Dunlap Drive location in South Lake Tahoe, but the right place never came along.

Then earlier this year everything clicked. They bought the building that is next door, which also fronts Highway 50 at the Y. The Grass Roots sign is in place even though the moving date isn't likely to be until March.

"One reason we wanted to expand is there are a lot of new products, fun things (on the market). We go to trade shows and say we wish we could carry this and that, but where would we carry it?" McElroy said.

The McElroys look forward to being able to carry more products, expanding the produce section and creating a better shopping experience. He envisions it being a mini Whole Foods Market.

With the tight quarters of the current store, it's not possible to introduce a new product without taking one away.

Although the size of the store is much larger, with doubling the aisle space to 6 feet, much of the room will be used in cosmetic ways instead of devoted to sales. But at the same time, a more pleasant environment with more choices may keep the cash register ringing louder and more often.

Like most businesses, Grass Roots saw its bottom line take a hit in 2009 and 2010. McElroy said things have been on the upswing this year.

"People's shopping habits have changed. We have a sales flyer

that comes out every month. They will look for specials and walk around with the flyer in hand," McElroy told *Lake Tahoe News*.

While people are price conscious, they are also turning their attention to better nutrition. This is one area where Grass Roots is attracting new customers – those who care about what's in a product and where their food comes from.

Lots of things need to be done to the building to convert it from a video store to a grocery store. Gone are the blue carpet and yellow walls. Wood will be on the walls and the floor will be stained concrete.

Today's store has four little freezer doors. The new place will have 10.

Grass Roots is forming a partnership with Freshies for that South Tahoe restaurant to provide soup at the new location. It will be self-serve, with people able to get lunch on the go.

McElroy is talking to some people about turning the current Grass Roots spot into a café. The owner, who lives out of state, is likely to convert the upstairs back into apartments. Now it's used as office space and storage.

The bakery, which McElroy knows well, will remain in the current location because the process to create a commercial kitchen is too involved. It means the fresh breads will be sold at the new property.

McElroy first went to work at Grass Roots as a baker in 1978 when Karen and Jeff Miner owned the natural foods store. The Miners had opened it five years earlier. McElroy bought them out in 1985 – the same year he got married. The McElroys have been operating it ever since then.