Youngster walking after fall from Diamond Peak chairlift

A 4-year-old boy survived an 8-foot fall from the Schoolhouse chairlift at Diamond Peak in Incline on Dec. 27.

Steve Eikam, North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District battalion chief, told *Lake Tahoe News* his department first called for a helicopter, but canceled that when it was determined the injury was minor. An ambulance transported the boy to Incline Village Community Hospital so X-rays could be taken.

Neither the name of the youth nor his hometown was released.

This is the second time this month a child has fallen from a Lake Tahoe area chairlift. John Hendersn, 7, of Davis died from the injuries he stained after falling 60 feet from a Sugar Bowl chairlift.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

How much of organic food is really organic?

By Barry Estabrook, Atlantic

When is “USDA Organic” not organic? More often than you probably realize. The USDA keeps a “National List” of inorganic products that can legally go into foods labeled as organic. The casings for those tasty USDA Organic sausages can come from conventionally raised animals that have been fed

antibiotics. The hops in your favorite organic beer can be sprayed with all manner of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Strawberries can be labeled as organic even if they had their start in a conventional nursery.

According to USDA rules, if 95 percent of a product is made up of organic ingredients, it can be called organic. If it's 70 percent organic, the label can read "made with organic ingredients."

For the past several years, public interest groups such as the Cornucopia Institute have complained that the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which has the power to determine what materials can – and cannot – be used in organic production, too often weakens regulations in the face of intense lobbying by corporations who are more interested in the higher profits conferred by the word "organic" than in strong and meaningful standards.

Recently, five new members were nominated for five-year terms to the 15-member board. The Obama administration has had a schizophrenic relationship with agriculture, on one hand cozying up to the likes of Monsanto Co. by advocating for GM crops, and on the other hand winning plaudits from small farm and organic advocates for programs like Know Your Farmer Know your Food and the White House organic garden.

Read the whole story

Heavenly, Northstar and

Mammoth score well with Facebook fans

Heavenly and Northstar are listed as two of the top 10 most popular ski resorts, according to a poll taken on Facebook.

SkiReports.com in Boston crunched the numbers that were released Dec. 27.



Heavenly has a lot of Facebook fans. Photo/LTN

Here's the list:

1. Mammoth Mountain – 99,458 fans

2. Heavenly Mountain Resort – 93,887 fans

3. Whistler Blackcomb – 87,477 fans

4. Vail – 79,765 fans

5. Breckenridge – 66,060 fans

6. Jackson Hole – 62,088 fans

7. Keystone, Colo. – 56,145 fans

8. Northstar – 49,498 fans

9. Beaver Creek – 40,068 fans

10. Mountain High, Calif. – 39,742 fans.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Fire destroys 2 houses, kills 2 dogs on South Shore

By Kathryn Reed

Two dogs are dead and the residents of two South Shore houses have been displaced after a fire raced through both structures Monday night.

Hot ashes left in a trash can on wood deck smoldered before erupting into flames, engulfing the first house and spreading to the one next door.



Firefighters from Lake Valley on Dec. 27 help residents of a burned out house search for

possessions.
Photo/Provided

“This is the third structure fire we’ve responded to because of (hot ashes) in the last couple weeks,” Leona Allen, spokeswoman with Lake Valley fire, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Lake Valley and South Lake Tahoe firefighters responded Dec. 26 at 8:30pm to the 900 block of Onontioga Street, which is off Pioneer Trail.

A dollar amount has not been put on the loss. No people were injured. The dogs who were killed resided in the house where the fire started.

The fire spread a bit into the adjacent forest as well.

“The safety message is it has to be an approved container with a lid and put on a non- combustible surface,” Allen said of where to place hot ash from fireplaces or wood stoves.

Dream Act students live in state of limbo

By Stephen Magagnini, Sacramento Bee

Mandeep Chahal is a young woman in limbo.An honors student at UC Davis, Chahal has plans for medical school and a career spent healing children in poor communities.

She is also undocumented, which means no matter what academic degrees she ultimately earns, her ability to work in her chosen profession in the United States remains clouded in doubt. In just more than a year, under the California Dream Act legislation Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law in October, Chahal and more than 10,000 other undocumented students in the state can start competing for millions of dollars in public and private college financial aid.

The legislation allows undocumented students who came to the country before age 16 and attended California high schools access to public financial aid, including Cal Grants. Those students already are eligible for in-state tuition, and Brown in July signed a companion measure affording them access to private financial aid.But nothing in the legislation eases their path toward citizenship; and no matter how well those students do in college or graduate school, they will have a tough time landing professional jobs because undocumented students can’t get the Social Security cards required by hospitals, law practices, engineering firms, universities and other employers.

Chahal, who was 6 years old when her mom brought her to the United States from the Punjab region of India, wonders if her hard work and growing debt will pay off.”People like me are in this limbo state,” said Chahal, now 21. “I don’t have a path to legalization. You can absolutely get into medical school,

but if I don’t have legal status, all that work will go down the drain. I won’t be able to help anyone here in California, where I grew up.

“President Barack Obama is pushing federal Dream Act legislation that would create a path to citizenship for young people who were brought to the United States illegally as children and went on to attend college or serve in the U.S. military. But the bill has failed to get out of Congress, opposed by some Republicans who argue it would draw more undocumented immigrants.

Assemblyman Tim Donnelly, R-Twin Peaks, makes the same argument about the California legislation. He is gathering signatures for a referendum that would repeal Assembly Bill 131, which he calls “The California Nightmare Act.”Donnelly rails against the “unfairness” of AB 131, saying the children of parents who broke the law shouldn’t go to college “on the backs of taxpayers” while “California is billions of dollars in the hole, 2.5 million people are out of work, the governor has cut our schools, shut down job centers, closed our state parks and slashed veterans’ reentry services … “The architect of the Dream Act legislation, Assemblyman Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles, counters that California’s future depends on undocumented students who, once they get legal status, will shore up California’s economy and tax base.”Many parents of these children pay taxes for many services they cannot get,” said Cedillo.

Even without citizenship, the so-called “Dreamers” can work as tutors, researchers, caregivers, architects and lawyers, Cedillo said.

“We want them to be prepared to optimize their God-given talents so they can make a constructive contribution,” he said. “By not educating them, they may end up being illiterate, ignorant and a burden on society.”

Read the whole story

Fire academy graduation

June 23 at noon the cadets from the Lake Tahoe Fire Academy graduate.

The event is in the Duke Theatre at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe.

Youth terrain park competition

Sugar Bowl Resort has partnered with KidZone Museum to host four children’s terrain park competitions this season.

The first competition is Jan. 8 from 11am-noon in the Caboose Terrain Park. The competitions teach kids terrain park safety, and introduce them to a safe but competitive skiing/riding atmosphere, ultimately having fun while competing for great prizes.

Competition entry fee is $15 and participants receive half price lift tickets and a free barbecue voucher. Prizes for winners include Dynastar skis, a Flow snowboard, a Giro helmet, jackets from M3 and Vans and other prizes.

Registration for all competitions begins at 9am in the Judah Lodge. All kids 12 and under are welcome to compete and must

wear a helmet.

Other competition dates are Feb. 12, March 18 and April 15.

More information on these events is posted online.

No scarcity in visitors to Lakeview Commons

With no fanfare, Lakeview Commons at El Dorado Beach is open. And based on the number of people frolicking along the expansive walkway and terraced seating during the holiday weekend, its popularity has not diminished. With the major face lift, it is likely to be even more popular than year's past.

Gone are the fences, construction crews and machines needed to complete the multimillion dollar project in South Lake Tahoe.



Lakeview Commons in South Lake Tahoe is open. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The City Council will tour the area as part of the afternoon

session of the Jan. 3 meeting.

Work continues on the boathouse, though that should be open in the summer. A fence does separate the beach and water, but that, too, will be gone by the time people want to venture into the lake.

– Kathryn Reed

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Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Rudolph and his buddies Prancer, Donner and Vixen are all biding their time at the shelter, playing and generally acting very cute until their new families come to adopt them.



There are five kittens at the South Shore animal shelter, plus several other adult cats who are all hoping the holiday season brings them good luck and good homes.

Rudolph is neutered, microchipped, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go

online.

– Karen Kuentz

Opinion: Pledging allegiance to a lobbyist is bad for the country

By Anna G. Eshoo

The Constitution gave birth to the world's greatest democracy and stands as our country's timeless statement of our fundamental laws, beliefs and ideals. It requires an oath of office for those selected as guardians of our principles.

At the opening of each new Congress, we "solemnly swear … to support and defend the Constitution of the United States … to bear true faith and allegiance …" and to "well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office." I took this oath, and I keep this oath sacred. But today, the Founding Fathers' shared ideals enshrined in the Constitution stand marred by special interests.

Sadly, before taking the oath to our Constitution, 233 of my colleagues in the House of Representatives and 41 members of the Senate had already pledged their allegiance to a lobbyist, Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform. By signing his Taxpayers Protection Pledge, these members have vowed to oppose any and all efforts to ever increase taxes on businesses and individuals, and to protect all tax breaks and deductions.

On the surface, this pledge might seem tolerable, to some admirable. But in practice, this special-interest oath is jeopardizing our country's fiscal health. In recent years, the pledge has effectively prevented any compromise. Pledge legislators have kept Congress from moving forward or accomplishing vital legislative goals, such as deficit reduction and job creation.

We most recently witnessed the destructive power of this pledge with the failure of the so-called supercommittee that was tasked with finding $1.2 trillion in cuts to the federal budget for deficit reduction. Its failure sadly surprised nobody. Every Republican on the supercommittee had signed this pledge and refused to consider closing tax loopholes, raising revenue or increasing any taxes.

Anna G. Eshoo, a Democrat, represents California's 14th Congressional District.

Read the whole story