Lakeview Commons about to open to the public

By Kathryn Reed

Fencing at Lakeview Commons in South Lake Tahoe is expected to come down before Christmas.

While interior work continues on the boathouse this winter, that section of the waterfront project on Highway 50 will be cordoned off. The whole project has taken longer than expected.



Lakeview Commons should be open to the public this week. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The last touches on the multimillion-dollar project will come in late spring.

South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Tom Davis last week said he would like the city to arrange for a summer concert to kick off events at the renovated site that sits across from Campground by the Lake.

Norma Santiago, who as El Dorado County's supervisor sits on

the California Tahoe Conservancy board, asked at the Dec. 16 CTC meeting about getting the parties together to talk about completing the second half of phase one.

CTC Deputy Director Ray Lacey said even though the Conservancy was the funding agency, it is a city and county project and they need to coordinate reconvening the steering committee.

Santiago said she wants to discuss the name of the project. When the Board of Supervisors met in Tahoe in November 2009, the name Lakeview Commons did not sit well with them.

The land the project is on is leased by the city from the county.

It will take another $4 million to $5 million to complete the first phase. The rest of what was once called the 56-acre project is on the other side of Highway 50. Ideas have been bounced around for what to do there, but no concrete plans are in place.

Opinion: O’Rourke is feasting on the city of South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

Looking at the fuss over the bonds to bail out the private management of the ice rink, it appears to be a new chapter in

Alice in Wonderland. Who will pick up the cost of turning the non-taxable bonds into the taxable bonds at a price tag of over $400,000?

JPA staff, John Upton, says the city must cough up the dough. City manager, Tony O’Rourke, claims private management must pay the piper.



Bill Crawford

Tweedledum and Tweedledee decided to have a battle over a new rattle. Of course there was lots of nonsense in it just as there is in the bond shenanigans.

The problem is the city manager who rushed to contract out management of the ice rink. Now having been the pied piper that led the city into a faulty deal he attempts to place the burden for his mistake onto the back of the private party to break the contract.

In his haste, Mr. O’Rourke acted mindlessly thinking that he is infallible. He has a master’s complex, and the city is his plantation. But he is fallible, and he is incapable of acknowledging it much like the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland. The result of his behavior is he sows mistrust because he has shown a lack of concern for the social fabric and under his leadership the fabric is thread bare. The community cannot have confidence in Mr. O’Rourke when he has displayed incompetence in managing the city’s business.

Finally, in the nursery rhyme the walrus and the carpenter did deceive the oyster and had them for lunch. It is time to stop

Mr. O’Rourke’s feast on the city.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Truckee organization helping adaptive skier reach South Pole

By Tim Mowry, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

FAIRBANKS, Alaska – Grant Korgan wants to be the first adaptive athlete – he’s paralyzed from the waist down – to reach the South Pole and he came to Fairbanks to help make that dream come true.

Korgan, along with teammates Tal Fletcher and Tom Day, spent three days in Fairbanks last week pushing his sit-ski around on the ski trails at Birch Hill Recreation Area and the University of Alaska Fairbanks as part of his preparation for what he hopes will be a historic event.

Early next month, Korgan, Fletcher and renowned polar explorer Doug Stoup, along with a four-man film crew, will attempt to ski 100 miles to the South Pole. For Korgan, that means pushing a sit-ski – basically a chair on skis – 10 miles a day for 10 days while enduring temperatures that could drop as cold as 70 degrees below zero.

That’s where Fairbanks came in.

“One of the main reasons we came to Alaska was for cold

weather training," said Korgan, as he, Fletcher and Day prepared for a training session at Smith Lake on the UAF ski trails Friday afternoon.

Needless to say, they were a little disappointed when they arrived early last week to temperatures in the teens.

"When we booked our tickets it was 40 below," Korgan said, referring to a record-setting cold snap that hit Fairbanks the week before Thanksgiving.

Despite the relatively balmy temperatures, Korgan, Fletcher, who will serve as one of two guides on the trip, and Day, a cinematographer who is part of the film crew, deemed their short stay in Fairbanks a success. They were able to test their equipment and bodies in the cold, namely a thermocouple device that measures the temperature of Korgan's feet. Because Korgan doesn't have feeling in his feet, he can't tell when they get cold.

"We're up here to test our gear, to test ourselves and to test the cold on my minimal circulation limbs," Korgan said.

Sitting in his sit-ski before their training session at Smith Lake on Friday afternoon, Korgan checked the temperature of his feet by plugging thermocouples that were taped to a toe on each of his feet into a digital thermometer. One foot was 77 degrees and the other was 75.

"Last night my foot got down to 27 degrees," Korgan said. "That's 5 degrees too cold."

When that happened, they called it a night and retreated to their car and hotel rooms to warm up. On Friday, Korgan returned wearing two pairs of socks and he had chemical heat packets in the bottom of his boots to help keep his feet warm. He planned to spend the next eight hours pushing his sled in circles around the lake. He hoped to cover 10 miles, the average distance they will have to go each day during their

expedition.

In addition to the cold feet Thursday, the team encountered some mechanical difficulties after Korgan crashed at Birch Hill Wednesday and broke a push rod on his sit-ski, a small rod that allows the skis to bend and flex. They couldn’t find a similar part anywhere in Fairbanks and ended up going to Sentry Hardware and buying a $3.78 turnbuckle they rigged between the two skis.

“That’s the name of the game,” Fletcher said. “When you’re taking a spinal cord injury into that environment, you’re going to have to do some problem solving. We need to do a lot of problem solving up here. They don’t have hardware stores and super friendly people like they have in Fairbanks at the South Pole.”

Dubbed simply “The Push,” the expedition is the first of its kind. While lots of people have skied to the South Pole, nobody has ever pushed a sit-ski to the Pole. The sit-ski Korgan will use is custom designed by two-time paralympic gold-medalist Kevin Bramble of New Jersey.

Called the KBG Artik Crosscountry Sit Ski, the contraption has two independently articulating skis rather than the traditional monoski used by disabled skiers.

That feature allows athletes to push through turns rather than dragging a hand to turn. It also enables them to traverse undulating terrain and side hills. Made from carbon fiber and aluminum, the sit-ski weighs only 8 pounds.

Originally, the plan was for both Korgan and John Davis, a two-time paralympic gold medalist in downhill skiing, to push sit-skis to the Pole. But Davis suffered a training injury in Argentina recently that knocked him out of the expedition.

Korgan, 34, was paralyzed in a snow machine wreck deep in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in March 2010. He was in the hospital

when he met Roy Tuscany, who founded the High Fives Foundation, a Truckee-based nonprofit organization dedicated to raising money and awareness for athletes who have suffered life-altering injuries. Tuscany, who dreamed of becoming a world-class professional skier, was paralyzed in April 2006 while skiing in Mammoth Mountain, Calif., though he since has recovered to the point he can walk again.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe music scene changes with the season

By Susan Wood

If there were any doubt Lake Tahoe tourism through the generations is as much about the synergy between its beauty and recreation as its leisure activities and nightlife, consider this: even the bands who play here want to take part in its splendor.

Hence, New Zealand's Sola Rosa band leader Andrew Spraggon telling *Lake Tahoe News* before his recent late-night performance at MontBleu's Blu Nightclub that as a first-timer to Tahoe he was just as interested in playing on his snowboard as he was his multi-track techno keyboard. The band, which stands for "sun and rose" in Spanish, brings out a vibrant following of young dancers enjoying what Spraggon calls a "groove music rally." The "winter welcome" party for ski resort employees was no exception.



It's not unusual for music at Blu inside MontBleu to start close to midnight. Photo/LTN

“I can’t think of a place to have three free days between dates than Lake Tahoe. I’ve always wanted to come here,” Spraggon said. A change in schedule cut the visit short, but he pledged to return – with his board.

Tahoe offers that perfect mix of daytime sport and after-hours frolic. And as summer’s distant past gives way to winter’s promise, some of the South Shore’s largest players in activities, and specifically the music scene, are hosting a huge lineup of bands and acts.

Warning: If you’re older than 40, you may not recognize the band names.

During the three days leading up to the new year, South Lake Tahoe’s city officials have teamed up with Lake Tahoe Community College to bring to campus the inaugural SnowGlobe festival, which city spokeswoman Nancy Kerry says is “definitely targeting a younger crowd.” Billed as a “mix of mountains and music,” the featured bands include: Bassnectar, Pretty Lights, Thievery Corporation, Glitch Mob and Childish. (Note: Doctor P won’t make it.)

There’s no secret here in Marketing 101. The casinos and the ski resorts – working hand in hand – have noticed the consistent double-digit growth of the snowboarder market, which brings a younger demographic of millennials and Gen Xers from November to April. In line with the U.S. Census’ 9.7 percent population growth, sports participation went up 6.9 percent in the last decade, the National Ski Areas Association reported last year.

Baby boomers had their day, or season, with Delta Blues singer Keb Mo at Harrah’s South Shore Room and Florida-based disco group K.C. and the Sunshine Band at MontBleu this year.

In winter, the young rule. The Cataracs play Dec. 30 at MontBleu. Others include The Expendable Winter Blackout Tour 2012, Iration/Trevor Hall/Thrive and 311/Dirty Heads.

“There is definitely a seasonal strategy when promoting shows in Tahoe. I like to bring in acts that will cater to the majority of visitors in the market, so during ski-snowboard season it just makes sense to present headliners that would cater to a younger demographic. Acts like 311, Whitney Cummins and Iration definitely will hit that core group of young people who are here for the snow activity,” said Paul Reder of PREpresents, a longtime entertainment booking agent on the South Shore.

Even young families will find something in it for them. Magician Tony Clark will return to Tahoe at the Horizon for a show called Illusion Fusion.

Still, you’ll need to be 21 or older for a few shows down the street at Harrah’s this winter. Fitz and the Tantrums and G. Love & Special Sauce for example are expected to bring out large crowds numbering more than 1,000 for the weekend Winter Snow Blast events, so the casino would like more control on alcohol consumption.

Come Jan. 21, Young the Giant is expected to bring out the

younger set at Harrah's as the main event for Tahoe Snowcial, a coordinated effort with Heavenly Mountain Resort. The ski resort is focusing its marketing on the deemed "trendsetters" – those who want "to pack as much into their vacation as possible," Heavenly spokesman Russ Pecoraro explained.

"This type of music is more like alternative or even college bands," Harrah's entertainment guru John Packer said.

With what the show Rain did with the Beatles music, Harrah's is continuing a legacy of mixing generations. The Hollywood Stones tribute show to the Rolling Stones slated for Jan. 7 will kick off an exuberant lineup to the casino's South Shore Room.

The South Shore Room does include acts for the boomers. Expect Kenny Loggins to continue going footloose Feb. 18. And one may only hope rocker George Thorogood, slated for March 17, can still play his guitar behind his head.

Outdoor enthusiasts sharpening their blades

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

Making lemonade out of the lemon weather pattern that has

brought weeks of cold, clear skies and no snow to the Reno-Tahoe area, about 50 ice skaters converged on Prosser Reservoir in Truckee on Saturday for some pick-up hockey games and gliding fun.

“This time of year, most of these people would be skiing today, but at least we can skate,” said Greg Keziah of Truckee as he tied on his hockey skates and headed out on the ice. “It’s amazing how fast it froze. A couple of weeks of single-digit temperatures, and it’s a good 5, 6 inches thick.”

Experts say ice should be at least 4 to 6 inches thick for safe skating. It’s also important never to skate alone.

Prosser is one of several Truckee-Tahoe area bodies of water that have frozen in the past month; others include the pond in Martis Valley near Truckee-Tahoe Airport; the ponds near Coldstream and Serene Lakes in Soda Springs; and Spooner Lake at Spooner Summit, west of Carson City.

Read the whole story

Cities cutting from bottom while adding 6-figure salaries at the top

By Phillip Reese and Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

Several local cities sliced their payrolls through layoffs last year by cutting those who made the least. And they ended up paying more employees six-figure salaries.

The 3,800 employees who earned at least $100,000 annually last

year made up 10 percent of the region's city and county workers, but ate 25 percent of payroll. Their ranks increased by about 80, while the number of city and county workers earning less than $100,000 fell by almost 3,000, according to a Bee review of new data from the state controller's office.

The trend was not universal. Cities such as Davis, Rancho Cordova and Elk Grove reduced the number of their workers earning six figures.

But the city and county of Sacramento collectively increased the total amount paid to six-figure employees by $23 million, or 9 percent, while cutting 1,800 workers from their payrolls.

"Somehow that doesn't surprise me," said Tana Taylor, who was laid off from her job as an office assistant in Sacramento County's Department of Health and Human Services last year. "Higher-end people – they seem to be hanging in there."

Several city and county leaders said the trend was largely unavoidable due to labor contracts and minimum staffing requirements. Many had to lay off employees based on tenure – and give the remaining employees raises due to their contracts.

For example, the number of county of Sacramento employees under 30 – most of them low earners – fell by 50 percent, to 900, from 2007 to 2010, according to actuarial documents from the county retirement system. During the same period, the number of workers over 30 declined by just 4 percent.

"Workers that were able to stay had higher seniority and are at the higher wage scale," said Chris Andis, a spokeswoman for the county of Sacramento.

The trend also reflects politics and priorities. About 45 percent of the region's municipal six-figure earners are cops and firefighters, and several cities chose to limit public safety cuts in favor of reducing staff in parks, health care

and social services, where fewer highly paid employees work.

“Instead of monitoring labor costs, pay rates, and pension costs in response to the recession, they’re instead laying off the junior workers in the city who are often the most productive,” said Craig Powell, president of Eye on Sacramento, a local civic watchdog organization.

Read the whole story

Volunteers needed for SnowGlobe

Volunteer are needed for the SnowGlobe Music Festival in South Lake Tahoe the nights of Dec. 29-31.

Go online to volunteer.

Then click on the “Contact Us” tab at the top of the page; then the “Volunteer” link to register.

Volunteer assignments include:

· Trash collection

· Assistance at shuttle stops

· Water refill program

· And more.

From surf to turf – Squaw freeriders embrace challenging sport

By Kirsten Fairchilds, Santa Cruz Sentinel

Cody Townsend freely admits to getting scared. But unlike other mere mortals who might try to avoid feeling fear at all costs, Townsend purposely faces it down on a regular basis.

He has used fear to carve out a career. While the Santa Cruz native may accurately describe himself as a professional skier, 28-year-old Townsend is more specifically a freerider. Also called freeskiing, freeriding is still a relatively new sport.

“Freeriding and freeskiing are interchangeable terms,” Townsend said by telephone from his Olympic Valley home. “It’s a pretty recent job description – about two decades old. In competitions, you go to the top of a mountain where there are cliffs and a lot of natural features and you ski down in the coolest way possible. A panel of judges scores you. It involves jumping, doing flips and spins and skiing the mountain in a challenging and aesthetic way.”

A former ski racer, Townsend started freeriding in 2004. He met former Alpine ski racer Elyse Saugstad at a ski industry event in Las Vegas in 2005. She had just moved to Olympic Valley, Townsend’s winter base and the home of Squaw Valley Ski Resort.

With Townsend’s encouragement, Saugstad took up the sport to great success. In 2008, she was the women’s overall winner of

the Freeride World Tour. Sports magazines referred to the couple as “ski royalty.” Townsend proposed to Saugstad late last year and they planned their royal wedding on Maui in October.

Both skiers embrace fear as part of the thrill of freeriding. And despite a number of occupational injuries, they agree that freeriding is a better fit for their personalities than ski racing ever was. Freeriding offers them challenges that allow them to look fear squarely in the eye on a consistent basis.

Read the whole story

Property management firm wants LTVA to promote that lodging segment

By Kathryn Reed

An owner of a vacation rental agency in South Lake Tahoe wants the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority to pursue a promotional program with PBS.

Jim Morris, who owns Lake Tahoe Accommodations, spoke before the LTVA board this month about a campaign that would cost $97,000 for a year.

When LTVA had its ad agency Duncan/Channon look into the idea when it was first brought up a year ago, one reason to not pursue the promotional campaign was not knowing what hour of the day or how many times the information would be presented.

Duncan/Channon reps at this month’s LTVA meeting said they

would revisit the idea because there would be hard data to analyze.

Morris said with the amount of money rental properties give to LTVA through transient occupancy tax, his segment of the lodging industry ought to be promoted, too. He requested the PBS “Getting Away Together” campaign be put on a future agenda.

In other action:

• The board will be following the Nevada open meeting law rules from now on. Changes came at the December meeting with how the agenda was written to give more information and to allow public comment after each item.

• Kimberly Kuntz is on the LTVA board representing the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce.

Snowboarding icon White delivers at Breckenridge

By John Meyer, Denver Post

BRECKENRIDGE — Looking down a 602-foot superpipe with walls 22 feet high apparently doesn’t faze Shaun White, but a movie put a good scare into him this month.

The action sports superstar from San Diego came down with a bad head cold two weeks ago on a flight from Beijing to Los Angeles. And the “heavy part” was that he was watching the movie “Contagion” on the plane.

“Oh, my gosh,” White said, “it was rad.”

He’s still bothered by the cold, and he’s been on snow only four days this season, but neither challenge prevented him from winning Saturday’s Dew Tour superpipe competition at Peak 8. White won with a score of 95 points on his first run and crashed hard doing a McTwist 1260 on his second. Louie Vito of Bellefontaine, Ohio, was second with 92.75 on his second run.

White said a case of “dead leg” from a lot of riding compressed into four days caused the crash.

“I didn’t get enough pop on that last hit,” White said. “It just gave out on me.”

Because White represents Vail Resorts and trains at Northstar, company co-president John Garnsey came out to watch. Garnsey is an alpine ski racing guy to the core, but he was blown away by White’s ability to be the best man in the pipe after only four days on snow.

Read the whole story