Tahoe symphony

Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus will present Mendelssohn in the Mountains featuring Elizabeth Pitcairn, violinist, performing Mendelssohn’s Concerto in E minor on the legendary Red Stradivarius Violin. The Symphony Chorus will be featured in Part 2 of Mendelssohn’s Elijah.

Performances are:

Jan. 19 at 7pm at the North Tahoe Hebrew Center in Tahoe Vista

Jan. 21 at 3pm at St. Patrick’s Church in Incline Village

Jan. 22 at 3pm in St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe

Jan. 24 at 7pm in Trinity Church in Reno.

Tickets are available at the door or online. General admission to all concerts is $30 adults, $25 seniors, $5 students, and preferred seating is $40.

There are special room and dinner/concert combinations at the Resort at Squaw Creek. Call (530) 581.6615 for information on these packages.

For information or preferred seating, call (775) 313.9697, or email ToccataTahoe@gmail.com.

Tahoe RCD on mission to educate public about

unwelcome species in Tahoe

Tahoe Resource Conservation District has released a series of educational posters which identify some of the biggest threats to Lake Tahoe Basin, as well as what visitors, residents and even kids can do to help. Titled “Tahoe’s Most un-Wanted,” the first three posters feature aquatic invasive species, fine sediments from runoff and invasive weeds, and are free to pick up or request for local schools, businesses and other organizations who would like to display them publicly.



Tahoe RCD is also having a contest through New Year’s Eve on its Facebook page where people may submit their ideas regarding threats to Lake Tahoe for a chance to win prizes, including an Emerald Bay Cruise for two on the Rum Runner, free bowling at Tahoe Bowl, a free bike or ski tune from Wattabike/Vertical Sports, a pass to High Altitude Fitness and a free cake from Cakes on the Lake.

Details and rules are online.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• “Ski Town Soups” is a cookbook that will be out in late 2012. Freshies of South Lake Tahoe has its vegetarian chili in it.

• The 3D movie “Lake Tahoe in Depth” won the “Best of the Fest” award at the 2011 3D Film Festival in Los Angeles.

• Christmas trees cause approximately 240 house fires each year in the U.S., resulting in $16.7 million in property loss.

• Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority made a subtle, though substantive, change to its agendas by posting the dollar amount involved with proposed action items. Here is the LTVA agenda for the Dec. 8 meeting.

• Here is Caltrans’ Sierra roadwork schedule and the El Dorado-Tahoe schedule for this week.

• Lakeside Inn in Stateline has a deal for people who prove they’ve been skiing that day – first beer is free from 4-7pm.

Howard honored for work in resort, second home arena

South Lake Tahoe’s Deb Howard has been named Resort and Second Home Property Specialists of the Year by the National Association of Realtors and its Resort and Second-Home Real Estate Committee.

This award honors a person for her community involvement, innovative marketing techniques, and RSPS-related accomplishments.



Deb Howard

Howard has more than 25 years of experience in South Lake Tahoe resort and second-home real estate. She has also held the RSPS certification since its inception in 2006 and has been voted Realtor of the Year twice.

Howard owns Deb Howard & Co. Real Estate based in South Lake Tahoe.

SLTFD getting holiday fire truck ready to roll

It’s that holiday time of year and the SLTFD would like to encourage everyone to think of those less fortunate members of our community. At all the city fire stations you can drop off

any new or like-new condition used toys into the Christmas Cheer barrels. Any donations will be gratefully forwarded to needy households this holiday season.

Also, the city fire department will again be handing out candy canes from the decorated fire truck driving throughout the community. Starting on Dec. 10t through Dec. 23 each night, the holiday truck will make its way through specific sections of the city. For times and dates to see the fire truck in your neighborhood, *Lake Tahoe News* will have them when the department finalizes the schedule. These scheduled dates will be dependent on the weather, and may be changed due to driving conditions or emergency responses.

The South Lake Tahoe Firefighters hope to see many of you on our routes this holiday and would like to wish everyone a safe and joyous season.

– Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Police Department

Budget gift: Items from Tahoe museum, art league

Publisher's note: ***Lake Tahoe News is looking for gift ideas that are less than $20. Find out how to make a suggestion.***



Stop by the Historical Museum of Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Art League, which are side by side near the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center on Highway 50.

There are great gifts at both locations and you support local artists and a nonprofit. You can share a bit of Tahoe in your gift.

Of course there are some beautiful things that are much more, but you'll find some cool stuff for $20 or less. The Art League will be open 10am-5pm until Christmas and, after this weekend, the museum is only open on Saturdays.

For exact gifts under $20 there are hand-painted note cards, ornaments, a very cool hand-painted wine glass holder and hand-painted wine glasses and jewelry and much more at the Tahoe Art League.

At the museum there are great, hard to find local history books as well as books on hiking trails, maps, note cards and many other unique choices.

– Paula Peterson

Opinion: Unable to understand logic of STPUD's water rates

By Steve Jacobs

I am extremely upset and frustrated with South Tahoe Public Utility District. As a consumer and full-time resident of this community, I believe many of us are being victimized by STPUD's current water policy. I believe their current water rates are unfair, inequitable and should be illegal.

If you do not yet have a water meter: If you do not yet have a water meter, you will continue to be billed at the "flat-rate" of approximately $200-plus per quarter (for both water and sewer). As soon as STPUD gets more funding, they will eventually install a water meter at your house. Once you have a water meter, you will then be charged based on your water usage.

If you already have a water meter: If you currently have a water meter (or when STPUD eventually installs one for you), you will be charged for every drop of water you consume. I am a full-time resident and I recently received my latest quarterly bill (water and sewer) for almost $500.This is up from the flat rate of $200-plus. There are only two people in my household, and we have landscaping but no lawn areas. (Note: For more details about my water situation see below). So I am now being charged 2½ times the amount of a flat-rate customer.

But it is not just me. One of my neighbors lives alone and received a bill for almost $800 (she has a lawn). Her neighbor who has a family of four and lawn area received a bill for over $900.

The problems: People without water meters will continue to pay the flat rate while many of us with meters will pay substantially more. This is not equitable and the district openly admits that their current rate system is unfair. STPUD says that California law requires the district to charge metered customers for their water based on volume consumed. And while this is true, there is no state law that establishes the actual rate that STPUD has elected to charge us. The

problem is STPUD has set the water rates way too high.

To determine how much to charge for water, STPUD hired a consultant. And, of course, STPUD needs a certain amount to support their operations. However, both the consultant (as stated in the consultant report) and STPUD (in my conversations with customer service and according to Dennis Cocking, STPUD public information officer) admit that the current water rate disparity is unfair and inequitable when applied to their customer base. This inequity is especially amplified in our community where we have such a high percentage of second homes. In order to keep the rates "revenue neutral," STPUD has to set water rates substantially higher for those of us who live here full time and use a "normal" amount of water. Second homeowners (with properties that sit mostly vacant) use little water and will pay far less. The result is those who already struggle financially to live here full time will now subsidize those who can afford to have a vacation home at the lake.

Also, in my view, people with a reasonable amount of landscaping and who water responsibly should not be penalized. Our water comes directly out of the ground, and if you water your lawn or your plants you recycle most of that water back into the environment. It would be different if we were in a drought situation. But we are not in a drought, and from my understanding we probably never will be, as there is plenty of water here in the Tahoe basin. While it is everyone's responsibility to use water conservatively, I do not think it is right that STPUD wants us to live like we are in a continual drought.

Possible solutions: While I question the cost-benefit of the multimillion dollar water meter installation program, ultimately I believe it is a good thing to have meters in order to encourage people to use water wisely. However, the laws and policies relative to water usage need to be established and applied fairly and impartially. STPUD'S

current water rate policy clearly does not meet this test. Here are some possible solutions:

1. It is my understanding that some current STPUD board members are in favor of raising rates even higher. Prior to establishing user rates, I believe STPUD needs to take a hard look at every aspect of their operation to ensure they are doing everything possible to minimize waste and maximize operational efficiency. Over the past years, most companies in America have cut back staff and have streamlined operations. I do not see that STPUD has ever made any effort to do this. They are a monopoly; they are supposed to be working for us (the public) and not just protecting their own interests. STPUD needs to evaluate staff compensation packages, staff levels, and implement infrastructure cost controls.

2. I believe STPUD should immediately increase the fixed portion of the water bill (the meter charge) and substantially decrease the consumption rate (to near zero) until such time that all of their customers have water meters. This would comply with state law, and would alleviate much of the inequity and class disparity for residents and second-home owners. In the distant future, when everyone has water meters, an equitable volumetric rate among the entire customer base could be considered.

3. I believe STPUD should immediately establish a tiered usage, seasonally adjusted base rate so people can afford to water their landscaping in the summer. (Tiered rates are commonly used by many utility companies.) People should not be penalized for having a reasonable amount of landscaping that is watered intelligently and conservatively. Plants are good for our environment, and the water used to keep plants healthy is mostly returned back into the ground from where it originated. Also, water used for irrigation is relatively cheap to provide since it does not need to be sewage processed or pumped over the hill to Nevada.

4. I believe that STPUD should delay volume-based billing for a period of one year for each of their customers after that customer has a water meter installed. My understanding is that this is permitted by state law. Excerpt follows… "(B) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), in order to provide customers with experience in volume-based water service charges, an urban water supplier that is subject to this subdivision may delay, for one annual seasonal cycle of water use, the use of meter-based charges for service connections that are being converted from non-volume-based billing to volume-based billing." For this one-year period, STPUD bills should indicate to their customers the actual dollar amount for the metered rate versus the non-metered rate. This would allow customers the opportunity to learn and prepare for the differences between the two billing systems.

My water situation (for comparison): In my case, I have a water meter at our house. So, STPUD charges for water based on their current metered rate, and as a result my latest quarterly bill (for sewer and water) has jumped from $150 to almost $500. There are only two people in my household and we use water very conservatively. We have low-usage water fixtures and appliances (1.6 gpf toilets, low-flow showers, sink aerators, high-efficiency dishwasher, etc.), and we have a landscaped yard with native plants (no lawn areas) that is on a low-flow drip irrigation system that is on a timer.

STPUD says that, with current water rates, over the course of an entire year the total amount that a metered customer pays will equal the amount paid by a flat-rate customer. This is simply not going to be true for anyone with landscaping that needs to be watered in summer.

Please let me know your thought: I have tried to put the facts and my beliefs together on this issue. If I am in error on anything, I apologize and please let me know. I am interested in hearing readers' input on these ideas.

I encourage everyone to call the district (530.544.6474) and let them know your ideas; or better yet, attend a STPUD board meeting and express you thoughts.

Thank you.

Steve Jacobs is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.

Undercover white supremacist from Reno tells his story

Publisher's note: *John Matthews is a resident of Reno.*

By R.M. Schneiderman, Newsweek

John Matthews had long been a shadowy presence in his son Dan’s life. Every six months it was a new city, a new state, a new apartment. Dan, who lived with his mother, suspected something illegal was going on. He was estranged from his father and even used his stepfather’s last name, Candland. Once, when Dan was 16, Matthews called him from a pay phone to say he was going underground and might appear on the television show America’s Most Wanted one day. Months later, when they reconnected, neither brought it up.

Matthews, who is now 59, recognized how he must have looked to his son: a troubled Vietnam veteran, a paranoid man who wandered between jobs and marriages, despised the government, and always kept a camouflage backpack filled with food, water, and clothing by his bedroom door. “Danny always figured I was trash,” Matthews says. “Or a bad person.”

Now they were outside the federal courthouse in downtown Salt Lake City; Dan, 33, had no idea why. A grizzled man in a Stetson hat smoking a Toscanelli cigar introduced himself as Jesse Trentadue, attorney at law, and led them into his office across the street. There, Matthews divulged the secret he had harbored for two decades: while his family thought he was hiding from the law, palling around with white supremacists and other antigovernment activists, he was working as an informant for the FBI, posing as an extremist to infiltrate more than 20 groups in an effort to thwart terrorist attacks. “[Dan’s] eyes got bigger and bigger,” the lawyer recalls. For Dan, the revelation brought sanity to a childhood of mystery and frustration. Finally, he says, “it all made sense.”

It is rare for an informant to unmask himself, especially one who has found his way into the violent world of heavily armed bigots. But Matthews had developed a fatal lung condition and a drastically weakened heart, and he wanted his family to know his true identity before it was too late. “I ain’t gonna be around for more than a couple of years longer,” he says. “So I figure whatever’s gonna happen is gonna happen.”

Read the whole story

Nevada improves data collection to measure student achievement

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Nevada has made significant progress in the collection of the data needed to measure and help improve student achievement, but still has work to do in putting the information to work for parents, educators and policy makers, a national report says.

The Data Quality Campaign's (DQC) seventh annual state analysis, Data for Action 2011, shows that states have made major progress building their student data systems. More states than ever – 36, up from zero in 2005, including Nevada – have implemented all of DQC's 10 Essential Elements of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems.

The report shows however, that states continue struggle with the 10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use, which are intended to ensure that stakeholders can effectively use the data to increase student success. The report shows that Nevada has implemented five of the 10 actions.

The report shows, for example, that 41 states do not link workforce data with K-12 data and 38 states do not link workforce data with post-secondary data.

Aimee Guidera, executive director of the Data Quality Campaign, said in a telephone conference call today that there

has been substantial progress since the first report was released in 2005 in collecting the date needed to improve student achievement.

“Not only have states made progress, but for the first time, the campaign is thrilled to announce that we believe that every single state in this country now has the capacity to empower education stakeholders,” she said. “And that means everyone from parents to policy makers, with quality data to inform decision making. And that is an amazing, gaming changing opportunity for us in the education sector.

“People have complained they didn’t have access to information, they didn’t know where to get the information, we didn’t have the quality information, and we think that we are now at a turning point in the conversation to say there are no more excuses, we now have this data that is collected at the state level,” Guidera said.

But states need to do more to provide access to the data to teachers, parents and policy makers, and to make sure they know how to use the information, she said. Only eight states are now providing individual student information to parents, and only five are providing information to students themselves, Guidera said.

States particularly need to ensure the date can be effectively used by teachers, she said.

Gov. Brian Sandoval has made quality data collection a priority of his administration because of its importance in measuring education reform efforts.

He issued an executive order Oct. 7 asking a state education panel to take the necessary steps to create a system to track students through their school years, following in the steps of other states as part of an overarching effort to reform education and improve student performance in Nevada.

That group, the P-16 Council, met Nov. 9 to begin the process of creating a usable data system to track student performance from early childhood education through college.

In remarks at the meeting, Sandoval said: “This is a historical moment, this is really a crossroads in the state of Nevada and we have some great opportunities to really improve the delivery of education in this state.”

Guidera said Nevada is in the middle of the states with five actions met. The average nationwide is 4.6.

Nevada has a lot of momentum in the data collection effort, having this year put the 10 elements in place, she said. The challenge now is to ensure the state data system is meeting the needs of the local school districts as well as other users, Guidera said.

Keith Rheault, Nevada’s superintendent of public instruction, said the state was able to meet the data quality elements through a federal grant received in 2008. The funds ran out this year but the agency is pursing another federal grant to continue the process.

“Our next step will be to link the data systems of K-12 education to the (Nevada System of Higher Education) NSHE data as well as the workforce database (managed by the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation),” he said.

Rheault said the new grant would be used to meet several of the missing action items cited in the report, including the linkage of the systems as well as building a statewide data repository.

“Quality educational data that is readily available to school districts and the public is a key element in improving schools and the achievement and success of our students,” he said.

Sports are the transcendent moments that bring us together

By Terry McDonell, Sports Illustrated

In the fall of 1980, when SI senior writer Lars Anderson was nine years old and living in Lincoln, his father took him to the Florida State–Nebraska game. With less than a minute left in the fourth quarter, the highly favored Cornhuskers had the ball on the Seminoles' three-yard line, trailing 18–14. That's when heartbreak visited Nebraska: Quarterback Jeff Quinn fumbled. Florida State recovered. Game over. Then, as Seminoles coach Bobby Bowden and his team walked off the field, the crowd rose to its feet in appreciation of the underdogs' hard-fought victory. At first it was just polite clapping, the kind you hear at a golf tournament, but then fans started cheering for Bowden and his players, building to one of the loudest roars of the day. Tears of disappointment ran down Lars's cheeks as his father put his arm around him, pointed to the red-clad fans in full throat and said, "Lars, this is as good as sports gets."

Sportsmanship can be a naive word, especially in the shadow of the failure and shame of Penn State. But if we are who we say we are, if we believe in courage and integrity and fair play, then we define ourselves in our sports. New ways of thinking about race, about media, about celebrity have always played out on our fields and courts. This is where we learned to tell each other who we are.

Along the way we also built businesses and refined what has

come to be taught as Sports Marketing, using the excitement of our games to sell each other everything from fast food to estate planning. Our major leagues describe themselves with shrewd marketing nuance: Where amazing happens (NBA); There are no words (NHL); This is what it's all about (NFL); This is beyond baseball (MLB). All operate chains of stores. The cynical view is that our drive to commercialize even our play trumped our innocence long ago, and we sold ourselves out. That like a parody of that brilliant Nike campaign, we just did it, turned our media into a colossal Breakfast of Champions.

But I'm not buying it.

I believe our hard, beautiful games shaped us for the better. The marketing lifts because it feels good to just do it or to protect this house, and then the reality makes us feel even better. And sometimes that commercialization we complain about gets it just right.

Thanks, Mean Joe.

It's not about scores and stats, it's about the stories. The players' skill and athleticism can be mind-blowing, but without the backstories there is no connection. The excitement comes from knowing enough about the athletes to care who makes the shot and who misses. Would Jazz guard Derek Fisher's hitting a key three-pointer in the 2007 playoffs have mattered as much if you didn't know that he had just flown round-trip to New York from Salt Lake City to see to his ailing 10-month-old daughter? This is why SI puts rooting interest (mostly) aside. There are no home teams for us. We root for the story.

But that's running out ahead.

As I write this, I have 325 colleagues at SI. Only a few have been the kind of athlete we cover, but they all have stories. I spend more time with these people than with anyone else in my life. Working with them has become tribal. We don't tell

each other stories around campfires, but we might as well. Who was the greatest athlete you ever saw? What was the greatest moment? The greatest comeback? Greatest rivalry? Which team had the most heart? Did you ever see something that wasn't fair?

There are no wrong answers. Senior writer Richard Hoffer wrote in SI's 50th Anniversary Issue, in 2003, that sports "evolved from a local flavor to a national appetite … and suddenly, all sorts of people could talk to one another, volatile debates defused by a shared passion for sports." Tribes within tribes.

Big-city teams like the Yankees became civic metaphors, and so did small-market teams like the Packers. Journeymen such as Bucky Dent and Steve Kerr created myths, and the superlative athletes—Ali, Aaron, Jordan—became transcendent brands. The games themselves (Super Bowl, Final Four, World Series) are now national imperatives. Almost everything of importance can be expressed in sports terms—sometimes in strange ways. Here's a headline from the NEW YORK POST on Oct. 21, after Muammar Gaddafi was killed: GUNMAN HAD MORE HITS THAN A-ROD.

Hoffer again: "Strange isn't it, that the very themes of achievement and disgrace that animate our history would be expressed in something so universal (and benign) as a box score, an improbable athletic feat, a magazine cover. Who could have guessed that, henceforth, anything worthwhile could be demonstrated on, say, a basketball court—racial harmony, affluence, cooperation, style, commerce? (High-five!) Who could have possibly known that?"

And if we break it down, what we are left with is the game or the team or the athlete as a bridge between generations, the adhesive that binds relationships, the spit that holds families together.

When SI.com senior producer Andrew Perloff was a little boy in the 1970s, his father was not very available. He worked long

hours running a small wholesale grocery company in South Philadelphia, and when he came home he was not much of a talker. The only thing that Andrew knew they could connect on was Philadelphia sports, and the only uninterrupted time they had to be close were eight Sundays every fall because his father had season tickets to the Eagles.

The Eagles were not good then and always got beaten up by the hated Cowboys. Andrew was so emotionally invested in the team that he wrote letters to NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle complaining about the officiating. Then suddenly, in the late ’70s, the Eagles became very good. They reached the NFC Championship Game in 1980 against Dallas, and Perloff and his dad were there on a frigid Sunday afternoon at Veterans Stadium when the Eagles won 20–7 thanks to a 42-yard touchdown run by the shifty Wilbert Montgomery. You still see highlights of that game on TV because NFL Films loved capturing Eagles coach Dick Vermeil running the sidelines like a wild man. Vermeil was known for breaking down and crying at press conferences. That day everyone in the stadium cried. And fans back then didn’t look anything like the corporate crowd today. Philly had hit a bad patch economically in the 1970s, and the Eagles’ run carried a lot of symbolic weight. That was a hard place, and tough men were openly weeping.

Years later, when Perloff started working at SI.com, he happened upon an old photo of Vermeil being carried off the field that afternoon, and a storm of emotions came back. To this day when he calls home, he and his dad start without much to say, but after a minute or two they fall easily into conversation about the Eagles or the Phillies or the 76ers. And they still talk about that 1980 NFC Championship Game.

On the other side of the country, senior writer Damon Hack was a consumed Lakers fan, and Magic Johnson was his world. If the Lakers were on, Hack was in front of the TV with a notepad, charting Magic’s points, rebounds and assists. On the schoolyard Hack was no-look passing his way through phys-ed

class. In the NBA there was Magic and there was everybody else, and that’s the way it was even when Hack was almost grown and starting as a 6’3″ point guard at Van Nuys High.

Read the whole story