Budget gift: Lake Tahoe News T-shirt

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

What could be more stylish than sporting a *Lake Tahoe News* T-shirt? OK, probably lots of things.



But they make for great gifts at $15 each. Sizes range from small to 2X.

Send a check made out to *Lake Tahoe News* to P.O. Box 13406, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151; indicate size of shirt; and include an address where it should be mailed to. We would offer to gift wrap, but we're a little challenged in that department. However, if you want creative wrapping, we can do that.

– Lake Tahoe News staff

Medi-Cal cuts could affect skilled nursing centers, including Barton

Publisher's note: ***In regards to the following article, Barton Health Vice President of Finance Dick Derby said, "The affects***

of Medi-Cal cuts to Barton Health's Skilled Nursing Facility is currently under review. Currently, the estimated annual negative impact to Barton is $1.5 million. The Skilled Nursing Facility at Barton Memorial Hospital is always at capacity and generally has an average of 47 out of 48 'residents' funded by MediCal. We understand the great benefit this facility has on our community and are researching options to assist us in continuing to provide this vital service to our residents. In addition, the California Hospital Association has filed an injunction against the reduction and the case is to be heard on Dec. 19."

By Darrell Smith, Sacramento Bee

Hospital officials in California's rural counties say the latest round of cuts to Medi-Cal could leave thousands of the state's neediest people without access to medical care.

At particular risk, they say, are elderly and long-term patients who need skilled-nursing care.

"This is a real crisis," said Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, a patient advocacy group. "We have been skeptical of providers' claims in other areas, but not with Medi-Cal cuts."

The cuts are intended to save the budget-strapped state up to $623 million. Reimbursement rates will be trimmed as much as 10 percent, but earlier cuts blocked by legal action could also take effect, making the effective reductions 20 percent or more.

"This is a difficult decision," said Norman Williams, a state Department of Health Care Services spokesman. "California is facing a tremendous shortfall. There is pain."

Medi-Cal is the name for the state's federal Medicaid program. It serves more than 7 million low-income Californians – approximately 20 percent of residents – and costs the state

more than $41 billion a year, about 13 percent of the budget.

Read the whole story

Artist’s final brush stroke came too soon

By Robert Schimmel

I began this column a few days ago with various ideas and differing directions that had yet to coalesce into a final “platform” of content when distractions intervened and two days slipped by more quietly than a whisper. But the pace and activity belied the whisper, and then came news Nov. 30 of the passing of the very talented and accomplished fine artist, Reiko Hervin, that threw me into a mental spaghetti bowl of disjointed musings, heartbreaks, anger, projections, appreciation and fondness.

Death is seldom timely, and in Reiko’s case it came completely unannounced, even after three-plus weeks of grim facts and medical overtime that began to give hope for a recovery from her horrific traffic accident. And thus the nonplussed emotion that at the same instant wanted to rage within me for the defense and return of such a kind and talented individual committed to her artistic passion and the creation of beauty.



Robert Schimmel

One didn’t have to know Reiko well (she and I were just casual art friends) to feel her joy for life and her chosen occupation as well as see this exuberance in her lovely face and gorgeous paintings. Although a local in activity while living with her husband, Kurt, and son, Heroki, in Wellington, Reiko’s background was clearly international, and the love she had for art and painting came from her upbringing and studies in Japan.

My understanding is that she moved to the United States in 1993 and pursued her art career and romance with watercolor continuously to the present. Relating to her passion and also being a teacher, I watched with high regard her efforts and the results she achieved the last several years as her watercolor classes and student followings increased. There is no lack of instruction or talent in her field of art, and the students of hers I met always had praise and appreciation on their lips. Clearly, she’d begun to receive the recognition and success, in its best sense, that was well earned and never taken for granted.



"When time stands still"

So what makes someone like Reiko unusual and able to live what might be considered such a joyful and productive life? It could be something as simple as a dream or vision for one's life that is being actively pursued, because even she had her share of hardship to which she claimed no excuse or victimization. There seems to me to be some dreamer in all of us, and, when you add the creative propensity and mindset of an artist, this often equates to a willing acceptance of the "debt" for even a portion of the dream's manifestation. To this end Reiko lived her dream and even spelled it out in her website name, www.reikodreamart.com, and upbeat promotions.

I believe artists and all creative individuals have an innate responsibility to "pay it forward" by modeling the kind of spirit that nurtures joy, love, peace, gratitude, generosity, etc., and inspires others. Likewise, these same artists have a unique product that results from the gift they are given which may, to some degree, be a tangible legacy of wonderful and timeless memories for those close and who follow. We have been blessed by just such an artist who has touched many and will positively influence many more for years to come.

Thank you for the gift, Reiko, and my (our) heartfelt condolences and prayers go out to your family.

Robert Schimmel is a professional artist and teacher in South Lake Tahoe as well as host of "Lake Tahoe Art Scene" on KTHO radio on Thursdays at 5:15pm.

No ordinary musical for STHS'

state-of-the-art theater

By Kathryn Reed

Clicking of tap shoes fill the room. Girls in skirts from the 1930s. High school boys in suspenders and vests.

It must be “42nd Street” – on Viking Way.

Alec Niven plays the lead dancer Billy Lowler, while Jack Percival has the lead non-dancing role as Julian Marsh. Tall and thin, the two young men look like they could be from that era eight decades ago.



South Tahoe High students practice a number from "42nd Street". Photos/Kathryn Reed

“This is a lot different (than other shows). There are a lot more dance numbers,” Niven says, taking a break from rehearsal on Thursday.

Percival says the number of set changes also makes it a more complicated show.

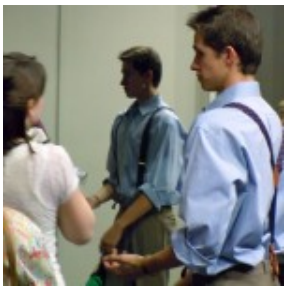
In less than a week, one of South Tahoe High School’s largest productions will be performed. Theater director Liz Niven didn’t want to go small when it came to breaking in the new

theater. The bigger the better – something memorable – she told *Lake Tahoe News* as the Theater Arts and Design Academy was being worked on last summer.

Feet rapidly move, arms wave, bodies are gyrating – all in unison – all under the watchful eye of Marcia Sarosik.

They are in the Sound Stage room where a wall of mirrors allows them to see themselves. A flat screen television has a direct feed to what is going on in the theater.

Using an iPod to deliver the music (it will be live music during the performances), Sarosik watches her charges clack their shoes – the girls all with a slight heel to contend with.



Alec Niven plays Billy Lowler.

Sarosik has been an integral part of each high school musical, and the dance instructor for some of these students since they were little kids.

She knows the play well, having seen it four times – at Harrah's, on Broadway, and twice in up state New York. The latter was with South Tahoe High School graduate Bubba Romagnolo on stage.

Romagnolo returned home in October to spend a few days helping to choreograph the show and inspire the students.

On Thursday, the set was still being painted and looked far

from finished.

Today is hat day. Each must be unique to complement the stylish dames who will parade across the stage.

More than 100 people are involved with the production – from actors to set designers to the orchestra. Key adults include Bob Grant as musical director, Casson Scowcroft as orchestra conductor, and Drake Niven as technical director.

“The theater being new is adding extra challenges,” Sarosik admits. “The sound and lighting are more challenging.”

Everything is new. But it’s also smaller, with less seating. This is one reason why instead of having the usual four productions in one weekend, there will be six shows covering two weekends.

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"42nd Street" involves a sea of fast moving tap shoes.

Performances of “42nd Street” at South Tahoe High School:

• Dec. 9 7pm

• Dec. 10 7pm

• Dec. 11 2pm

• Dec. 16* 7pm

• Dec. 17 7pm

• Dec. 18 2pm

Advanced tickets are available by calling Lori Nelson at (530) 541.4111, ext. 235. Cost: $15 general admission, $10 adults 60-plus, $5 students, Super ASB free after all ticket holders are seated.

* Performing Arts Booster Association is celebrating the opening of the theater with a fund raiser called “Stars Night Out” on Dec. 16 that will feature dinner at 5:30pm served by the high school’s culinary arts students. Dessert will be served during intermission. Cast members will make appearances. Cost is $40 and includes the show. Contact Kathy Percival at (775) 527.3556 or Madonna Doyle at (530) 545.9734 for “Stars Night Out” tickets. Dinner seating is limited.

Romney faces tough decision regarding online gambling

By Karoun Demirjian, Las Vegas Sun

When it comes to reviving the economy in Nevada, politicians of different stripes hawk different solutions.

Democrats say the future is in green energy. Republicans advocate loosening regulations on mining permits. But both parties in this state agree that one of the biggest potential employment engines is legalizing online poker: Do that and, as Sen. Harry Reid once put it, you’ll create “jobs, and lots of jobs.”

Nevada’s front-runner in the Republican race for the presidential nomination, however, isn’t yet sure.

“I haven’t come down on online poker,” Romney said in an interview with the Sun last month, explaining he had yet to take a serious look at the issue.

But then he did something most politicians don’t: He voluntarily offered a promise, and a timeline, to deliver a more specific answer.

“I will, and I’ll give you an answer,” he continued. “Before the caucuses come along, I’ll give you an answer on that.”

The pledge sets up a potentially thorny decision for Romney: Say you’re against legalizing and regulating the online poker industry, and you risk upsetting some Nevadans; say you’re for it, and you risk upsetting the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Romney’s Mormon faith has stirred headlines elsewhere in the country, but in Nevada, there’s never really been any fault lines between Romney’s politics and his personal faith.

“Romney does not talk about it … and I don’t think Nevadans cared. Being a Mormon isn’t that much of an issue in Nevada or anywhere in the West, for that matter,” said Eric Herzik, professor of political science at UNR. “Mormonism is a longtime part of Western society.”

Read the whole story

Giving Tree benefits South Shore youth at holidays

The El Dorado County Library, South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center and CASA El Dorado are partnering to offer the seventh annual Giving Tree. The tree is up in the South Lake Tahoe branch library and decorated with the holiday wish list ornaments of children who are part of the court system, perhaps in foster care, or living in a shelter as a result of domestic violence in their family.

Here is how you can help with the Giving Tree:

• Pick an ornament from the tree. Or pick more than one.

• Take the ornament(s) and buy what you would like from the list.

• Return the unwrapped gifts to the library no later than 1pm Dec. 10 so Santa has time for wrapping and delivering to kids.

• To return, please put gifts in a bag and secure the ornament tag on the outside of the bag.

These children have wishes, and the community can help their wishes come true.

For more information on the Giving Tree, contact Amanda at (530) 573.3072 or amanda@casaeldorado.org.

Blackjack tournament benefits cancer foundation

The Incline Firefighters Association along with the Northern Nevada Children’s Cancer Foundation is having a charity blackjack tournament Dec. 8 at 8pm at the Hyatt in Incline Village.

The tournament is in conjunction with the 16th annual Paramedic Refresher.

A limited number of spots are available on a first come, first serve basis, with all the proceeds directly benefiting the Northern Nevada Children’s Cancer Foundation.

Cash and other prizes are available for the top finishers.

The Hyatt has donated the space for the tournament and drinks will be provided during playing.

The cost is $40 for conference attendees and $50 for non-conference attendees.

To sign up, go online and click on “Sign up here.”

Adventure film explores Norwegian archipelago

Alpenglow Sports’ second installment of its annual Winter Film Series is “Norway’s Wild West” on Dec. 8 at 7pm at the Sawtooth Ridge Café in Tahoe City.

Join Salt Lake City ski mountaineering icon Andrew McLean for a three-part trip to Norway's Spitsbergen archipelago. Situated in the Arctic Circle, the area provides world-class skiing, trekking, sailing and adventure. Tour through abandoned Russian ghost towns, dodge Polar Bear tracks in the fog, and savor the world's most expensive snowmobile ride in a land where the sun never sets.

McLean and a host of other ski mountaineers descended on the region in the spring.

The show is free and is designed to motivate, inspire, and educate.

The Sawtooth Ridge Café will serve dinner specials beginning at 5:30pm. Call Alpenglow Sports at (530) 583.6917 with questions.

Fish & Game fleet reduction may have unintended consequences

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Conservation groups are warning that Gov. Jerry Brown's plan to slash the state's vehicle fleet could have consequences for California wildlife and their habitats.

The Department of Fish and Game is slated to lose 527 vehicles in the fleet-reduction program, according to preliminary data obtained by the *Bee*. Unlike the take-home or rarely used

vehicles primarily targeted by the program, most of the Fish and Game vehicles are special equipment used to conduct research, maintain duck habitat and catch poachers.

According to a spreadsheet identifying the targeted vehicles, state wildlife refuge areas would lose 14 bulldozers, 10 tractors, six graders and three backhoes. These vehicles, though often used only on a seasonal basis, are essential to prepare wetlands for migratory waterfowl, said John Carlson, president of the California Waterfowl Association.

Also slated for elimination are 124 boats statewide that are used for wildlife law enforcement, habitat management, research and oil spill prevention.

Under the program, the vehicles would be auctioned off to generate revenue for the state, which is struggling to balance its budget.

Read the whole story

‘Maintaining spiritual well-being through the holydays’

“Maintaining Spiritual Well-Being through the Holydays” will be Hillary Bittman’s topic Dec. 5 from 6:30-8pm through Unity at the Lake.

Discover how to stay in a peaceful place and keep the meaning of the season alive.

Love offering.

For more info, call (530) 544.2266.

The gathering is at the Star Tahoe Building, 2489 Lake Tahoe Blvd., Ste. 27, South Lake Tahoe.