Inaugural tree lighting in Meyers

On Dec. 9 at 6pm Meyers will have its inaugural tree lighting in the Divided Sky/Downtown Café parking lot.

The event is free and open to the public.

The tree will be wrapped in 7,000 warm white lights, and attendees may enjoy hot chocolate, popcorn and entertainment.

For more information on attending or on how to donate to the event, contact Rene Brejc of the Meyers Business Group at (530) 577.7111.

California farmers a bright spot in state's economy

By Diana Marcum, Los Angeles Times

FRESNO – As Californians savor their Thanksgiving feasts, the states' farmers are especially thankful. California's agriculture sector is on track for a record year, a rare bright spot in the state's economy.

Prices for cotton, grapes and other crops are near all-time highs. Foreign buyers are gobbling California almonds, grapes, citrus and dairy products. Agricultural exports through September are up 16% over the same period last year. Net farm income is projected to post strong gains in 2011 after nearly

doubling over the previous decade.

At a time when other Golden State industries are struggling, times are good down on the farm. Just ask Steve Moore.

The Fresno County pistachio farmer recently completed the harvest on his 480-acre spread near Huron, part of what's estimated to be California's second-largest pistachio crop ever. Prices are strong, at around $2.10 a pound, driven by growing demand in places including China and Israel.

Moore started with 160 acres in 1982, planting trees that take seven years to produce. "Looking at those bare sticks in the ground, I thought I must be nuts," he said. But the crop is so lucrative he's looking to expand again.

Indeed, prices for all manner of farm products are so high that Vernon Crowder, an agricultural economist with Rabobank, a major agricultural lender, has been seeing some unfamiliar faces at industry events.

"When you go to ag conferences you now have venture capitalists hanging around," he said. "But they find it very difficult to beat out another farmer for land, and that shows you how strong the market is. There's been a fundamental shift as the global market demands more food and more expensive food."

That's good news for California, the nation's leading agricultural state and the fifth-largest producer worldwide. In contrast with the grain-and-livestock focused Midwest, California farmers cultivate more than 400 commodities, including more than half of the nation's fruits and vegetables.

Looking for artichokes? Dates? Kiwi? Pomegranates? California accounts for more than 99 percent of the U.S. production of each of those crops, according to the California Food and Agriculture Department.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The Ritz-Carlton at Northstar was picked by readers of *Conde Nast Traveler* as on of the top 10 resorts in the world.

• South Tahoe Refuse residential customers are asked to set out canned and packaged foods in a bag next to their trash can on the regular refuse collection day the week of Dec. 5-9. The goods will be collected by marked STR trucks and distributed to community programs.

• State Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, received an A grade for the fifth year in a row from the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association for the 2011 legislative session. Gaines earned the highest score (96.8 percent) out of the 40 Senate members and was one of only six Senators to earn an A.

• Virginia Fah won a season pass to Heavenly Mountain Resort for attending four of Barton’s wellness lectures this year.

• Nevada Department of Transportation is taking survey about cycling as it develops a statewide bicycle plan. California residents may respond, too. Deadline to take survey is Dec. 6.

Nevada intensifies tourism rebranding campaign

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

With the Nevada Commission on Tourism six months away from unveiling the state's new tourism branding message, commissioners agreed Tuesday to double their meeting schedule next year to offer more frequent feedback to their new director on the project.

Commissioners got a glimpse of the direction research is steering the brand message at the commission's quarterly meeting and met new director Claudia Vecchio in the session conducted hours before the opening of the Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Rio.

Commissioners said early indications show that the development of the brand by Seattle-based GreenRubino is on track and members believe it will provide a message that will attract visitors to the state, especially rural Nevada.

"It all my years with the commission, this is one of the best things I've ever seen," said Commissioner Lorraine Hunt-Bono, who as lieutenant governor headed the commission from 1999 to 2007.

GreenRubino President John Rubino is scheduled to give delegates attending the tourism conference a look at work to date later today.

In Rubino's review with commissioners, he described how his company researched public sentiment about Nevada to learn what visiting the state meant to people. In interviews with 3,000

people, the common theme Rubino found was that Nevada represented uninhibited freedom, inspiring discoveries, rewarding adventures and that it’s unexpectedly diverse. People used words and phrases like “thrilling,” “uplifting,” “awe-inspired” and “off the grid” to describe their feelings for the state.

Rubino interpreted that into a brand insight – that “Nevada is for do-ers.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Clear-cuts help keep forests healthy

By Daniel Tomascheski

Katherine Evatt isn’t the only one who can’t see the forest for the trees. It’s not surprising that many people are alarmed to see good forest practices at work. A few acres of downed trees don’t square with their notion of what a healthy forest is supposed to look like.

Ironically, it’s what they don’t see that tells the real story. They don’t know that the robust stands of foothill conifers nearby, filled with wildlife and natural wonders, are themselves the product of decades of sound forestry practices – including commercial harvesting.

The debate over cutting trees has raged for generations, often without facts to back up either side. Few people had ever bothered to actually go into a forest to study it in place over time. But Sierra Pacific Industries has done that now for

nearly two decades – with rigorous monitoring and assessment of commercial forestry practices, water quality, wildlife habitat, archaeological resources and native plants.

As an example, SPI has maintained permanent water quality monitoring stations within Shasta County's Battle Creek watershed – following EPA-approved protocols and testing by an EPA-certified laboratory – taking measurements for temperature and turbidity every 15 minutes, every day for the past nine years. Independently verified data from those stations and testing for the presence of herbicides demonstrate that water quality there can support salmon, trout and other fish species.

Daniel Tomascheski, vice president of resources for Sierra Pacific Industries, is responding to the Nov. 29 guest column.

Read the whole story

What house/business is worth driving by to see its holiday lights? Please put address and city.

Spices, herbs help with healthy lifestyle

By Kerri-Ann Jennings, EatingWell

As a registered dietitian and associate nutrition editor at *EatingWell* magazine, I know that herbs and spices do more than simply add flavor to food. They let you cut down on some less-healthy ingredients, such as salt, added sugars and saturated fat, and some have inherent health benefits, many of which Joyce Hendley reported on for *EatingWell* magazine.

Modern science is beginning to uncover the ultimate power of spices and herbs, as weapons against illnesses from cancer to Alzheimer's disease. "We're now starting to see a scientific basis for why people have been using spices medicinally for thousands of years," says Bharat Aggarwal, professor at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and author of Healing Spices (Sterling, 2011).

Aggarwal notes that in his native India, where spices tend to be used by the handful, incidence of diet-related diseases like heart disease and cancer have long been low. But when Indians move away and adopt more Westernized eating patterns, their rates of those diseases rise. While researchers usually blame the meatier, fattier nature of Western diets, Aggarwal and other experts believe that herbs and spices—or more precisely, the lack of them—are also an important piece of the dietary puzzle. "When Indians eat more Westernized foods, they're getting much fewer spices than their traditional diet contains," he explains. "They lose the protection those spices are conveying."

While science has yet to show that any spice cures disease, there's compelling evidence that several may help manage some chronic conditions (though it's always smart to talk with your

doctor). What’s not to love? Here we’ve gathered eight of the healthiest spices and herbs enjoyed around the world.

Read the whole story

Recreation projects will increase hiking, fishing, biking opportunities

By Susan Voyles, Reno Gazette-Journal

Three projects key to providing more hiking, fishing and biking along the Truckee River in the Verdi area are gaining traction: the first leg of a bikeway in the Truckee Canyon, more parkland along the river and a new pond for fishing at Crystal Peak.

All of the projects involve obtaining grants or using voter-approved funds for park projects and should be ready for use by next summer. None of the projects involve funding that support local government services such as fire and police, officials said.

In the Truckee Canyon west of Verdi, a three-mile stretch of the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway is expected to open next summer after work is completed to strengthen the Fleish footbridge west of Verdi in California.

Renovating the 200-foot-long suspension bridge over the Truckee River is prerequisite for the Truckee Meadows Water Authority to open its maintenance road to hikers and bikers at the start of the Truckee Canyon.

“Getting this bridge in is a big deal for us,” said Janet Phillips, leader of the Pyramid-Tahoe Bikeway project. “We have a deal with TMWA. We help fix up their bridge and they will allow it to be used by the public.

“By late next summer, we will be able to ride mountain bikes from Verdi up into California,” she said.

The bikeway project is concentrating on filling in missing links so someday people can ride a bike along the Truckee River from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake.

Of the 116-mile bikeway, about 55 percent is now open, Phillips said. With a new footbridge installed this week at the McCarran Ranch, that raises the mileage to 58 percent completed when it opens to the public this spring. The new section to Fleish will raises the percentage to 64 percent.

“The paradox is the easy sections were done first, meaning the remaining sections are harder,” Phillips said.

A new anchor for the Fleish bridge was poured a few weeks ago. Next year, a thicker cable will be installed to hold up the bridge and safer side railings and other features will be added, she said.

With all that, she said, the bridge won’t sway as much.

Read the whole story

Budget gift: Helping Humane

Society of Truckee-Tahoe

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

The holidays are an extra special time to help those pets who are less fortunate than your own. Sadly, hundreds of homeless dogs and cats in our community will spend their holidays alone, without a loving family to care for them. The Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe will do everything it can to brighten their days, but nothing beats a real home and a real family.



More than 70 homeless dogs and cats are waiting at HSTT for their new forever homes.

HSTT is also in desperate need of a new shelter. The current kennel, which HSTT shares in a partnership with the Truckee, only accommodates eight dogs and 30 cats; however, at times there are upward of 30 dogs and 80 cats in need of shelter.

A donation of any amount will support the continuation of programs such as rescue and adoptions, pet assisted therapy, community spay and neuter and humane education. And, of course, adopting a homeless pet during the holiday season is always a wonderful option. HSTT has countless animals of all shapes, sizes, breeds, ages and temperaments.

To meet adoptable dogs and cats, go to HSTT's Adoption Day, every Saturday from noon to 2pm at the Truckee Animal Kennel, or call (530) 581.3199 to schedule an appointment.

To learn more about how you can donate to the capital campaign, call (530) 587.5948 or go online.

— Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe confident; keeps pot ordinance intact

By Kathryn Reed

“Bring it on!”



That was essentially what the five members of South Lake Tahoe’s City Council said Tuesday night at the conclusion of a one-hour special meeting about the medical marijuana ordinance.

“Let them react to us for a change,” Councilman Tom Davis said after Councilman Bruce Grego led the charge to stick with the status quo.

The reference is to the feds who keep waffling on what their stance is in regards to medical marijuana as well as to the recent Pack vs. Long Beach court decision.

The Nov. 29 meeting was a continuation of the Nov. 15 meeting when attendees spilled into the lobby area where they had to watch the proceedings via a television monitor. The latest meeting, though people nearly filled the room, was much more subdued with only five people speaking.

All the council members agreed much give and take has gone on for the last two years to come up with what all sides affected

locally believe is a viable, comprehensive and fair ordinance for regulating the three dispensaries and dealing with growing medical marijuana in residences.

City Attorney Patrick Enright presented five scenarios to the council. They ranged from doing nothing to banning dispensaries completely.

After the meeting, Enright told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I think they made the right decision."

While an attorney better versed in the topic was consulted and recommended tweaking the ordinance, Enright believes in what is on the books, as does the council.

It was also pointed out that something new about the topic seems to emerge monthly – whether it's a court decision, litigation, policy change or something else. Neither the council nor city staff wants to keep hashing out the issue.

As Grego said, the city needs to move on and start addressing other issues besides medical marijuana.

Plus, there is no truly safe decision the council could have made.

"I think we could get sued no matter what we do," Councilwoman Angela Swanson said. "We can't act based on the fear of litigation."

While the ordinance remains in effect without change, all cities in the California with medical marijuana dispensaries are waiting until the state Supreme Court decides if it will hear the Long Beach case. That decision is expected by Jan. 10. If the jurists hear the case, a decision could take more than a year. If they don't hear it, then the Long Beach case is the law of the land and South Lake Tahoe would have to revisit the issue. Or the top court could depublish the Long Beach decision, making it enforceable only within the limits

of the Southern California city.

South Lake Tahoe has asked for the federal government to issue a ruling on the city’s ordinance but as of Nov. 29 had received no response. And while the feds have sent letters to dispensaries in some California cities to cease and desist, the three dispensaries in South Tahoe have received no such letters to date.