Americans eat 13 pounds of turkey a year

In fall 1621, early settlers of Plymouth Colony had a three-day feast to celebrate a bountiful harvest, an event many regard as the nation's first Thanksgiving. Historians have also recorded ceremonies of thanks among other groups of European settlers in North America, including British colonists in Virginia in 1619.

The legacy of thanks and the feast have survived the centuries, as the event became a national holiday in 1863 when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of November as a national day of thanksgiving. Later, President Franklin Roosevelt clarified that Thanksgiving should always be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of the month.

The number of turkeys expected to be raised in the United States in 2011 is 248 million. That's up 2 percent from the number raised during 2010. The turkeys produced in 2010 together weighed 7.11 billion pounds and were valued at $4.37 billion, according to the USDA.

Minnesota raises the largest number of turkeys – 46.5 million expect this year. Other high-volume turkey production states are North Carolina (30 million), Arkansas (30 million), Missouri (18 million), Virginia (17.5 million) and Indiana (16 million). These six states together account for about two-thirds of U.S. turkeys produced in 2011.

In 2009, Americans on average consumed 13.3 pounds of turkey plus 5.3 pounds of sweet potatoes – that's per person.

ZCES Sharing Feast embodies true meaning of Thanksgiving

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Sampling the pie before the main course was barely touched, a pair of third-graders gave the sweets thumbs up.

Rachelle Hernandez is used to eating pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving, so for this meal she chose cherry. Her friend Alyssa Siewell was not going to break with tradition, so she was diving into the pumpkin.



Rachelle Hernandez and Alyssa Siewell are fans of the pie at ZCES' Sharing Feast. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Both said the pie at Wednesday's Sharing Feast at Zephyr Cove Elementary School was the best part of the meal.

"This is coming in second place right here," Alyssa said of the roll she had covered with mashed potatoes. While that isn't usually how she eats bread or potatoes, it was working

for her the day before Thanksgiving.

Now in its third year, the Sharing Feast is the brainchild of parent Kelly Krolicki. The idea to ensure everyone – students, teachers, administrators, parents – have at least one hot Thanksgiving meal.

The sharing part is that it's a group effort to feed 210 students plus all the adults. They share in the preparation and the eating. Per health codes regulations it is store bought food the parents must bring, while under the guidance of the school nutrition manager the hot food is freshly prepared.

Lakeside Inn donated the turkey. Filling out the plate were green beans, mashed potatoes, gravy, and fresh fruit. Rolls and cranberries were on each table, with pie and juice also available.



Teachers and parents share a meal with students Nov. 23.

No worries about twin kindergartners Henry and Andrew Craig fighting over who gets more gravy. Andrew doesn't want a drop to hit his plate. Henry is more than glad to have another ladle.

"I love gravy on my mashed potatoes," Henry said.

While Andrew is a huge fan of potatoes – it practically looked like he licked his plate – he likes them au natural.



Kelly Krolicki dishes turkey to students at ZCES.

Principal Nancy Cauley walked among the tables with a plate of food – making sure everyone was having a good time. She is proud her school is the only one in Douglas County School District to have such a feast.

Mixed in with the students are parents and extended family members.

“The food is so good,” kindergartner Hana Muller said as she cut another piece of turkey.

No one seemed to care they might be having a very similar meal today.

State senators see broad

management problems in Caltrans

By Charles Piller, Sacramento Bee

In a sometimes contentious legislative hearing Tuesday, state senators told California Department of Transportation officials that their management of data falsification by a technician in one of the agency's testing units suggests pervasive management problems.

"I'm a little bit troubled about what seems to be a systemic problem in the agency," said Sen. Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar. "I'm concerned that it took a whistle-blower and the press to bring this to light … .

"I can only imagine if you were a private entity caught in falsifying data, what the consequences would be."

The Senate transportation committee's hearing was called to address the findings of a recent Bee investigation concerning fabricated data, improper test methods and apparent misuse of state property in the Foundation Testing Branch, which examines the integrity of underground supports for bridges and other freeway structures. The Bee found that Duane Wiles, a technician who fabricated data on three structures, also examined the foundations for portions of the new Bay Bridge eastern span, slated for completion in 2013.

Huff suggested that the state might consider moving some Caltrans responsibilities to county agencies as part of a realignment of budget priorities.

Read the whole story

Bear-people clashes on the rise

By Stephanie Simon, Wall Street Journal

Forty years after being hunted to near-extinction in many parts of the U.S., black bears have become so plentiful that they are causing trouble for their human neighbors—ripping open camping tents in Colorado, attacking dogs in New Jersey, even breaking into a home in Florida to nab a birthday cake from the kitchen counter.

Bear populations have surged so much that several states, including Nevada, Oklahoma and New Jersey, have started or expanded bear hunting seasons. Texas is circulating a brochure that tells hunters what to do if a bear wanders into camp. ("Talk in a calm manner…Do not run!…Do not play dead!")

Black bears search for food behind a diner in Pomona, N.Y. Encounters between bears and humans are rising.

Black bears, which can top 350 pounds, were hunted with vigor for centuries. But with their populations near collapse, states began imposing hunting limits or bans in the 1970s.

Recovery has been slow—bears reproduce just every two to three years—but pronounced. Today there are an estimated 3,000 black bears roaming Florida, up from just 300 in the mid-1970s, said David Telesco, who manages bear conservation in the state. Between 300 and 400 black bears live in Nevada, and biologists say the population is growing 16 percent a year.

"There are now bears in areas of the country where there haven't been bears since the colonial days," said Rick

Winslow, a carnivore biologist with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

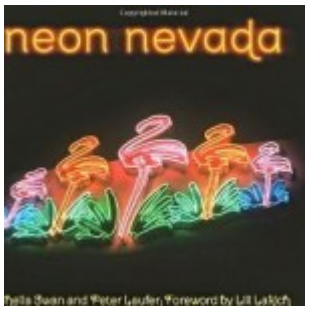
J.A. Whittenburg V saw one not long ago—charging toward him on his ranch in south Texas, he said in an interview. His dogs barked furiously. The bear wasn't intimidated. "He just kept coming my way," he said.

Read the whole story

Neon lures authors to retrace steps across Nevada

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

Three times in nearly 35 years, Sheila Swan and Peter Laufer have traversed Nevada in search of neon.



In their first quest in 1978, they photographed neon signs from downtown Las Vegas to the mom 'n' pop motels and bars scattered across the Nevada landscape, their interest piqued by the two small neon signs in their living room in Silver City.

They found scores of examples, such as the signs for the Cal Neva Lodge and Harvey's Resort Hotel at Lake Tahoe, and the Frontier and Comstock motels in Carson City, whose signs sported not just lettering but figures animated by the lighting synchronization of gas-filled glass tubes.

Then, in the early 1990s, the couple set out again, looking for the same signs they'd seen in the 1970s and any others to add to their collection.

They found the French Bar in Gardnerville and the neon boots of the Burns Brothers Truck Stop in Mill City, among others. Their first “Neon Nevada” book came out in 1994.

A few years ago, rummaging in their garage, Swan and Laufer found the photo transparencies of their first journey and decided to hit the road again to look for new signs and rediscover old ones that still existed.

The result is a new “Neon Nevada” (Globe Pequot Press, $16.95 hardcover), which contains neon photos from 1978 into the 21st century, commentary and plenty of neon history.

Read the whole story

Turkey fryers a leading cause of fires at Thanksgiving

By Eric Guevin

You will be thankful if you don’t let fire gobble up your holiday. Cooking fires continue to be the most common type of fires experienced by households in the United States. This is even more apparent during the holidays. There is an increased incidence of cooking fires on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day, and Christmas Day.



Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District wants to warn residents and guests that cooking fires are the leading cause of fire injuries in homes. These fires are preventable by simply being more attentive to the use of cooking materials and equipment.

A lot of attention has been focused on deep fryers for turkeys. They need to be used with extreme caution. Turkey deep fryers are not given a Underwriters Laboratories safety rating. Flash and explosive fires are common.

Never leave the cooker unattended, use on a stable surface away and outside of any structures. It is advised to thaw the turkey because ice and water can cause a violent reaction with grease and cause a flash fire.

Always pre-measure the oil before you place the bird in the cooker because overflowing oil will also cause a violent flame.

Have an all-purpose ABC type fire extinguisher at hand. Never use water to fight the grease fire.

Remember, all fires start small so be sure and call 911 right away.

Tahoe Douglas Fire Department wants you and your loved ones to have a happy and safe Thanksgiving and don’t cook your goose.

Learn the facts about cooking fire safety online.

Eric Guevin is acting fire marshal for Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• Kirkwood Mountain Resort will be open Nov. 25-27 and Dec. 2-4, with full operation expected Dec. 9.

• The Donner Summit Safety Roadside Rest Area reopened this week. It was completely reconstructed to meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

• JW McClenahan Co. won one of four Pinnacle Awards from the Nevada Chapter of the Associated General Contractors for the work it did in replacing the boiler at South Tahoe High School. Q&D Construction was recognized for its sensitivity to the environment, history and culture for its work at Thunderbird Lodge.

• Unity at the Lake is moving into the old Child Development Center at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, in early December.

• Squaw Valley Institute on Nov. 30 at 6:30pm sponsors the test screening of "Dam California," an independent feature film created and produced by a team of Tahoe-based filmmakers. It will be shown at the Resort at Squaw Creek. The film is entered in the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.

Thanks comes in all art forms

By Robert Schimmel

There are times when I wish there were nothing to be thankful for, then I'd be justified in all my whining "what ifs?" and pity parties. I don't do as much of what I really want to do on a regular basis. I'll talk responsibility for this later.

But for now, daily tasks, mundane chores, and work that pays

most of the bills (if one is lucky these days) make it so easy to paint the grass as greener over yonder. Ever been there or somewhere similar? Whew, not a good space until something triggers the “look at that guy; how does he do it; where is that smile coming from?” question that hopefully engenders a reality check and ultimately a lesson in gratitude and/or humility.



OK, right about now you’re ready to leap from my therapist’s couch to a real art column or magazine … but wait. There is a connection.

Remember sometime back when I encouraged you about having and acknowledging your talent? Well, there’s a tremendous amount of it out there that begs to be discovered, trained, enjoyed, shared, etc., and that’s what we need to be thankful for as individuals and as a community. Once we’ve taken the step of recognizing how marvelous it is to have talent, use it, and enjoy it as well as that of others, isn’t it a no-brainer how joyless and dull our world would be without its expressions and manifestations?

Of course, and here is where the connection lies: I have no business being a whiner when I get to write this column, host a radio show, paint or teach. Do I also have to go to work, pay for this, fight for that, struggle here, and lose there? Absolutely, and the latter too often obscures the former. Yet, all are incredible blessings, and you have your version of these same lists. No one wants the minuses, but the truth is that character and strength don’t come from having or winning, but from how we meet our challenges and lift up others in the process.

And this is what I witness constantly from individuals and organizations (for-profit and nonprofit) supporting and promoting the talents of others for the benefit of all.

To this point in the big picture, I just took part in a workgroup session of the Tahoe Prosperity Center at the Lake Tahoe Community College and came away humbled by the talents, accomplishments and concerns of all involved. Each is a professional as well as caring enough about Tahoe's future to volunteer time and energy to configure and implement relationships and plans to create end results and opportunities that will enable prosperity now and for posterity. I am thankful for these people.

Do I have my own Top 10 "Thank you" list? Actually, no, just a top two: my Lord Jesus Christ and my family. After that it becomes a litany of great friends, mentors, concepts, intangibles and experiences to whom and for which I owe so much. However, I do want to sincerely and heartily say "Thank you!" to all the fine, giving, caring, and steadfast volunteers, donors, promoters, organizations, teachers, companies, employees, bosses, etc. who put it on the line for developing and sharing all that Tahoe has to offer. I couldn't do what I do, for instance, were it not for casinos, news sites and radio stations and the people behind them, not to mention all the guests and events I've been blessed to experience.

What's your ledger look like? What are you thankful for and who is responsible for your talent and/or its use? Express it; tell them.

And finally, art is a strange animal in that it asks little and gives much. All we need to do is grant it freedom to exist and open doors for its expression, then it will bear abundant returns and yield a "field of dreams" never seen before. Tahoe needs that like no other, as current vernacular goes. We as a community, city, county and lakewide region need to recognize our talents, be thankful for them and open the doors to allow them to flourish. Then, and only then, will we be able to avoid the whining of economic woes and pity parties of "what ifs" and enjoy the giving of thanks in terms of the heart and

the harvest.

May I wish each of you a wonderful, fulfilling, giving and sharing Thanksgiving Day and beyond.

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.

Opinion: Anonymous online commenting only encourages civic bile

By William Endicott

It was with some trepidation that I logged on to sacbee.com and scrolled down to reader comments on Jennifer Garza's recent story about the inclusive philosophy of St. Mark's United Methodist Church and its gay and straight congregation.

Stories that mix religion and gay rights are always ripe for the most outrageous comments from both sides of that divide. So I feared the worst and those fears very quickly proved to be well-founded.

The very first comment I saw made mention of a particular body part and was so offensive that it does not bear repeating.

That was followed by this: "Is it just me, or does anyone else weary of the 'gay in your face' news we endure day in, day in, day out."

From the other side, someone compared anti-gay Christians to sociopolitical fascists and another declared, “Nothing is so immoral as Christianity.”

And my favorite: “Another reason why I quit getting the *Bee*,” apparently missing the irony in the fact that he or she was commenting on a Bee story.

A few of the nearly 300 comments that were there when last I looked were thoughtful, some were inane, ignorant and/or snide, others were hateful and mean-spirited. But most had one thing in common: They were anonymous.

William Endicott is a former deputy managing editor of The Bee.

Read the whole story

What are you thankful for?