# Judge taking a month to rule on Kindertown's future

Kindertown Day Care will remain closed as El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Warren Stracener reviews charge brought against the South Lake Tahoe center by the state.

At a hearing last week in Placerville that was attended by supporters of day care owner Maria Barrows-Crist, Stracener said he would have a decision in a month.

Kindertown was closed earlier this month after the state Department of Social Services went to the appellate court.

Barrows-Crist represented herself in court.

"I correct every citation I get. Then they pile them together and use them against me. I feel like it's double jeopardy," Barrows-Crist told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I feel horribly discriminated against."

The state does not return phone calls.

*– Kathryn Reed*

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# State forcing South Tahoe

# drug task force to disband

**By Kathryn Reed**

Drug dealers and users may have something to celebrate with the New Year. For everyone else it might not be such good news that the South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Enforcement Team is disbanding.




SLEDNET is one of the 34 drug task forces being forced to shutdown because of state budget cuts. The remaining 18 operations in the state rely solely on federal money.

While the local agency has been around since 1988, the joint task forces of federal, state and local law enforcement have been part of the Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement since 1976. This is the oldest state narcotics bureau in the country, having started in 1927.

On Dec. 31, 170 agents employed by California will work their last day. This is part of Gov. Jerry Brown's quest to cut $71 million from the Department of Justice budget over the next two years.

"If you take away the threat of being caught in this community, it is going to be disastrous," Jeff Catchings, SLEDNET commander, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

"It would not be good. I cannot say that enough," he said of eliminating the narcotics task force.

Catchings works for the state, but is one of the agents with enough longevity to be spared receiving a pink slip. Between now and the end of the year he is working with local law enforcement and the state to keep SLEDNET functioning in some

manner.

In addition to Catchings, officers from South Lake Tahoe Police Department, El Dorado County Sheriff's Department and California Highway Patrol are part of SLEDNET.

What the state brings to the table are resources and money. The state has a greater ability to gather intelligence, especially with drug trafficking, than local jurisdictions have.

"We are trying hard and looking at every avenue we can to keep this task force intact," Sheriff John D'Agostini told *Lake Tahoe News*. "All the typical results you see in a drug ridden community, you would see that increase in the basin (without SLEDNET)."

All the local players are looking at operating SLEDNET – just without the state's oversight. No money comes out of the local agencies' general funds for the drug team – it's grants and drug forfeiture money that pays for things. What the state picked up was Catchings' salary and equipment.

Police Chief Brian Uhler said he and D'Agostini are trying to meet with Attorney General Kamala Harris to keep the asset forfeiture money in town to go solely for SLEDNET. That meeting, though, has not been arranged.

It might not matter if the meeting happens because Harris has been outspoken in not agreeing with the governor's decision, saying she wants more control in how to make the cuts to her department. But she is not getting her way.

If the state doesn't help resolve the issue, Uhler wants the police and sheriff's departments to pick up the commander's salary. But that will take an act of the City Council and Board of Supervisors to reallocate funds.

Uhler said the drug problem on the South Shore is huge, and

that it would be worse without SLEDNET. He points to the heroin busts in town in the last year as examples of why SLEDNET must stay intact.

Catchings said marijuana is another significant problem here.

Highway 50 and the airport are conduits for drug traffickers.

“The FAA is constantly tracking tail numbers. A lot of things happen behind the scenes that people don’t realize,” Catchings said.

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# Opinion: CHP thankful for turkey drive

**To the community,**

The CHP Turkey Drive on Nov. 19 was very successful; collecting 70 turkeys.

The CHP South Lake Tahoe area would like to thank Sam Coolbaugh and Bijou Safeway for providing our collection location, STMS Club Live for their help during the

collection day, and the South Lake Tahoe Women's Center and Sierra Community Church for providing crucial services for our community.

A special thank you to everyone who supported our community through this effort.

**Jeff Gartner, California Highway Patrol**

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# Looking at what climate change will mean for California

**By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee**

The songbirds at the feeder outside your window are not the same as they used to be. The goldfinch, the grosbeak and even the ever-present sparrow are all a little bit bigger.

The reason is climate change, according to a new study, which found that 70 bird species, all common to Central California, have evolved a longer wingspan and greater body mass over the past 40 years.

Scientists think such adaptations, in annual increments of less than a tenth of a percent on average, help birds cope with food shortages and stronger storms already triggered by climate change.

"We need to be thinking about things like extreme weather and other ways climate change is going to impact our ecosystems, and those things are not just important for birds," said Nat Seavy, co-author of the bird study and research director at

PRBO Conservation Science, a research facility in Petaluma. “They are important for farmers and all sorts of people.”

The evidence is just one piece of a new wave of research slowly painting a more vivid picture of what climate change may mean for California. The studies also reflect a new effort by scientists to help the public understand climate change by speaking plainly.

“We struggled mightily to translate these results into lessons that could be useful to policymakers and resource managers,” said James Cloern, a biologist at the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park and lead author of a comprehensive new climate study on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

“We don’t want to scare people with this paper. We want to put them in a position where they can start thinking and planning.”

**Read the whole story**

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# Mountain bike movie examines access to public lands

The Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association is presenting “Pedal-Driven: a bike-umentary”, a new documentary film from Jamie Howell at Moon Productions.

The screening will take place at Mo’s Place in South Lake Tahoe on Nov. 30 at 7pm. It will be preceded by a social hour starting at 6pm. The movie screening is in conjunction with the TAMBA End of Season Party.

The one-hour documentary examines the long-standing

confrontation between mountain bikers and federal land management agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service over bikers' access to public lands.

"Pedal-Driven" was created as a nonprofit project in affiliation with International Mountain Bicycling Association and with the cooperation of the Forest Service.

TAMBA is hosting this screening as a membership drive for 2012. The event is free to all new or renewing TAMBA members. TAMBA dues are $10 for individual memberships and can be purchased online or at the event.

TAMBA is the largest mountain bike organization in the Tahoe region and focuses its efforts on volunteer trail work, cooperation with land managers, and education of trail users.

For additional information, go online.

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# Opinion: Is anyone listening to the Occupy movement?

**By Garry Bowen**

Last Thursday we had our first official Occupy Tahoe (according to some, it will soon be Occupy SLT, to herald the idea that someone had co-opted the first).

What is Occupy? Is that the same as Occupied Berlin or, Occupied Lebanon?



Garry Bowen

No, it appears it is a more spontaneous gut-reaction to the unanswered shenanigans of our corrupted, dysfunctional system, brought about by an increasingly out-of-touch leadership, at many, many levels. It is the pent-up answer to “Where is the outrage?”

Watching C-SPAN over the weekend, the comments shifted back and forth between two erstwhile Wall Street organizers, Adam Jewler (D.C.) and Amin Husain (Wall Street), who appeared pretty cogent and peaceful in their attribution to its being merely a voice of the people, one that they don’t ordinarily have or use. As C-SPAN routinely opens a talk-line in three categories, Liberal, Conservative, and Independent, two out of three were pretty much in concert with the First Amendment’s rights being exercised, while the third was resplendent with “socialists“, “pinkos“, and “watch your back from now on“ as if they were to be the guardians of the truth.

Even the *New York Times* weighed in Nov. 21, wondering whether it justified current journalism standards, by questioning whether “it would continue to keep its“ hold on the collective media imagination?“ The *NYT* also said, ”It was and is a grass-roots combustion that happened to have a lot of cameras pointed at it.”

As concluded, “reporters live for spectacle”, as if Hollywood explosions, car chases, and ambulance-chasing (for lawyers) were their only stock-in-trade, and any other thoughts were some sort of aberration. Given the ignorance afforded the societal loss of trillions of dollars in constituent value,

followed by the immediate return of eight figure bonuses, as if nothing untoward had occurred (i.e., business as usual), along with media hand-wringing as to when our legislators will ever wake-up again to our realities, and not just theirs, I thought I'd digress.

In response to our programmed shorter and shorter attention spans, I will relate to the departed Joseph Kruth, an international lawyer, living in Zephyr Heights, who envisioned a future for Tahoe with his creation of the Tahoe Center for a Sustainable Future back in the early 1990s.

One of the last conversations we had (he died of cancer) was about his concern for the ever-declining purchasing power of the dollar and the ever-increasing income gap. At one time, it was in the 14 to 15 times an average worker range, as opposed to today's 300 times. It was becoming obvious that a sustainable society would not be possible if the needs of the populace were undermined by policies that continued to favor those whose wealth was increasing their power.

Undermining the needs of the populace is in fact a sustainable principle, and we are on the verge of shutting down any pretense of fairness if this situation is allowed to continue. Sadly, there are now those in society who could care less, as long as they are not bothered to think about it.

It would seem that some in the journalism business, according to Patrick Bruner, an Occupy Wall Street organizer, don't recognize that "we're righting a system and this media is part of that system – and when this media doesn't cover us in a fair fight, the desire isn't to shame them, it's to create an alternative."

Communications, at its core, means "to share, or hold in common", which is, at essence, what Occupy is really about, as our own Tahoe experience shows. Although only between 30 and 40 people were there, it was impressive to hear fully 60

percent or so of the vehicles traveling by that honked in solidarity, not to be confused here with the absence of metropolitan horn-honking of yesteryear. This was followed by those on *Lake Tahoe News* who thanked those in support for showing up in Stateline.

I have always considered the most important part of Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" to be the Upton Sinclair quote within, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it." This has now infected our entire culture, as the source of power that others wield in abeyance; this is not sustainable as it is a form of dumbing down.

Much better the mantra of 7-year-old Christian, who "occupied" while his bad held a banner; as someone would drive up to the curb, roll-down the window, and offer their respects, Christian would run up to the curb also, and yell out, in his own inimitable way: "We need a better future!"

So be it. Is anyone really listening?

*Garry Bowen has a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health. He may be reached at tahoefuture@gmail.com or (775) 690.6900.*

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# Restaurant owner gambles on

# moving to more visible location

**By Kathryn Reed**

Adapting to change – that's Dale Dodd's approach to staying viable in the always unpredictable restaurant business.

Unable to come to an agreement with his landlord on Ski Run Boulevard, Dodd decided to move his 20-year-old Scusa's restaurant to Highway 50 in the middle of South Lake Tahoe where he had been operating the 2-year-old Tahoe Grille.



Scusa's has moved to Highway 50. Photos/LTN

If a location can be found that would be suitable for Tahoe Grille, he will revive what he said had been a successful restaurant. After all, he's been in the restaurant business for 35 years, so he knows patience is part of the game.

And buying the property where Scusa's is will eliminate any landlord-tenant squabbles.

Plus, the traffic up Ski Run isn't like it used to be – and it has little to do with the ongoing recession in Lake Tahoe. When the gondola opened in 2000 it meant tourists in particular no longer needed to get to Heavenly Mountain Resort

via Ski Run. Then the Marriott properties opened two years later. Since then people staying in the main bed base area of the South Shore have been taking advantage of not needing to start their ski day at the California Lodge, and therefore never driving on Ski Run Boulevard.

“March used to be our biggest month with all the destination skiers,” Dodd said. He said it’s been much quieter on that street when it comes to skiers looking for a place to eat after a day on the slopes.

He is hoping the move will get him drive-by diners as well as be better for people who got frustrated with the parking situation at the old site. Here he has a 30-car lot.

Dodd also has more tables to fill. He went from 21 to 30. In the summer he’d like to develop the back area into al fresco dining.

Scusa’s opened in its new location a week ago. The menu is the same, though some items from the Grille may make their way onto a revised version in the future. Things like Lobster Gnocchi, Oven Roasted Salmon with a Beurre Blanc, and Rosemary Roasted Chicken with Polenta were favorites with Tahoe Grille customers.

Not one who eats meat or fish, I never went to the Grille. But when Dodd took it over from the owners of the Thai restaurant, he gutted the place. What a pleasant change. It’s clean, inviting and warm.

Dodd said hanging some pictures is about all that needed to be done to have the Grille become Scusa’s.



Frank Benvenuto plays saxaphone for diners.

To the left of the entry is a room that can be shut off for private parties. We opted to dine in that room to be able to hear Frank Benvenuto play sax. A nice change from so many Tahoe restaurants – we could hear the music and still have a conversation.

We started the night with the Frito-Misto Scusa ($7.95). This appetizer is very tasty – with garlic, artichoke hearts, olives and other goodies.

Both of our entrees ended up being lunch as well. Sue loved the spiciness of the Sausage Linguine Bolognese ($18.95). I thoroughly enjoyed the Spinach Pasta Mediterranean ($16.95). They didn't skimp on the veggies.

Scusa's is open for dinner starting at 5pm every day but Mondays during the shoulder season. From Dec. 15-April 15 it is open seven days a week.

# James Coleman Foff – 1953-2011

Jim Foff, former owner of the Fantasy Inn in South Lake Tahoe, died Nov. 16. He was 58.

James Coleman Foff was an active member in the lodging community, having been a past president of the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association. He was also active in the various chambers of commerce on the South Shore.

Mr. Foff graduated from Eastern Kentucky University. He went on to become a certified public accountant.

He is survived by wife Connie Foff of South Lake Tahoe; daughters Lindsay Clausen, Ann Blair Foff, and Sarah Foff; grandchildren Coleman and Ella Clausen;.sister Lady Anne Judge of London and brother John Foff of Philadelphia.

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# El Dorado County health offering low-cost vaccinations

The Public Health Division of the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency has wrapped up its community flu clinics for the season and is now offering low-cost flu vaccine by appointment.

The seasonal influenza vaccine is available in the shot and

nasal mist forms through Public Health for $10 per vaccination. No one will be turned away due to inability to pay.

Individuals must be at least 6 months of age to receive the influenza vaccine. The Tdap (whooping cough) booster shot and pneumonia vaccine are also available by appointment through Public Health for $10 per shot.

To schedule a vaccination appointment, call (530) 621.6100 in Placerville or (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe.

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# Squaw Valley on course to revamp its reputation

**By Kathryn Reed**

Renaissance – that's what Squaw Valley's makeover is being called by resort officials.

With plenty of snow on the mountain, the resort opens Nov. 23, though the ski team first took turns Nov. 9.

At a meeting last month put on by the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, CEO Andy Wirth talked a bit about the changes coming to Squaw. He was not shy in admitting improvements beyond on-mountain upgrades need to happen.



Squaw Valley is improving its grooming for the 2011-12 season. Photo/Keoki Flagg

He revealed surveys consistently say three things about the resort:

• It’s not friendly;

• People don’t feel welcome;

• The mountain is intimidating, that people have a hard time navigating it.

“Everything we are doing with the renaissance is rooted in that,” Wirth said. “We are going to go back to where we started. That’s why we call it a renaissance – because we feel we can bring back the luster.”

Personality-wise, it is working on having less attitude.

“You’ll see the level of service increase. We will absolutely compete with Deer Valley, Vail and Beaver Creek,” Wirth said when it comes to hospitality.

There is no doubt Squaw is an epic mountain. And with its legacy of hosting the 1960 Winter Olympics, its mark in the history books is indelible. But in an era of “What have you

done for me lately?” attitude, Squaw didn’t have much of an answer. Until now.

The ownership change a year ago from the Cushmans to KSL Capital Partners, then to the merger being finalized this month of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings running Squaw and Alpine Meadows, the North Shore resort is ready to be a player again.

While this season it’s still not possible to legally ski between the resorts, one day that may change. For now, the combined 6,600 acres will be connected via free shuttles.

The infusion of $50 million in five years (one year is completed) will go a long way to upgrading Squaw physically.

From a marketing standpoint, the amount of time Squaw was portrayed in the latest Warren Miller movie will inevitably entice people to make a trip to North Lake Tahoe. It’s estimated 800,000 people will see the film this fall.

Part of the cash going into the resort was $3 million on 10 snowcats.

“We think we have one of the most remarkable mountains. Imagine if we have world class parks on that mountain,” Wirth said. Six cats are dedicated to working on Squaw’s terrain parks.

In summer 2012, Granite Chief chairlift will be replaced.

A snowsports building is at the base of the mountain. This is where a ticket for any on-mountain activity can be bought.

It’s not all about skiing at Squaw.

The SnoVenture center features new and expanded activities for kids and families, including mini snowmobiles and enhanced snow tubing. Dog sledding, horse-drawn sleigh rides, cross country skiing and snowshoeing are operated out of the center, too.

Eight shops are opening this season in the Village at Squaw Valley – including Salomon, North Face and Oakley concept stores. Farrah Rale Jewelry Design allows guests to create jewelry.

Full Belly Deli and Euro Sweets will each open in early December. Batch Cupcakery will open closer to the December holidays. Wildflour Baking Company is expanding.

Rocker@Squaw is in the village offering lunch, dinner and late night fare. Its claim to fame is being the only restaurant in the country allowing guest-generated on-site video editing and screenings.

The historic Olympic House was completely remodeled. Gold Coast Lodge at the top of the Funitel has a new restaurant – Funi's.

| **Projected opening dates (weather dependent):** |
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| Alpine Meadows – Dec. 10 |
| Boreal Mountain Resort – Open |
| Diamond Peak Ski Resort – Dec. 15 |
| Donner Ski Ranch – TBD |
| Granlibakken Resort – Sled hill Nov. 24, ski hill Dec. 15 |
| Heavenly Mountain Resort – Open |

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| Homewood Mountain Resort – Dec. 17 |
| Kirkwood Mountain Resort – Nov. 25, Fri.-Sun only, check website |
| Mt. Rose – Nov. 23 |
| Northstar – Open |
| Royal Gorge Cross Country – Dec. 10 |
| Sierra-at-Tahoe – TBD |
| Soda Springs –TBD |
| Spooner Lake Cross Country – TBD |
| Squaw Valley – Nov. 23 |
| Sugar Bowl – Nov. 24 |
| Tahoe Cross Country – Nov. 25 |
| Tahoe Donner Cross Country – TBD |
| Tahoe Donner Ski Resort – Dec. 9 |