Women’s center launching Adopt-a-Family program

For the 11th year in a row, the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center is organizing an opportunity for community members and businesses to come together and participate in the Adopt-a-Family program.

Last holiday season, the community helped hundreds of individuals working with the Women’s Center. The gratitude expressed by the families adopted was tremendous. Many mothers cried when they saw the gifts donors brought for their children.

These are challenging times, with more families than ever needing help.

Here are ways for individuals or companies can help local families who have been working with the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center:

• Adopt a family and receive a wish list completed by the family. There are families of all sizes to accommodate any budget.

• Donate non-perishable groceries or gift cards for pre-cooked holiday meals at local grocery stores (such as Safeway) so families can enjoy special holiday meals and make happy memories together.

• Make a special end-of-the-year tax deductible donation toward the Women’s Center’s Adopt-A-Family program or to support our other comprehensive and trusted programs and services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.

• Call to learn about the many different ways we could put

your energy to good work as a volunteer – one hour per week or even one per month.

The deadline to turn gifts in is Dec. 16 by 4pm at the Women's Center office at 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

To help, call Emily at the Women's Center at (530) 544.2118, ext. 7633 or by email at epeart@sltwc.org.

South Shore nonprofits can benefit from celebrity golf tourney

The American Century Championship has $100,000 to give out to South Shore nonprofit organizations.

The deadline to apply is Nov. 30. Applications are online. Recipients will be announced Dec. 5 and checks will be presented at the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority board meeting Dec. 8 at 3pm.

A committee of tournament representatives will review each submission. For funding consideration, organizations must meet 501(c)3 certified nonprofit guidelines and complete the formal donation request.

The American Century Championship Contribution Committee will distribute awards ranging from $2,500 to $10,000.

Since the golf tournament's inception in 1990, more than $3.5 million has been raised for a variety of national and local charities.

Eldorado begins seasonal road closures in forest

Eldorado National Forest is starting to close dirt roads and trails for the winter season.

The U.S. Forest Service closes dirt roads during the wet weather months to keep vehicles from damaging saturated, muddy roads and trails. They are also closed to keep mud from running off the routes and into creeks and rivers.

Check the Eldorado National Forest website for condition updates or call a ranger station for the latest information.

Seasonally closed routes are identified on a free map that is available at all Eldorado National Forest offices or on the Eldorado National Forest website.

The seasonal closure will begin no later than Jan. 1 and will end no sooner than April 1.

Santa to light Christmas tree in Kings Beach

Santa and Mrs. Claus will help light the Christmas tree Dec. 2 at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach.

The event at 8318 North Lake Blvd. is from 5-7pm.

The annual community event will include photos with Santa, a cookie swap, craft stations for the kids, hot cocoa, candy canes, homemade soup and more.

For more information, call (530) 546.9000.

Red Hawk Casino beginning to turn a profit

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Red Hawk Casino is making progress.

The troubled Shingle Springs casino generated higher revenue and profit during the third quarter, its management company announced this week.

In a conference call with investors Wednesday, executives with Lakes Entertainment Inc. of Minneapolis said customers were responding to marketing changes at Red Hawk, including better deals at the restaurants. The conference call mainly focused on Lakes' third quarter financial results.

Tim Cope, Lakes' chief financial officer, said Red Hawk has bounced back from a slump encountered in July 2010, when rival Thunder Valley Casino in Lincoln opened a luxury hotel.

"Red Hawk has recovered from that well," Cope said on the conference call. "They've recaptured many of the customers." Profits and revenue are higher, although the company didn't release specific numbers.

The casino has struggled since opening in late 2008. Its owners, the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, halted

payments earlier this year on a $66 million loan to Lakes.

Voters may be asked to weigh in on Nevada education spending

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – A Nevada labor union leader said his organization is "looking seriously" at launching a ballot initiative to put a tax hike to increase funding for education to the voters at the 2012 general election.

"We are looking seriously at this process because the legislative process is an impossible one," Danny Thompson, executive secretary-treasurer of the Nevada State AFL-CIO, said this week. "With the two-thirds requirement in the constitution, what in effect that does – it has the minority control the majority wishes. You cannot solve the problem at the Legislature alone without some help from the people."

Nevada has a two-thirds vote requirement in the Legislature to raise taxes or fees.

Thompson said Nevada needs more tax revenue to properly fund education, which in turn would help in the diversification of the state economy and lead to the creation of jobs.

A survey of Nevada voters by the Retail Association of Nevada showed 57 percent would prefer to raise taxes rather than see further cuts in spending to education and health care. Sixty-four percent also said higher taxes would lead to job losses, however.

Other polls conducted in Nevada over the years have often shown voter support for specific types of tax increases, such as those imposed on gaming or on alcohol and cigarettes. Voters have typically not favored increases in the sales tax or property tax.

Asked to comment on a potential tax ballot initiative, Nevada state Sen. Michael Roberson, R-Las Vegas, said the issue properly belongs in the Legislature.

“I don’t think there are very many people in the state that believe that tax policy should be through ballot initiative,” he said. “We can talk about it now, we should be talking about it now, between now and next February (2013). But it is the job of the Legislature to make those decisions.”

The Nevada Legislature will convene again in 2013.

Ballot measures are not always well thought out and often cause more problems than they solve, Roberson said.

“We all want to have more revenue and more funding for education,” he said. “Education and job creation are the two biggest issues facing the state. This state is certainly at a crossroads. We have got to reform education but we all know we need to fund education better.”

Roberson said he and his Senate Republican colleagues would be happy to sit down with Thompson, as well as with legislative Democrats, to discuss and work toward an acceptable solution regarding tax policy and tax reform.

“People are fed up,” Thompson said. “We have the lowest spending on education in the nation and we have the highest unemployment with no solution to these problems in sight, and we have a total dependency on a single industry for paying our bills.”

Tree of Remembrance ceremony in South Tahoe

The annual Tree of Remembrance Interfaith Ceremony hosted by Barton Hospice and Foundation is Dec. 7 from 5:30-6:30pm at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church (2733 Lake Tahoe Blvd South Lake Tahoe).

This event gives attendees the opportunity to reflect on the memories they share and celebrate the lives of those they have lost.

Barton Hospice encourages everyone to take this opportunity to honor those they will forever cherish. Attendees will be able to say the name of the person in remembrance and light a candle in their honor. Music and song will be performed by OneVoice of Unity. Handmade porcelain ornaments, glazed with iridescent mother-of-pearl, will be available for $15 each. All proceeds will benefit Barton Hospice.

For information, call Barton Foundation at (530) 543.5614.

Opinion: Tips for a safe holiday season

By Armando Avina

The holiday season is fast approaching, so now is a good time to talk with family, friends and neighbors about keeping each

other safe during this busy and exciting time.

If you have not already done so, this is also a good time to get to know your neighbors. This includes the people who live next door, across the street and over the back fence. Neighbors watching out for neighbors help keep an eye out for suspicious activity and make communities safer.

You can also increase your home security by signing up for the free online neighborhood safety service, Alert ID, or by starting Neighborhood Watch program. For more information on both, go online.

Beginning Nov. 21, follow the Washoe County Sheriff's Office on Twitter @washoesheriff to receive the 12 Tweets of Holiday Safety. The sheriff's office plans to provide a series of daily Tweets with holiday safety tips to help kick off the traditional holiday shopping season.

Shopping:

* Lock your vehicle and hide valuables, preferably in the trunk or locked compartment.

* Before sunrise and after sunset, park and walk in well lighted areas and carry keys in your hand.

* Stay alert to your surroundings and take a moment to glance around for possible suspicious persons, vehicles, and/or situations.

* When in crowded places, be alert for potential thieves. Don't overload yourself with packages. Maintain visibility and mobility to avoid potential threats.

* Be wary of strangers approaching you for any reason. The holiday season is notorious for "con-artists" who may attempt to distract you with the intention of taking your money or belongings.

* When possible, avoid carrying large amount of cash and valuables, and avoid wearing expensive jewelry.

* Never leave personal belongings unattended.

* Avoid shopping alone; there is added safety when shopping with a companion.

* Keep a record of all your credit card numbers in a secure place at home.

* When shopping with children, keep a close eye on them at all times. Consider coaching them to go to a store clerk or security guard if they become separated, and be sure they know their first and last name so they can advise someone who they are.

* Give children a contact phone number that they can carry on their person in case they do become lost.

Travel:

* Inform someone who's trustworthy where you will be and when you might be expected back to your residence.

* Ask a neighbor or other dependable persons to watch your house and retrieve your newspapers and mail if possible.

* Prior to getting into your vehicle take a look inside and around before entering. If you observe evidence of a possible burglary, call your local law enforcement agency. For the sheriff's office, call (775) 832-9276.

* Anticipate inclement weather and plan accordingly – carry chains, keep sufficient gas in the tank, and use extreme caution while driving.

Home safety:

* Be extra cautious about locking windows, sliders, and doors when leaving for any length of time. We suggest keeping all

entrance points into your house secured while you’re at home as well.

* Set indoor and outdoor lights on timers and think about doing the same with a television or radio to make it appear as if someone is home.

* Never keep gifts or valuable objects in plain view from any window. Close blinds, shutters, drapes, and curtains because if a burglar can see those items they may attempt to take them from you.

* If a person knocks at your door and you don’t recognize them, don’t feel obligated to open your door. Teach your children that by no means will they open the door to anyone prior to your knowledge and authorization.

Armando Avina is a deputy with the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office.

Sexual harassment training for managers

The California Fair Employment and Housing Act requires all employers with 50 or more employees to provide training for supervisors and managers on preventing sexual harassment. The training must:

* Be at least two hours

* Be interactive

* Occur every two years, and

* Be provided to each new supervisory employee within six months of assuming their position.

LTCC’s Community Education Connect program is offering Sexual Harassment Awareness & Prevention Training course on Dec. 13 from 9-11am at the South Lake Tahoe campus theater. Cost is $20.

A certificate of completion will be provided at the conclusion of the training.

Virginia Boyar is the instructor.

Register online.

Coordinated trail system at Camp Rich in the works

By Kathryn Reed

Turning the more than 40 miles of trails in the Fallen Leaf Lake-Camp Richardson area into a more cohesive, logical system is being proposed by the U.S. Forest Service.

While the project area encompasses nearly 13,000 acres on the South Shore, nowhere near that much will be touched. The physical boundaries are Lake Tahoe to the east, Glen Alpine to the west, Mount Tallac to the north, and Angora Ridge to the south.

The proposal that is out for public review contains 12.9 miles of new trails, 8.4 miles of reconstructed trails and decommissioning 14.4 miles of trail.



The bike trail by Camp Richardson may be upgraded and parking in the dirt eliminated. Photo/LTN file

“What is there now is a kind of spaghetti string mess,” Jacob Quinn, trails coordinator for the Forest Service, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Some trails are Forest Service-created and some are user-created. There is not a lot of signage where the trails go or to know how to get to where you parked your car.”

Improving connectivity is a main goal of the project. While most cyclists stick to the lake side along the paved trail, the plan is to better tie that area to what is on the other side of Highway 89.

While the trails won’t be technical, various loops will be different lengths. Signs will tell people what they are about to embark on. Nothing like that exists today.

While the paved trail dead ends on the north, this will be changed so there is a logical place to cross the highway to hook up with trails on the other side. However, the west side will not be paved. It will be a hard-pack natural surface.

The bridge crossing the dam at Fallen Leaf Lake will be reconstructed so cyclists can easily cross it.

All of these ideas are just that – ideas. The Forest Service

will compile comments it receives between now and mid-January to see if changes need to be made to the scoping document, if something needs to be studied more, and if new ideas should be incorporated.

Input from agencies like Lahontan Water Board, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Department of Fish & Game are being sought now, too.

Most likely an environmental analysis will be done. Once that document is completed, the USFS can start seeking funding to do the work.

Quinn would not put a dollar amount on the project because with it still in the scoping stage much could change. He said funding is often easier to secure once a project is shovel ready. It's possible the project would be built in phases; with the soonest any work might happen being late next summer.

Some of the significant changes people are likely to notice as they drive through the Camp Rich area are parking differences and the bike path not next to the road.

Caltrans has on its books (albeit without a start date) plans to eliminate parking on the shoulder of Highway 89. The Forest Service wants to coordinate its efforts with the state agency.

The USFS expects the overflow used for events at Valhalla to be paved. That area is an old polo field. Behind it could become a gravel overflow lot.

A second lot could be built about one-quarter mile east of Spring Creek. This would be where people on the far end of the bike path could park.

Expansion of the Tallac trailhead lot is also proposed. It would not grow so significantly as to bring more people to the area. What it would do is get people off the plants and dirt – which is where some people are parking.

“We don’t want to go so big so it would change the character of the recreation experience,” Quinn said of the trailhead parking.

The parking at all lots would be free.

No new paved bike paths are proposed, though slight alterations to the existing one include widening it to bring it up to current standards and having it be set farther back from the highway. This would involve the removal of some larger trees.

The myriad dirt trails leading through the meadow to the homes on West Way would not be touched with this project.

With the holidays coming up, the Forest Service has decided to extend the comment period on the Fallen Leaf Lake Trail Access and Travel Management Project to Jan. 13. For more information on the proposal and how to comment, go online or contact Jacob Quinn at (530) 543.2609 or email jmquinn@fs.fed.us.