USDA puts chill on consumers getting local meat

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The demand for locally grown food is ballooning, but it turns out that local meat is almost a misnomer.

Small ranchers in El Dorado County gathered at a Local Meat Summit in Placerville last week to beef, if you will, about how hard it is to sell to local consumers.

Ranchers who want to sell an individual tri-tip or tenderloin at a farmers market or store have to have it harvested – the current word for slaughtered – at a facility approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

There aren't many of those.

Consequently, that can mean a 500-mile journey, round trip, for locally raised meats, said Fred Hunt, who organized last week's summit on behalf of the Resource Conservation Districts of El Dorado County and the Georgetown Divide.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Time to honor Girl Scouts with special license plate

Dear Elected Officials,

This letter is an urgent request for your administration to recognize the Girl Scouts of the USA as a preeminent leadership development organization for girls with over 3.7 million members throughout the United States, including U.S. territories, and more than 90 countries through USA Girl Scouts Overseas.

The 100th anniversary of founder Juliette "Gordon" Low's organization is being celebrated extensively from: Opening Ceremonies at their 52nd Convention in Houston (Nov. 8-13); the California Girl Scouts of the Greater Los Angeles Organization and their Jan. 2, 2012, Rose Bowl Parade Float along with weeklong celebrations recognizing previous and current Gold Award Winning Members of the Organization; the H.R. 621: Girl Scouts USA Centennial Commemorative Coin Act Directing the secretary of the Treasury to mint and issue up to 350,000 $1 coins in commemoration of the centennial of the founding of the Girl Scouts of the USA; and ad infinity nationwide activities and events.

Special interest license plates are created by an act of the state's Legislature to support a particular group or cause. The time has come for you, California's officially elected representatives by working together to issue a direct fiat of the California Legislature to accomplish writing, approving, getting the governor's signature, printing and producing this special interest license plate in commemoration of the centennial celebration of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America (March 12, 1912, to March 12, 2012).

Right now you have that opportunity, that power, that clout, the right contacts, and the special privilege of making this happen – thereby putting your stamp of approval by officially honoring and recognizing the Girls Scouts of America and their world renowned organization that continues to build girls of courage, confidence and character who notably make our world a

better place.

Please “get busy” Californian’s and get this project accomplished.

Girl Scouts of America is an icon in our country’s history. This is noteworthy, doable, and in “your corner” today.

Ultimately, my vision is to have the opportunity to invite the honorable Gov. Edmund G. Brown, Jr. (with perhaps Brownie Troop 123 from South Lake Tahoe) to recognize your dedication and diligence in getting this assignment accomplished as he proudly stands by the Girl Scouts of the USA Rose Bowl Parade float on Jan. 2, 2012, with the newly designed and proudly revered Centennial Commemorative Girl Scouts of the USA license plate for the “great state” of California!

Kindly work together … talk about this …. blog it … Facebook it … promote it and get the job accomplished. There’s a whole bunch of young, old, boys, girls, men, and women counting on YOU to get this project accomplished.

What do I need to do next? Somebody, please acknowledge this and advise me what’s next. Thank you in advance for “doing the right thing.”

Linda Kabealo, Girl Scout volunteer in South Lake Tahoe

Kirkwood looking at finacial, partnership options

By Kathryn Reed

“As one of the few independent resorts left at this point and

time, it is clearly in our best interest to see what type of partnerships exist and to see what our best opportunities are."

So says David Likins, CEO for Mountain Springs Kirkwood, which owns Kirkwood Mountain Resort.

Likins acknowledged a bevy of activity has been going on at the resort on Highway 88, south of Lake Tahoe. But he was adamant the resort has not sold. Nor is it in any hurry to enter any type of agreement with anyone.



Kirkwood usually gets the most snow of any Tahoe-area resort. Photo/Jessie Marchesseau

"We are in a good financial state. We have no pressing needs. We had solid years back-to-back and almost no leverage on assets. We sold more real estate in the last two months than we have in the last two years," Likins told *Lake Tahoe News*.

"We are looking at ways of restructuring, but not along the lines of JMA buying Kirkwood."

JMA Ventures owns Homewood Mountain Resort and until the announcement last month, all of Alpine Meadows. Squaw Valley's owners, KSL Capital Partners, and JMA have formed a third company to operate Squaw and Alpine.

Kirkwood, Alpine and Homewood have various pass deals that link the resorts.

With the California Ski Industry Association having a meeting at Northstar on Thursday, talk of consolidation in the industry was rampant. Lake Tahoe has lost some of its market share to Colorado and Utah. It's the Vails and Whistlers of the world that Tahoe area ski operators want to compete against – not with each other.

Likins doesn't believe KSL and Vail Resorts are finished with acquisitions. The latter bought Northstar a year ago.

"Big, successful companies go to areas that they see are attractive and then other folks follow," Likins said. "Resorts with real estate are even more attractive."

Likins knows his employees saw JMA and other folks at Kirkwood on Oct. 14 – after the ski industry meeting – and that rumors are running rampant.

"I won't deny people have been out at Kirkwood and I've been out at places," Likins said. "Every discussion we've had is focused on how to improve strategic opportunities at Kirkwood so we can accelerate the pace of mountain and real estate development."

Kirkwood officials have never been shy about saying real estate will fund on-mountain improvements. With the housing and financial markets tanking, this meant all upgrades were put on hold. The Expedition Lodge, five years ago touted as the resort's showcase property of the future, was supposed to be occupied in summer 2009. It hasn't even been built.

When Kirkwood is built-out it will have about 1,400 housing units – double what it has today. Sales of that property will allow for expanding the ski area into the 1,100 acres of terrain it has a permit to use – nearly doubling the acreage that is now lift accessed.

With Chip Seamans, COO and general manager at Kirkwood, having left about six weeks ago, personnel changes are likely, according to Kirkwood insiders.

Likins doesn't deny management and financing discussions are what are taking place.

"Ultimately there are always possibilities for ownership mergers, investment and co-investments, either financial investors, or equity investors. There's lots of that out there now," Likins said.

Eating at Passaretti's in S. Tahoe helps TACCD

In celebration of TACCD's 30-year milestone, five local restaurants are helping to increase TACCD's funding base.

Passaretti's is honoring Tahoe Area Coordinating Council for the Disabled with a percentage of its profits on Oct. 18.

The Getaway Café in Meyers was the first restaurant, while Ernie's Café was last week's restaurant.

Taqueria Jalisco's day is Oct. 25 and Coyote Grill is Oct. 27.

Pitch and Putt fundraiser

Sierra Expeditionary Learning School's fourth- and fifth-

graders will be at the Tahoe Donner Golf Course on Oct. 23 to raise money for a trip to Yosemite so they can learn geology.

The Pitch and Putt event is from noon-5pm. Tickets are $15 for adults, $8 for children, or $45 for a family. The cost includes: Pitch and Putt fun, prizes for all age groups, local pros facilitating the contest, on demand chipping contests and a barbecue lunch.

For more information, contact Julie Brisbin at (530) 414.3602 or jbrisbin@truckeecharterschool.org.

Sierra clears 1,750 lbs. of garbage from its slopes

More than 175 people helped clear more than 1,750 pounds of trash from Sierra Resort on Oct. 16.

Found during the annual Keep Sierra Clean Day were two snowboards, a few skis, an iPhone, a digital camera and a lift ticket from back when the resort was called Sierra Ski Ranch.

Plastic bottles, cans, trail fencing and signs were also collected.

Sierra employees spend the winter and summer months cleaning up the base area and parking lots, but cleaning up the slopes is a job that takes many helping hands.

Pumpkin Patch in Incline

Incline Village’s 32nd annual Pumpkin Patch is Oct. 22 from 10am-3pm at Incline Elementary School. There will be pony rides, bounce house, picture booth and raffle prizes. Admission is free.

Hair cut benefits youngsters with cancer

South Tahoe High School’s ALLY Club and RAH Hair Studio are having a fund raiser of sorts for children suffering for the effects of cancer treatments.

The hair salon is collecting hair from people who have at least 10 inches to donate.

Contacts Angie at RAH Hair Studio for a free cut on Oct 20 – (530) 545.1160.

Lake Tahoe Unified staff and students are lining up to have their locks cut off.

CHP looking out for young

drivers’ safety

By Jeff Gartner

Today’s youth are tomorrow’s future, and we should make it our mission to do everything in our power to protect them on the road. For young drivers between the ages of 15- and 20-years-old, traffic collisions are the leading cause of death for teens in America.

Teenagers are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers.

“Inexperience combined with speed, a lack of seat belt compliance, distractions, alcohol or any other risk-taking behavior can have deadly results behind the wheel,” said California Highway Patrol Commissioner

Joe Farrow. “Unlike a video game, you aren’t given multiple lives and there isn’t a reset button; our goal is to arm California’s youth with enough knowledge to make smart driving decisions.”

The CHP is hoping National Teen Driver Safety week (Oct. 16-22) will serve as an important reminder for teens and their parents or guardians to get involved with any number of the traffic safety programs the department offers which are geared toward teen drivers, including:

· Start Smart, a driver safety education class targeting new and future licensed teenage drivers between the age of 15-19 and their parents/guardians.

· Impact Teen Drivers, a nonprofit, public awareness and education program designed to educate teens about the dangers of distracted driving.

· Every 15 Minutes, a program focused on high school juniors and seniors, which challenges them to think about drinking,

driving, personal safety, the responsibility of making mature decisions and the impact their decisions have on family, friends, and many others.

National Teen Driver Safety week was established by the U.S. Congress in 2007. It is observed annually the third week of each October to raise national awareness to teen driver safety issues and encourage safe teen driver and passenger behavior.

“Kids will imitate you and your behaviors,” added Farrow. “Parents or guardians can help reinforce what their teen drivers learn in these programs by practicing safe driving habits at all times. This will help our young drivers mature into great drivers for the rest of their lives.”

The CHP South Lake Tahoe Area is having a Start Smart Class at South Tahoe High School on Oct. 18 at 6pm. Contact Officer Jeff Gartner with any questions at (530) 577.1001.

Jeff Gartner is a CHP officer stationed in Meyers.

Placer County gives NLTRA $5.4 million

The Placer County Board of Supervisors approved an agreement last week that will provide the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association with more than $5.4 million during the 2011-12 fiscal year for marketing, transportation and infrastructure-development efforts.

Each year, Placer County contracts with the resort association to promote tourism and provide other services, using transient occupancy tax revenue collected in the North Lake Tahoe area.

The contract approved by the board will provide the resort association with:

· Almost $2.8 million for marketing;

· More than $1.1 million for visitor-support services and transportation;

· Approximately $1.5 million for infrastructure projects.