Carson City IHOP making repairs in order to reopen

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

The International House of Pancakes restaurant that was the scene of one of the deadliest shootings in Northern Nevada history might be serving customers again before the end of the year, an official said Wednesday.

Eduardo Sencion walked into the Carson City IHOP on Sept. 6 and opened fire on customers, killing four and wounding 11 before fatally shooting himself.

The restaurant was boarded up after the shooting – numerous windows were shattered by bullets.

Read the whole story

Aspen bans plastic bags, charges for paper

By Carolyn Sackariason, Aspen Daily News

Aspen City Council on Tuesday voted 4 to 1 to ban plastic bags from the two grocery stores in town and place a 20-cent fee on paper bags.

The new law will take effect May 1.

Councilman Derek Johnson was the lone dissenter, saying that while he supports reducing waste, the ban doesn’t give people a choice and it could cost the city money to implement.

“I think we can do better,” he said.

In a Sept. 13 hearing on the issue, Johnson argued a ban would be too onerous on out-of-town tourists unfamiliar with the law.

The council has been talking about either a ban or a fee on plastic bags for the past two years. It was only a couple of weeks ago that a proposed 20-cent fee on plastic and paper bags morphed into a possible ban.

Read the whole story

Study: Gaming industry pros optimistic about 2012

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

A survey of more than 1,150 gaming industry professionals at last week’s Global Gaming Expo finds most participants are optimistic that 2012 will be a good year for the industry.

“These survey results indicate that there are exciting times ahead for the gaming industry,” Courtney Muller, senior vice president with expo producer Reed Exhibitions, said in a news release.

According to the survey, 77 percent of respondents feel positive about the direction of the casino industry in 2012 and 80 percent believe the company at which they work will be stronger next year. The survey said 76 percent are not concerned about their future employment situation.

Randall A. Fine, managing director of The Fine Point Group, a

casino management and advisory company, told those attending the final session at G2E that they should never stop innovating their products.

Read the whole story

Generation Wired – the good and the bad

By Emily Listfield, Parade

The other night as I was getting ready for bed, I turned off my phone and put it on the dresser. My 17-year-old daughter stared at me in disbelief. “But, Mom,” she exclaimed, “it’s so far away!”

For today’s youth, technology isn’t just a handy way to keep in touch or organize your calendar; it’s as integral as eating and breathing—and seems to come just as naturally. Between smartphones, iPods, video games, and the Internet, being wired is a way of life. The average teen sends more than 50 texts a day; younger children spend over 10 hours a week playing video games; and the amount of time all kids spend online daily has tripled in the past 10 years.

We are just beginning to assess how this nonstop connectivity is affecting our kids’ social and intellectual development. It is increasingly clear that it’s changing the nature of children’s relationships to each other, to their families, and to the world around them. The latest research suggests it may even be rewiring their brains.

In a world where sexting is on the nightly news, plagiarism is

just a Wikipedia click away, and people have hundreds of online friends they've never met, helping your kids make smart choices has never been more crucial. But there are few rules of the road, as any parent who has watched his or her child fall down the Facebook hole for hours can tell you. In part this is because technology is changing so rapidly that it can be hard to keep up. Just a few years ago, a 10-year-old with a cell phone could do little with it beyond placing a call. Now, handing her one is giving her the ability to text, go online, and send and receive photos. Are kids ready for that? Are you?

The notion that parents need to get involved in their children's digital lives as actively as they do in academic or sports activities is still new. "The digital landscape is a positive place for kids," says Dr. Gwenn O'Keeffe, lead author of the American Academy of Pediatrics 2011 report on the impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. "It promotes a lot of healthy habits like socialization and a sense of connectedness to the greater world and to causes." But, she says, children need guidance. Here are some of the thorniest issues and how parents can navigate them.

Read the whole story

$11 bil. water bond may be too much for voters

By Jim Christie, Reuters

Concerned about voter angst over California's finances, lawmakers say they may need to overhaul a ballot measure that would provide $11.1 billion for a slew of long-awaited water projects.

Lawmakers from both parties say the water projects are urgently needed, but the proposed bond measure's price tag may make it a non-starter with voters at a time when the state is facing ongoing budget woes.

California is prone to drought, and the state's aging system of reservoirs and aqueducts that distributes water to both urban and agricultural users needs a number of upgrades.

But voters outside of the state's agricultural centers are not particularly concerned about water, and lawmakers sense they may reject a massive bond that would add to the state's debt burden.

California already devotes 7.8 percent of its general fund to debt service, according to the state treasurer's office. Any further increase in the debt burden would put added pressure on schools, universities and other public services that have already seen their budgets slashed dramatically.

"There's a growing concern that a water bond of this size is a very tough sell," said Joe Simitian, a Democratic state Senator.

Republican Assemblyman Kevin Jeffries agrees: "Now we have a water bond that is so large that I think it's going to be very difficult for the public to support it."

Read the whole story

Caps for Kids' looking for

creative donations

Attention all you crafty folk who sew, knit and crotchet. The 24h annual Caps for Kids' collection is under way. The South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Department is again the place to drop off all of your handmade goodies – booties, hats, scarves and mittens are wanted and appreciated for holiday distribution.

All of the donations will be given to local children this holiday season through Christmas Cheer.

For timely distribution, "caps" should be dropped off at the Recreation Complex, 1180 Rufus Allen Blvd., by Dec. 2. Include a note with your name and address.

Need an easy crotchet or knitting pattern? Drop by the Recreation Complex or call (530) 542.6056 to have one sent to you.

Nevada controller creates Fraud Hotline

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – Nevada State Controller Kim Wallin announced last week that a Fraud Hotline has been posted on her agency's website in order to assist the public and state employees in reporting questionable practices.

Wallin said the link will send information directly to her for review. The types of practices that can be brought to her agency's attention include tax fraud, Medicaid fraud and over-

billing by government contractors.

“The Fraud Hotline link will be a way for the public and state employees to provide tips on fraudulent activities so we can crack down on scam artists and save taxpayer money,” Wallin said. “The governor’s website recently removed a similar link so I felt it was critical to take this responsibility on and make the link a feature of the Controller’s website.”

Mary-Sarah Kinner, a spokeswoman for the governor’s office, said the fraud link on the previous state website did not migrate to the new website unveiled recently. But typing the word “fraud” into the state website search function generates the link as the first search result, which goes to the Fight Fraud website operated by the Nevada Department of Business and Industry, she said.

Wallin said that nationwide, Medicare, Medicaid, Earned Income Tax Credit and Unemployment payments account for $87.5 billion in improper payments. The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, in its “2010 Report to the Nations on Occupational Fraud and Abuse,” estimated that the typical organization loses 5 percent of its annual revenue to fraud. Government organizations are the third most frequent victim of fraud after banking and manufacturing.

Wallin said she has not had such a link on her website previously, but decided to add it when the link on the main state of Nevada webpage disappeared.

“It’s something that needs to be done, we have to do it,” she said. “And I think in one way it is probably a good thing …, especially for employees reporting. They work for the governor, they don’t work for me. So that way their identities are protected and it is an impartial person looking at it.”

Wallin said she has been reviewing instances of potential fraud brought to her attention internally but has not had a fraud link previously.

The Controller’s office will promote the Fraud Hotline link through service providers and local governments. Each tip through the Hotline will be reviewed internally for potential investigation. Identities will be kept confidential.

The controller, one of the state’s six constitutional officers, is the chief fiscal officer and administers the state’s accounting system and debt collection program. The state Controller’s Office mission is to advance accountability, continuity, and efficiency in the state’s financial operations.

Opinion: Soldier teaches lessons with his death

Publisher’s note: ***The following is what Rep. Tom McClintock read on the House floor Oct. 13.***

Mr. Speaker:

Forty years from now, a beloved high school history teacher at [South] Tahoe High School named Garrett Fant should be celebrating his retirement surrounded by generations of his students and by his children and grandchildren. They would have all told affectionate stories of how Mr. Fant inspired them or helped them and wished him a happy and well-deserved retirement.

Sadly, history has willed a different story. Army Specialist Garrett Fant instead returned to South Lake Tahoe last week as a fallen hero at the age of 21. This young man sacrificed all those years, all those memories, all those pleasures – all that life – in the service of his country.

He loved the Army and had a plan for his life – he'd serve his country as a soldier for twenty years, and then he'd come home and serve his community as a high school history teacher.


Tom McClintock

From everything I've learned about Garrett Fant, he would have made a great history teacher. His mother told a reporter that "His thought was that high school was the last stop for kids, and he wanted to influence people."

He would have been a great family man. His older brother remembers looking up to Garrett as if Garrett were the older brother. Knowing full well the dangers that surrounded him in Afghanistan, his foremost attention went to reassuring his family that he was safe and secure. His mother said, "He always tried to protect me from the dangers of being over there … He was just someone that if you were his family or his friends – or his country – he gave you his all and loved you with everything."

Above all, Garrett Fant wanted to be a soldier. His brother tried to get him to enlist with him in the Navy, but Garrett would have none of that. He was all Army and had known from the time he was a little boy that's what he most wanted to do.

On Facebook, he listed his occupation as "grunt," telling friends, "You can't spell 'Infantry' without 'Fant.'" He was the top marksman in his class of 1,000.

I wish I'd have known him. I wish my grandchildren might one day have been in his high school history class.

Instead, Army Specialist Garrett Fant takes his place in history, among nine generations of American heroes who sacrificed all those precious years to protect those who couldn't protect themselves, to stand up to the bullies of the world, "to proclaim liberty throughout all the land and unto all the inhabitants thereof."

In his farewell address at West Point, General Douglas MacArthur turned his attention to fallen heroes like Army Specialist Garrett Fant and with searing insight observed, "Their story is known to all of you. It is the story of the American man at arms. My estimate of him was formed on the battlefields many, many years ago, and has never changed. I regarded him then, as I regard him now, as one of the world's noblest figures; not only as one of the finest military characters, but also as one of the most stainless.

"His name and fame are the birthright of every American citizen. In his youth and strength, his love and loyalty, he gave all that mortality can give. He needs no eulogy from me, or from any other man…

"But when I think of his patience under adversity, of his courage under fire, and of his modesty in victory, I am filled with an emotion of admiration I cannot put into words. He belongs to history as furnishing one of the greatest examples of successful patriotism. He belongs to posterity as the instructor of future generations in the principles of liberty and freedom."

And so Garrett Fant became a teacher after all. As Shakespeare said, "This story shall the good man teach his son."

Succeeding generations of students at South Tahoe High School, and also at Valley Oak High School in American Canyon, which Garrett also attended, will know his story. Every Memorial Day in his home town, his name will be read with a special pride that his friends and neighbors will share. For centuries to

come, strangers will pass by his honored grave, adorned with flags and flowers and note the few years he had and the sacrifice he made, and be humbled by it and perhaps inspired by it to become better citizens. No history teacher can do more than that.

To his grieving family, on behalf of a grateful nation, I can only say that you do not mourn alone. Your pride in Garrett is shared by your community, your country, and by many history teachers who will tell his story to the latest American generation.

Tom McClintock represents the California side of Lake Tahoe in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Hydraulic mining leaves colorful scar on state park near Nevada City

Publisher's note: ***Lucy D'Mot is making it her mission to visit the 70 state parks slated for closure next year.***

By Lucy D'Mot, Sacramento Bee

Mother Nature would take many millennia to create the likes of the huge, colorful cliffs at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park, 11 miles north of Nevada City.

These sheer bluffs were carved in just a few decades by streams of water shot from powerful cannons, washing away piles of dirt and gravel.

Gold miners used hydraulic mining, employing flumes and ditch

systems, as they eroded and sifted the soil for the precious ore. As much as 100,000 tons of gravel per day would disappear. Entire mountains were lost.

The mining companies built a 7,847-foot tunnel that went right through the bedrock to serve as a drain.

Farms along the south Yuba River were flooded and destroyed. Silt flowed all the way to San Francisco Bay, impairing navigation on the Sacramento River and parts of the bay. River channels closed to steamboat traffic.

But because residents prospered from mining operations, they simply built their levees higher to hold off floodwaters.

Read the whole story

Northstar upgrades resort with lift, trails and lodge

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – New lift, new lodge, new terrain – it's what Vail Resorts has done to Northstar with an infusion of $30 million since it bought the North Shore resort a year ago.

With a projected opening date of Nov. 18, the resort will have the Promised Land Express chairlift running, with the Zephyr Lodge expected to open a month later, and the additional 170 acres of ski area ready when Mother Nature cooperates.

The resort even has a new name. Gone is the "at-Tahoe" part of Northstar. The formal name is Northstar California – with the idea that it's more than a mountain. The logo is changed and

font is slightly different. The tagline is – The Way It Should Be.

The new detachable quad provides more access to the Backside – doubling the lift capacity to that area. Castle Peak run lines up so intermediate skiers are schussing toward that mountain in the far distance. Islands is so named because it has 22 trees – essentially providing islands – for skiers to skirt around.

Snowmaking guns will make sure they are covered with white stuff; plus Drifter now has snowmaking.

COO Bill Rock said so many lines exist off Islands trail that people may never want to leave it.

“As you can see, there are spectacular views of the whole Pacific Crest.”

– Bill Rock, Northstar COO

For the more advanced rider, the long-awaited access to



Sawtooth Ridge is happening this season. Called sidecountry terrain, this area in the past was accessed by hearty hikers carrying their gear up in order to ride down. Now Northstar will use snowcats to transport people to the area when conditions permit. Guided tours will be available there as well as to White Rabbit. One day the resort hopes to put Sawtooth inside the boundaries.

The additional 170 acres in the 2011-12 expansion don't include Sawthooth. The boundaries have been extended to the skier's left of the Prosser trail on Lookout Mountain. This adds about 1,000 vertical feet of terrain for new Lookout Glade, which is accessed from Martis Camp Express. Another 800 vertical feet is on the Sawmill Glade (off Vista Express) which is to the skier's right of Logger's Loop.

That's all advanced terrain.

The additional runs bring the skiable acres at Northstar to 3,170.

While Northstar, especially with the addition of the mid-mountain Ritz-Carlton two years ago, would like to be a year-round resort, Rock acknowledged, "Our bread and butter is winter. We are a winter business."

Thus the reason for millions of dollars being spent on winter guests.

Gold is also coming to the resort in the form of Shaun White – two-time Olympic gold medalist. He chose Northstar to be his training ground this season. The 22-foot halfpipe that will be built for his needs will be open to aspiring Olympians.

Dining with a view

Riding the Zephyr Express from the mid-mountain lodge it looks

more like a construction zone at the top than a ski resort. At the top to the left is a structure that will be for the ski patrol. Their yurt to the skiers' right was dismantled to make way for the Zephyr Lodge.



Glass panels will provide views to the Pacific Crest from the Zephyr Lodge. Photos/Kathryn Reed

While it's modeled after the Tamarack Lodge at Heavenly Mountain Resort (also owned by Vail Resorts), this is built out of steel instead of wood. SMC Contracting is also putting this facility in the ground.

The signature difference is the deck.

"As you can see, there are spectacular views of the whole Pacific Crest," Rock said as the pounding of nails and other construction equipment reverberated through the partially completed lodge.

Trudging through snow even in October to get to the lodge – it was a winter scene in early fall with the distant peaks covered in white. Bear prints are visible from the deck so critters are having fun in the snow. Glass is still needed to prevent people from falling over the edge.

Besides incredible views, the location was picked because it's accessible for most skier abilities.

Kelly Rodriguez, director of food and beverage at Northstar, is tasked with ensuring people's stomachs are full and satisfied while dining anywhere on the mountain – but the Zephyr Lodge allows for the chefs to be a bit more creative. Yes, the Vail Resorts' signature Epic Burger will be on the menu, but so, too, will be a burger unique to Northstar, and a veggie burger made from scratch – not cardboard.

"We have the ability to serve healthy items to consumers in a food court setting," Rodriguez said.

Gourmet pizzas (using their own dough), a grill, Asian station and salad bar are all planned.

Whenever possible the resort will buy local products – which is defined by a 100-mile radius.

It won't all be healthy – French fries and homemade onion rings will be available. Breakfast won't be served, unless a bloody Mary counts. It will be Northstar's first on-mountain sit-down bar.

In keeping with Vail Resorts' Lunch for Less program, this will probably be offered this season at the Big Springs Lodge.

Besides the food, what resort officials hope people will notice is less congestion at the dining venues throughout the mountain. Zephyr adds 500 indoor seats and about 250 outdoor to the mountain.

Sampling some of what will be offered this season at Zephyr, the gourmet grilled cheese with its three types of cheese and side of tomato soup is yummy. Chef Steve Anderson came up with this combo.

Chef Deb Finn designed the s'mores that come with a variety of choices – such as coconut covered marshmallows, chocolate

filled with caramel or mint, and graham crackers beyond the normal variety. The gas fire pits in the village toast up the marshmallows just as plump as any wood fire.

And a Dirty Snowman goes good with everything – just ask the bartender.

More information about Northstar California is available online.

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