Al Tahoe residents going to spend a day sprucing things up

The Al Tahoe neighborhood in South Lake Tahoe is having a clean-up day on Oct. 15 from noon-3pm. Meet at Regan Beach.

This clean-up day event is the result of feedback from a neighborhood service team meeting this summer. The clean-up event is focusing on collecting trash, not large scale items such as furniture.

Trash bags are being provided courtesy of the Caltrans Adopt-a-Highway program.

Participants should put out their filled trash bags in front of their homes for regular trash collection.

The flyer has more information.

Wild horses posing a problem on Nevada highways

The Nevada Highway Patrol is cautioning motorists who travel on Highway 341, the Geiger Grade, about the increased presence of wild horses that have been gathering near or crossing the section of highway between the roundabout at Veterans Parkway and Virginia City.



Additionally, two horses have been struck and killed in separate accidents in the past week.

Bands of horses have been observed and reported in Lyon County on Highway 50 between Mound House and Silver Springs as well.

Motorists who observe horses near the highway can report that information to (775) 687.0400 or the Storey County Sheriff's Office at (775) 847.0950. Either agency would contact the volunteer range master for the Virginia City area, Jim Stewart, or a brand inspector from the Department of Agriculture to assist with these types of calls.

BlueGo increases bus fares, changing routes

A simplified fare structure will greet BlueGo passengers this weekend, and a new route between Minden and Carson City begins Monday.

The Ranchos to Carson City routes will begin at 6:20am with the last run at 5:15pm, Monday-Friday. Fares are $4 for intercity trips and $2 within the local areas with half-price fares offered to youth, seniors and those with disabilities. Transfer stations are located at Tillman and Kimmerling in Gardnerville, and in Carson City at Washington and Plaza streets.

The revised route structure will be evaluated throughout

October. The finalized schedules will go into effect after Thanksgiving.

Grant will fund parking at Tahoe Vista Rec Area

The North Tahoe Public Utility District has been awarded $1.42 million from the Department of Boating and Waterways for construction of the parking lot at Tahoe Vista Recreation Area.

This funding, along with $500,000 from Placer County Redevelopment Agency and $500,000 from the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association Infrastructure Funding allow the district to move forward with construction in 2012 once all permits are in hand.

Completion of this parking lot will provide the final critical element for the Tahoe Vista Recreation Area. Beginning with property acquisitions dating back to 1991, funded by the California Tahoe Conservancy, more than $10 million has been spent on this prime public lakefront property including acquisition, permitting, environmental documents and construction. Funding for construction has come from the California Department of Boating and Waterways, CTC, Placer County and NLTRA.

The initial phase of the project included most of the lakefront amenities and was completed in summer 2005. In 2010, the boat launch was dredged and courtesy docks installed in the harbor. This final phase of the project will provide parking for 21 boat/trailers and 41 vehicles. The parking will be located on the northwest corner of Highway 28 and National

Avenue.

The district anticipates going to bid for this project in spring 2012 with construction being completed in the fall. Public meetings regarding this project will be announced once they have been scheduled.

Washoe County offering tips on being cyber safe

Keeping people safe online is the goal of October's National Cybersecurity Month. The Washoe County Sheriff's Office wants to help by providing daily cyber safety tips on Twitter.

The series of 31 tips covers topics ranging from identification theft to cyberbullying. Residents can have the information sent directly to their Twitter feed by following "WashoeSheriff" on Twitter.

Daily tips will also be distributed directly to members of AlertID and available online.

For more information about the Northern Nevada Cyber Center, call (775) 785.6200.

8th-grader's pedaling prowess

benefits Boys & Girls Club

By Paula Peterson

What started as a challenge during a spin class turned into a fundraising effort of more than $1,000 by South Tahoe Middle School eighth-grader Mykala Muskovitz.

Muskovitz was in a spin class with her mother when local businesswoman Jana Walker Spano proposed a challenge. Spano would donate $300 in Mykala's name to the Boys & Girls Club if she finished the Tour de Tahoe on Sept. 11.



Mykala Muskovitz, center, did more than ride 72 miles. Photo/Paula Peterson

Muskovitz spent her summer getting ready for the 72-mile ride, which included weekly spin classes and finding a bike that could handle the trek. Bike, riding shoes and clothing in hand, she joined her parents, Adam and Wendy, that Sunday morning and the three proceeded to complete the ride in six hours.

They stopped only at official rest stops even though the tough uphill climb near Sand Harbor would have made the best of bike riders want to take a break. When other people heard about

Muskovitz’s challenge by Spano, they wanted to be part of the fundraising efforts. Money came in from several people and Muskovitz was able to present the Boys & Girls Club with a check for $725.

Local businesses that helped the fundraising besides Spano’s Sealed With a Kiss and Lakefront Wedding Chapel businesses were Steve Kosmides of Lake Tahoe Plumbing & Heating, House & Garden Nutrients, Kevin and Ashley Evans of Southeast Freight, Steve and Trina Jones of NXT Ventures, Kristi Jouett of Sierra House Elementary, and Julianne Mehrtens of Skinapeel.

But it doesn’t stop there. With the help of Spano, Muskovitz is going to take the remaining $300 she raised and start a fund for Christmas shopping for the children of the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center.

Spano is sharing the “service above self” Rotary philosophy with young people as well as her employees in hopes of inspiring a future generation of philanthropists to be more community minded. She was proud to see Muskovitz accept the challenge without question and said, “Her motivation to help those kids far outweighed the overwhelming physical exhaustion she experienced. Never once did she consider giving up on them.”

If you are interested in helping Muskovitz with her continuing fundraising efforts, contact her parents at muskovitz@sbcglobal.net or Spano at jana@shopswak.com.

What to look for at next

week’s S. Tahoe council meeting

Some of the more interesting items on the Oct. 4 South Lake Tahoe City Council agenda are either on the consent agenda or closed session.

Analysis

The consent agenda is usually for slam-dunk items that require no discussion. However, that has not been the case with these five. They seem to pull about half the items each meeting — signaling either a disconnect between staff and council to what is important, or how well versed the council is on the item.

Next week’s red flag consent agenda is the resolution approving salaries and benefits of non-represented management and non-represented confidential employees.

While there is nothing alarming in the staff report, in these contentious budget times that necessitated an interim budget be passed before the complete 2011-12 budget is voted on later this month, this shows a lack of transparency on the city’s part by putting it on the consent agenda.

On the closed session agenda is the city manager’s annual performance review. While this is the usual place for such a review, it does come later than normal. Usually is at the one-year mark, which would have been August. However, previous councils have moved that date around. *Lake Tahoe News* has been told the format of the review has been changed, which caused some of the delay. No longer is it council members writing

down what they like or don’t like about the person. Some structure and professionalism has reportedly been introduced to the process.

What the council exactly thinks about City Manager Tony O’Rourke will not be public information. This is the same for any employee. However, a raise, additional perks or extension of his three-year contract would be public information.

In the past, city managers who want to continue on and who the council wants to stay put have been offered an additional year to their contract. That will be the item to look for and the reasons behind the decision (if anyone will talk) if that additional year is not forthcoming.

Tuesday’s meeting starts at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport. Here is the City Council agenda.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Flu shots available in Incline Village

Incline Village Community Hospital and the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District will be offering flu vaccines beginning Oct. 1 for residents of Incline Village and Crystal Bay. The charge for the vaccine is $20 per shot. Medicare billing will be available (bring a copy of your Medicare card).

The vaccine is available at Incline Village Community Hospital, 880 Alder Ave. as well as the main fire station at 875 Tanager St. Fire district personnel will also visit homes

or businesses by appointment at no additional charge.

The vaccines are for ages 3 years old and above, however the fire district will be administering for ages 12 years old and above.

To make an at-home or place of business appointment or to find out about flu vaccine information, call the Incline Village Community Hospital at (775) 888. 4201, or the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District at (775) 831.0351, ext. 0.

Kortge: Time to replace aging infrastructure is now

Publisher's note: ***Lake Tahoe News is profiling the six candidates who will be on the Nov. 8 ballot for the South Tahoe Public Utility District board. They are being published in the order they were submitted. Mary Kortge is running for the seat vacated by Marylou Mosbacher.***

Name: Mary Kortge

Age: As of Oct. 15 I will be 54.

How long have you lived on the South Shore?: 22 years

What water company supplies your home? Your work?: South Tahoe Public Utility District



Mary Kortge

Job/profession?: Homemaker/manage my rental property

What stands out to you in the 2011-12 budget?: The significant amount of proposed construction planned for this year since the construction cost are lower now. Also, that more money goes toward capital expenditures (40 percent) than wages and salaries (30 percent) and operations and maintenance (30 percent).

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: College degree in accounting/computer science, Zilwaukee Township clerk in Saginaw, Mich., School Site Councils for eight years, PTA boards for nine years, managed at AT&T phone centers, National Ski Patrol host at Sierra-at-Tahoe, the experience I've learned being married to my husband of 25 years in the engineering field from building bridges, dams and water treatment plants.

Is there any individual, group or organization you would not take campaign money from? Why?: I'm paying for my own campaign.

What is the No. 1 reason someone should vote for you over another candidate?: I know I am qualified for the position. I have reviewed the board's past minutes, with a range of experience from the field to the boardroom, I will listen to your concerns and be your representation on the board. If elected, especially during these tough economic times, I will work hard to ensure that budgets are spent wisely and

effectively.

California law mandates water meters be installed. What is your solution to make the fee equitable for those on meters and those without one?: It’s sad things couldn’t have remained the same as they were in the past, but state law mandated the water meters. In a perfect world no residents would be charged until all the meters have been installed, however, state law has dictated that owners be charged once the meters are in place. There is no way for it to be fair for everyone until all the meters are installed. The district needs to continue their efforts to find grants to pay for the rest of the water meters.

To get the remaining 60 percent of South Tahoe PUD customers on meters it will cost $15 million. As a board member, where will you get the money to pay for the meters?: We have a wonderful grant writer at STPUD and hopefully we will get more grant money to pay for the meters so we don’t have to pass it on to the public.

Do you believe the district should spend money on lobbying efforts in Sacramento and/or Washington, D.C.? Why or why not?: Yes, we should pay for lobbying in Washington, D.C. The water district spends about $70,000 a year for our lobbyist, which in turn since 2009 we’ve received about $6.5 million in grants from the federal government appropriated for water system improvements . Dennis Cocking who works for STPUD does the Sacramento lobbying, is very well known with the state and can accomplish any lobbying that has to be done at the state level.

What do you know about STPUD getting money from the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act?: The district has benefited from the act and if the money is to be spent in Lake Tahoe we might as well benefit. The money from the act was used to improve infrastructure including installation of fire hydrants. Due to the federal funding of the act, these improvements were made

without increasing our water rates.

How do you balance the economic situation of the community with the infrastructure needs of the district?: In the lean economic down turn it is the best time to do public works projects. It's time now to replace or repair our ailing infrastructure. We should continue to improve the infrastructure of the firefighting system. We should take advantage of the competitive construction bidding now since bids are coming in below our estimates. Minimizing the cost helps keep our rates low.

With 38 percent of a customer's sewer bill going to meet the needs of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act and $100 million already invested in Alpine County to take STPUD's wastewater, would you leave things as they are? If yes, why? If no, what would you change and how do expect to accomplish those changes?: Leave things the way they are since the infrastructure we have today is the result of federal and state laws. STPUD is working on energy self-production to keep our expenses down.

What should be done with the land STPUD owns where the old post office was on Black Bart?: Since the old post office does not have water or sewer there is not much you can do with the building except storage. Possibly remove the building, reclaim the coverage to bank for future construction, and revegetate the land. If an interested buyer could be found, it would have to be rezoned at some expense, making this a poor alternative.

There has been a three-year wage freeze for employees. What are your thoughts on employee raises and benefits?: The economy would have to change before I could consider a change in the employees' wages. The water district is a very distinguished employer in our basin. I think the employees are happy to be working for our water district.

When would you vote for a hike on water and sewer rates and

why?: At this time I could not vote for an increase given the current economy.

Lukins Brothers Water District – any comments?: Lukins system is old and in need of upgrades. It is a complicated issue that affects many South Lake Tahoe residents, so I will weigh the benefits and burdens of the different alternatives to make a fair and economically sound decision.

What should be the main priority of South Tahoe PUD?: To provide clean drinking water and sewage removal for the public at the lowest rate they can. Continue to improve the infrastructure for firefighting in the basin.

What should be the main priority of a South Tahoe PUD board member?: To make the best decision on the best information you can get to benefit the greatest number of the district customers.

Tell readers something about yourself that most people don't know: I'm in the process of becoming a member of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary. I also will be proud to have people call me STPUD.

Credit card scam hitting El Dorado County residents

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies have received several calls recently regarding a credit card scam.

According to victims, this is how the transaction occurs. Your phone will ring and if you have caller ID a 1-888 number will appear. The caller will offer a low fixed rate interest on a

credit card or credit card consolidation. The caller will then ask for credit card numbers, expiration dates, Social Security numbers, mother’s maiden name and other verification passwords.

Once the caller has obtained the information he will tell you he needs to process the information and will call you back. In addition there will be a one time financial fee which will vary in amount. Once the suspect has gathered the victim’s personal information, he has the ability to open lines of credit, make purchases and ultimately impact the victim’s credit rating.

There are some simple rules to follow when it comes to protecting your money and credit:

* Unless you initiated the phone call, never give out confidential information (account number, Social Security number, or mother’s maiden name) to anyone who calls.

* Review your statement each month for unauthorized purchases.

* Do not send credit card numbers through emails. Emails are typically not secured.

Residents who believe they have been a victim of credit card fraud should first contact their credit card issuer to report the fraud and cancel their card, and then contact the sheriff’s office to initiate a criminal investigation.