Community cleanup day in Tahoma

Clean Tahoe and the Tahoe Cedar Property Owners Association are coordinating the annual Tahoma Cleanup Day on May 24.

Dumpsters will be available at the El Dorado County DOT lot at 7101 Wilson Ave. in Tahoma. Residential materials only – no construction debris or commercial loads will be accepted. There will be additional fees for refrigerators, tires, mattresses, and large furniture.

Gates open at 8am and close when the dumpsters are full.

TVES to be home of transitional K program

By Kathryn Reed

After much discontent from parents, Lake Tahoe Unified School District listened. It was decided Tuesday that Tahoe Valley Elementary School would house the transitional kindergarten program starting in the fall.

At the March 29 school board meeting staff had proposed the program be at the defunct Al Tahoe school site.

Having it at Tahoe Valley means the little ones will be able take part in schoolwide events like Tahoe Arts Project assemblies. They will also be part of a real school.

In addition, Principal Christina Grubbs has a background in

early childhood education.

LTUSD has had what it calls preppie K for a number of years. Transitional kindergarten, or TK, is similar. It's just that now the state is requiring as of this fall for districts to have TK.

While all the questions and concerns of parents have yet to be addressed, some fears were dispelled at the April 22 meeting. Of the five people who spoke that night, four were parents who will have kids in the program next school year.

Busing, hours of the program, how the kids will be divided and what happens after school were all topics that were brought up.

Class will start at 9:10am, just like the rest of the school. This makes it less stressful for everyone. The exact end time has not been determined, but 1:30pm is likely.

Grubbs said going longer is not beneficial for most kids. For some kids, it's naptime after lunch.

"If you push them through the sleep time, in some cases their learning decreases by 70 percent," Grubbs told the board.

These kids will have their own bus to and from school so they are not mixed with big kids.

"We don't let a kid off the bus unless there is an adult to greet them," Grubbs said. No adult, then the child is brought back to the school.

Students can even be dropped off at day care centers.

Even though they may be going to one of the other three elementary schools for regular K the following year, all the TK students will be mixed together.

"We felt it better to mix the kids. A heterogeneous grouping

is vital. It’s vital for the social and emotional piece,” Grubbs said.

Tarwater said after school programs can be worked out in the future.

There will be no more than 24 students in a class. This is so the district does not jeopardize its $1.2 million class-size reduction subsidy from the state.

Tahoe Valley will receive a half million dollar sprucing up this summer. This will include new playground equipment, additional equipment moving over from Bijou Community School, paint, carpet, changes to the entrance and improved drop-off lanes.

Opinion: Bears and trash don’t mix well

By Catherine Cecchi

As the days get longer and temperatures rise, our local black bears are becoming more and more active. While some bears that have learned to “supplement” their diet with human food from garbage cans and dumpsters may not have hibernated during this mild winter, many bears are just beginning to wake up from their wintertime slumber and they are hungry. Bears are typically very active in their search for food in the springtime, and at Clean Tahoe we’ve seen a dramatic increase in animal-in-trash incidents in recent weeks.

This is a terrible situation for the bears as well as for all of the neighbors in an area where a bear has been feasting on

human food waste. A bear that has frequent access to human food will likely lose its natural fear of humans and also may damage property in its quest to reach the food source, oftentimes resulting in a death sentence for the animal – “a fed bear is a dead bear.”

Here are a few tips for ensuring bears don’t get into your garbage:

• Put all food waste in bear-resistant twist-lid cans (available at Scotty’s Hardware at the Y) or metal bear bins. If you have regular trashcans, keep food waste inside your house (not your garage) until the morning of trash pick up. South Tahoe Refuse recently pushed back residential trash pick up time by two hours, so you don’t have to put trash out the night before.

• If you own a vacation rental or second home, consider installing a metal bear bin. It’s worth the investment. Find options online.

• Keep dumpsters locked at all times. “Locking” a dumpster can be as simple as sliding a carabineer clip into the hole securing the lock bar in place.

• If you see a trash problem in your neighborhood, please report it to the Clean Tahoe Program at 530.544.4210. There are ordinances in the city and the county prohibiting animal access to garbage. We will post a warning notice at the property, and recommend a citation for repeat offenders.

We should all do our part to keep our community clean and protect local wildlife.

Catherine Cecchi is executive director of the Clean Tahoe Program.

Horizon owners still seeking permits

Even though the Horizon is closed and it is going to be transformed into Park Tahoe, not all the permits are in hand.

The owners – brothers Jon and David Park – are still seeking the necessary permits from Douglas County to do the work they desire.

One permit that is in hand is a demo permit. This is to tear down the porte cochere – or overhang for the valet area.

Douglas County is reviewing the building permit application to remodel the gaming floor area and renovate hotel rooms.

The Stateline hotel-casino is going to become a Hard Rock-themed property. About $40 million is being spent on the remodel.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Denim Day shines light on sexual assault

By Diana Meza Cabrera

April 23 is Denim Day – an annual international campaign that brings awareness to sexual assault.

In 1997, a teenage girl in Italy was picked up by her 45-year-old driving instructor for her first lesson. He drove her to an isolated location, pulled her out of the car, and forcefully raped her. The girl was courageous and despite his threats, she reported the incident and he was arrested. After his conviction the perpetrator appealed the sentence and the case went all the way to the Supreme Court.

In the final ruling, the Italian Supreme Court overturned the rape conviction because the victim was wearing tight skinny jeans at the time of the attack. The statement by the chief judge read “because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them, and by removing the jeans it was no longer rape but consensual sex.”

The women in the Italian Parliament were outraged by the verdict and protested the court by wearing jeans to work. This action began the annual international demonstration known as Denim Day.

Every two minutes a person in the United States is sexually assaulted. Sexual assault has increased by 86 percent in El Dorado County.

There is much work to be done help us raise awareness and make South Lake Tahoe a safe and violence free community for everyone.

In observance of Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month, we will be hosting free self-defense classes. Classes will be April 25 and April 26 from 11am-1pm at Escobar Training Grounds, 972 Tallac Ave., South Lake Tahoe. It is women and children ages 5-12.

Diana Meza Cabrera works for Live Violence Free.

Turn off electronic devices for the kids' sake

By Patti Neighmond, NPR

It's not just kids who are overdoing screen time. Parents are often just as guilty of spending too much time checking smartphones and e-mail — and the consequences for their children can be troubling.

Dr. Jenny Radesky is a pediatrician specializing in child development. When she worked at a clinic in a high-tech savvy Seattle neighborhood, Radesky started noticing how often parents ignored their kids in favor of a mobile device. She remembers a mother placing her phone in the stroller between herself and the baby. "The baby was making faces and smiling at the mom," Radesky says, "and the mom wasn't picking up any of it; she was just watching a YouTube video."

Radesky was so concerned she decided to study the behavior. After relocating to Boston Medical Center, she and two other researchers spent one summer observing 55 different groups of parents and young children eating at fast food restaurants. Many of the caregivers pulled out a mobile device right away, she says. "They looked at it, scrolled on it and typed for most of the meal, only putting it down intermittently."

This was not a scientific study, Radesky is quick to point out. It was more like anthropological observation, complete with detailed field notes. Forty of the 55 parents used a mobile device during the meal, and many, she says, were more absorbed in the device than in the kids.

Read the whole story

Devices can help save the environment

By Lynda Chervil

Just as intended, the 44th annual celebration of Earth Day is surrounded by talk of our environment, our impact on it and what we can do to better live in harmony with it.

We're seeing more and more people who realize that, if each of us does what we can every day, collectively, we can have a tremendous impact.

All the people carrying reusable grocery sacks, people who've quit the plastic water bottle habit, folks heating their pools or houses with solar panels – that's what we should be celebrating this Earth Day.

This year's March Gallup Environment poll found that 42 percent of Americans believe the outlook for the environment has improved, up from only 26 percent in 2008.

Here are four devices that would make a nice gift for Mother Earth on her day:

• HybridLight Solar Flashlight: These flashlights never need batteries, can be charged from any light source, and they always work. The 120 lumens model will burn for eight hours on one charge. HybridLight's flashlights are so reliable, the Boy Scouts' Utah National Parks Council endorse them – and they come with a lifetime guarantee. For every 10 hours of use, 100 HybridLight flashlights avert 60 pounds of toxic battery landfill waste. An added very cool note – HybridLights has a mission to light up corners of the world with little or no

electricity. Recently, the company supplied everyone in a Kenyan village with their own flashlight. Cost: Prices start at less than $20.

• Bedol Water Alarm Clock: Imagine a water-powered alarm clock that's loud enough to scare you out of bed. Bedol's water clocks run strictly on tap water – no batteries, no nothing else. The energy comes from a natural reaction between the water and two metal plates. The smallest clocks in the line run for six to 12 weeks before the display begins to fade, indicating that the water needs to be changed. Occasionally, you also need to clean the metal plates with vinegar. Just in time for Earth Day, Bedol is launch it's 12-by-15-inch wall-mount water clock. Cost: Prices start at $19.

• iGo Green Power Smart Wall: We've all heard of the "vampires" in our homes that suck up power whether we're using them or not – everything from coffee pots to laptops. Stem the bleeding with this surge protector that cuts the suck by up to 85 percent. The unit, which plugs into the wall, has four outlets, two of which are always on. The other two automatically power down when the attached appliance is not in use. Cost: Prices start at about $12.

• Pama Eco Navigator Satellite Navigation system: This GPS system also saves gasoline by providing you with the most energy-efficient routes to your destinations, and feedback on your car's performance, so you can adjust your driving habits to improve your gas mileage. It also saves all your routes, so you can assess their fuel efficiency. Cost: Watch for pricing and availability on Amazon.

Most of these items are not only budget priced, they save you money in batteries, electricity and fuel. Not only are you doing something great for the planet when you use green technology, you're taking a load off your wallet.

Lynda Chervil is the author of "Fool's Return," a new novel

that incorporates valuable life lessons in a page-turning tale that touches on technology, the green movement, and other aspects of contemporary society.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Valhalla Renaissance Faire is May 31, June 1, June 7 and June 8 at Camp Richardson. Adults are $18. For more info, go online.

• Clean Tahoe has reusable bags for $5. They are at 2074 Lake Tahoe Blvd., No. 6, South Lake Tahoe (across from Staples) or call 530.544.4210.

• The 27th annual Derby Day to support the Reno Chamber Orchestra is May 3 at noon. Lunch will be served as the Kentucky Derby is televised. To purchase the $70 tickets call 775.348.9413.

• Day of the Young Child at Lake Tahoe Community College is June 14.

• South Lake Tahoe Family Resource Center’s Cinco de Mayo fundraiser is May 2 from 5-10pm at Heavenly Mountain Resort’s California Lodge. Cost is $20. For tickets, call 530.542.0740.

Dozen illegal pot grows uprooted in El Dorado County

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies have been making a concerted effort to rid neighborhoods of illegal marijuana grows. In the last four months deputies have closed down a dozen commercial cultivation operations in the Lake Tahoe Basin. They were primarily housed in rental houses.

Complaints from neighbors is how most of them were located.

"These grows also use a great deal of electricity, far more than the residential power grid was designed to deliver to a single residential consumer. Within these houses substandard wiring is the norm, as is extensive damage due to moisture and mold," Sgt. Michael Seligsohn said in a press release. "Frequently structural modifications to the house itself are found in order to accommodate more plants and deliver more water to these plants. The extensive use of chemicals in these grows creates an environmental hazard and in many instances excess chemicals are disposed of through the public utility sewage system creating an added public expense and degrading the water supply. In other instances chemical infused soils have been found dumped in back yards where it runs off onto neighboring properties and it leaches into the ground water creating an environmental hazard."

Proposition 215 allows medicinal marijuana patients to grow for their own needs or people they directly and physically care for. It does not allow growing marijuana as a business.

The fire marshal is also brought out to inspect structures for substandard wiring, water damage, mold, or structural degradation. If there is an issue, power is cut off to the house and the building department will red tag the structure.

In the 12 raids, deputies have seized thousands of plants,

several dozen pounds of processed marijuana, tens of thousands of dollars, and several drug processing laboratories. These grows of 100 to several hundred plants have consumed as much 40 percent of the floor space of a single-family home. In every case the fire marshal's inspection revealed that wiring installed to support the grow was substandard and dangerous.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Prosecution, defense paint differing pictures of Nutting

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

A state prosecutor today opened the trial of El Dorado County Supervisor Ray Nutting by blasting him as a dishonest figure with "trouble following laws" routinely honored by other public officials.

Nutting faces allegations that he improperly hid state income for brush clearing on his family ranch, and Deputy Attorney General Pete Williams railed against the supervisor for casting himself as an advocate for taxpayers while failing to disclose that he is a recipient of public money.

"Mr. Nutting says one thing to the public and does another thing in private," Williams said. "He talks against taxes. He is against government. But he takes state taxpayer money to improve his property and he does it privately without other people knowing."

Nutting's attorney, David Weiner, responded that the supervisor is an honest public official and a dutiful

landowner who applied for state grants to reduce fire danger at the encouragement of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

“When it became clear that CalFire was going to use that money to reduce the dangers of fires, he became an advocate. He used it. He encouraged other people it use it,” said Weiner, who said the supervisor broke no laws. “I guess that’s why they call him a hypocrite.”

Read the whole story