Sierra Cup mountain bike competition at Northstar

The Sierra Cup Mountain Bike Racing Series wraps up the 2011 season on Oct. 2 with the Sawtooth Ridge Challenge at Northstar-at-Tahoe.

The Sierra Cup is a seven race point series to determine the USA Cycling cross-country mountain bike champions for the Northern California/Nevada region.

The Sawtooth Ridge Challenge, like the other Sierra Cup events, is donating event proceeds to bicycle related causes. Benefiting from this race will be the Truckee Trails Foundation and the Northstar/Giant development team. The series events have also partnered with Waste Not in Incline Village to meet or exceed zero-waste standards.

Racers will ride a 7-mile course that was developed by Northstar Resort for last year's Collegiate National Championships. Racers will complete multiple laps of the course depending on their ability category. The course will have a mix of trails that include small features like jumps, berms and technical descents. The climbs are spread out to allow time for riders to recover.

There are age and ability categories for all levels of riders. Custom recycled medals are awarded to the top finishers in each category as well as series points. After the race awards, there will be a podium ceremony for the overall series winners. Besides the regional championship medals from USA Cycling, there is also a $1,500 series purse for top riders.

Online registration is available.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Camp Richardson is looking for votes to be named The Most Awesome Family Resort.

• The 9-hole Tahoe City Golf Course is about to be sold to the Tahoe City Public Utility District for $5 million by the Bechdolt family.

• Joy Doyle, who most recently was ad manager for Northstar-at-Tahoe, is now executive director of the North Tahoe Business Association.

• Foam Fest – the event with more than 40 microbreweries that raises money for the Disabled Sports USA Far West – is Oct. 15 from 7-10:30pm in Truckee. More information is online.

• Michael DeGroff is Squaw Valley's vice president of resort services. Most recently he worked at Steamboat Ski Resort.

Talk focuses on breast health

On Oct. 5 from 5:30-6:30pm, Ahrin Koppel, a doctor at Tahoe Forest Cancer Center, will talk about how "Breast Health, Knowledge is Power".

The free health talk is at the Tahoe Center for Health and

Sports Performance building located at 10710 Donner Pass Road, Truckee.

Koppel will discuss the importance of knowing your family breast history and how to best educate yourself if you are a descendant of a relative who had or has breast cancer. Women aged 40 and older are recommended to have a clinical breast exam and mammogram annually.

Lecture about the art of making art

Saturday Mornings, the award-winning morning discussion and lecture series collaboration of Sierra Nevada College and Incline Village Parks & Recreation Senior Programs continue this fall.

College faculty and other knowledgeable locals present bite-size offerings of intellectually stimulating material to pique people’s interest and challenge their sensibilities.

An optional continental breakfast will be provided for $3.

Rick Parsons, Sierra Nevada College professor of fine arts, has served as Sculpture Program Coordinator at Anderson Ranch Arts Center and has taught at the University of Dallas,and Colorado Mountain College. He has been a visiting artist at Colorado College, San Jose State University, University of Miami, and Arizona State University. His sculpture has been exhibited throughout the country, been featured in solo shows, and in 2007 Rick’s sculpture was the focus of an article in *Sculpture* magazine. He was recently published in the book Confrontational Ceramics: The Artist as Social Critic and was

featured in the documentary film “Questions of Art.”

He he speaks Oct. 15 from 10am-noon at Sierra Nevada College, Prim Library, Room 213, 999 Tahoe Blvd., Incline Village.

For details, contact Debi Noonan at (775) 831.1314, ext. 7420, dnoonan@sierranevada.edu.

Flu shots available to all ages at S. Tahoe senior center

The El Dorado County Health Services Department, Public Health Division is offering a series of low-cost community flu clinics in South Lake Tahoe.

The vaccine to protect against seasonal influenza will be offered at the flu clinics.

The clinics will be at the senior center at 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd., 9am-1pm Sept. 29, Oct. 6, Oct. 13, Oct. 27, and Nov. 10.

High risk individuals are especially encouraged to be vaccinated. High risk people include those over age 60, individuals with chronic health conditions, residents of nursing homes, pregnant women, parents of children under 6 months of age, children 6 months to 4 years of age, health care workers and caregivers.

In addition to the flu shot, the nasal mist is available to ages 2 through 49.

The cost of the flu vaccine is $10, but the fee will be waived if an individual cannot pay. Standard Medicare Part B will be billed for people age 65 and older; Medicare HMOs and other insurance cannot be billed. Seniors must bring their Medicare card to the clinic for billing purposes and parents should bring their child's immunization record.

The Tdap (whooping cough) booster shot and Pneumonia vaccine will also be available at the clinics for $10 per shot.

People who are severely allergic to eggs or egg products, and infants younger than six months of age should not get the vaccine.

Heavenly taking strides to overhaul Cal Base Lodge

By Kathryn Reed

Heavenly Mountain Resort is in the process of having the soil composition for the California Base Lodge and parking lots be reclassified.

This is because a soil report the resort had done a year ago came back with a different analysis compared to what was recorded in the mid-1970s. Besides the soil difference, the latest study says the stream environmental zone at the resort is smaller than originally indicated.

The South Shore resort has long planned to revamp that area. A new lodge and other changes to the acreage are part of the master plan that was approved in 2007 by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the U.S. Forest Service. Because this

lodge and parking are not on Forest Service land that agency is not involved in the current talks.



Heavenly is inching forward with plans invovling the lodge and land at the base of Gunbarrel. Photo/LTN file

TRPA, though, is the agency tasked with reclassifying land designations. A hearing about Heavenly's desires to change things is slated for Sept. 29 at 2pm at TRPA's Stateline headquarters. This is done before a hearings officer.

Mike Cavanaugh, the TRPA planner handling this situation, did not return multiple phone calls.

He is the one who signed the letter dated Sept. 15 that was sent to neighbors alerting them to the hearing about Heavenly's request.

The staff report, which doesn't have a name on it, recommends the hearing officer make the changes Heavenly is asking for.

"This is a step in the process, in the TRPA review process so we can move forward with future planning," Russ Pecoraro, Heavenly's spokesman, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "There may be some mitigation we need to plan for. We want to know what we are

dealing with."

He would not say if a time line exists for redeveloping the outdated lodge and making that entrance to the resort visually more appealing.

"Since it is a scientific prediction and not a verification, TRPA requires all land capability classes be verified on a parcel before a project is permitted. A land capability challenge is one of TRPA's administrative mechanisms for correcting the land capability maps, which are based on the 1972 soil survey," TRPA spokesman Jeff Cowen said. "Heavenly's master plan is an approval of long range concepts, but not of the individual projects. Each project contained in Heavenly's master plan needs to be permitted and fully reviewed as they come forward. Master plan areas don't necessarily have all their land coverage verified prior to proposing a master plan.

"The California Base Lodge parcel never had its land capability verified and the applicant predicted they would need substantial soil testing and expert review, so they chose to forego the verification step and go directly to a land capability challenge, which includes soil boring, test pits, expert review and a public hearing."

Since its creation in 1974 by the TRPA and USFS, the Bailey Land-Capability Classification is the system used to determine what can be built where in the Lake Tahoe Basin based on the soil.

The extensive document says, "For purposes of this study, land tolerance is used as the principal measure of capability. Land capability is in turn defined as the level of use an area can tolerate without sustaining permanent damage through erosion and other causes. Although capability classes are expressed as levels of tolerance, they are estimated by the degree to which potential hazards arising from improper use are absent. (The lower erosion hazard a soil has, the higher its capability

rating for development.)”

In April 2008, Heavenly put more than 400 filters under the 15-acre California Base Lodge parking lot through manhole covers to reduce sediment from flowing into Bijou Creek. They are rated to handle a peak flow of 1-inch of runoff or rain per hour.

A cappella quintet part of TAP’s arts in the schools line up

Tahoe Arts Project kicks off its 25th season with the a cappella quintet The Standards on Oct. 7 at 7pm at MontBleu Theater in Stateline.

The human voice, that’s how it all started for five brothers who shared a passion for music. Singing together at an early age, they began the makings of this one of a kind vocal group, forging a relationship beyond brotherhood.

Hailed as one of the most sought after harmony vocal groups of today, The Standards have enjoyed success worldwide for their unique approach to vocal entertainment. Their shows offer more than just a typical music concert..

The quintet is made up of Morgan Williams, Nathan Williams, Jordon Williams, Nicholas Williams and Quinn.

The Standards will be performing their “Music with a Message” program for South Lake Tahoe students the week of Oct. 3-7 as part of Tahoe Arts Project’s in school performing arts series.

A key element to what makes them appealing to many different age groups is that they primarily sing songs that are known as “Standards.” You know and have heard them. Mix that with a new generation sound and unique style, you have an electrifying combination.

Tickets are $20 for adults, $10 for youth and $15 for seniors and can be purchased in advance at the California and Nevada Visitors Centers in South Lake Tahoe. To charge tickets by phone or for more information, call Tahoe Arts Project at (530) 542.3632 or go online.

S. Tahoe native training with Army in Alaska

By Jason Epperson

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – If soldiers with the 3rd Maneuver Enhancement Brigade are sent to Afghanistan, they’ll have to move equipment over mountains, damaged roads and rough terrain. They have a way to do it: “sling-load” it under helicopters.

Arctic Sappers from the 6th Engineer Battalion (Combat) (Airborne) gave instructions on sling-load operations to soldiers of the 3rd Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Sept. 13 on Bryant Army Airfield, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

“We’re getting real world training for new soldiers in the unit and battalion to get familiarization of how sling-load operations are conducted and the purpose behind them,” explains Sgt. 1st Class Mark L. Gatto, Forward Support Company, 6th Engineer Battalion (Combat) (Airborne). “Today we

are starting off in an intermediate phase. We're trying to train the soldiers that have been trained before and integrate them with soldiers who have never done it before."

Sgt. Jason Williams, a squad leader with the FSC, 6th Engineer Battalion (Combat) (Airborne), gave instructions to the soldiers about the importance of taping the vehicles and using 550 cord to secure items.

"The taping of the vehicles is to shatterproof items like the turn signals, parking lights, all the reflectors, the windshield and mirrors," Williams said. "You tape it to stop it from breaking hopefully, so once it hits the ground, you can put the vehicle back in operation. The tying of some of the equipment is to secure it from falling out and causing injuries to someone on the ground."

Once the soldiers rigged the vehicles and equipment, the Black Hawk UH-60 was ready to conduct the pick-up. Sgt. Bryan Allen, a crew chief with A Company, 1-52 Aviation emphasized the safety measures the flight and ground crew must take.

"It's extremely important for individuals to know the safety aspects of moving equipment underneath the aircraft, learning to maneuver the aircraft to situate us above the load, the calls required between individuals not being able to talk to us and using hand and arm signals and movements," Allen, a native of South Lake Tahoe, said.

Allen who has more than 1,000 hours of recorded flight time, has conducted combat sling-load operations in Afghanistan.

"We did some movement over there, but personnel equipment mainly," Allen said. "Getting MREs, water and other stuff up to different points were it would take a long time to truck and it's more hazardous. It's easier for us to move in by aircraft."

After the 3rd MEB sling-load operations were conducted

successfully, the aviation crew gave a helicopter ride to several of the young soldiers, up to the mud flats north of post.

“It was great training and a great learning experience,” Williams said. “Especially for the different types of equipment you can sling load. Everyone liked it and it was a big thing to get the soldiers up in the helicopter also after doing the sling load. It was a big morale booster. I’d like to continue this training and do it more often.”

“The training was different,” Spc. Ashley Lopez, a paralegal specialist with 3rd Maneuver Enhancement Brigade said. “It was good to get out of the office and into a different kind of environment for training. It’s not what we are used to being in legal, but it was nice to get out there with other soldiers to do these soldiering tasks with the 6th Engineers. It helps give a bigger perspective to what the big Army has to offer besides working in an office environment.”

Jason Epperson is a staff sergeant in the Army.

Retiree benefits for the military could face cuts

By James Dao and Mary Williams Walsh, New York Times

As Washington looks to squeeze savings from once-sacrosanct entitlements like Social Security and Medicare, another big social welfare system is growing as rapidly, but with far less scrutiny: the health and pension benefits of military retirees.

Military pensions and health care for active and retired troops now cost the government about $100 billion a year, representing an expanding portion of both the Pentagon budget – about $700 billion a year, including war costs – and the national debt, which together finance the programs.

Making even incremental reductions to military benefits is typically a doomed political venture, given the public's broad support for helping troops, the political potency of veterans groups and the fact that significant savings take years to appear.

But the intense push in Congress this year to reduce the debt and the possibility that the Pentagon might have to begin trimming core programs like weapons procurement, research, training and construction have suddenly made retiree benefits vulnerable, military officials and experts say.

And if Congress fails to adopt the deficit-reduction recommendations of a bipartisan joint Congressional committee this fall, the Defense Department will be required under debt ceiling legislation passed in August to find about $900 billion in savings over the coming decade. Cuts that deep will almost certainly entail reducing personnel benefits for active and retired troops, Pentagon officials and analysts say.

"We've got to put everything on the table," Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said recently on PBS, acknowledging that he was looking at proposals to rein in pension costs.

Read the whole story

Nevada officials make bear hunt permanent event

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada’s first black bear hunt can continue in future years under regulations unanimously adopted by wildlife officials Saturday.

The Nevada Wildlife Commission, facing one of its most controversial issues in recent memory, voted to make regulations guiding the hunt permanent.

The vote came after critics urged commissioners not to do so, instead asking for an independent review of science indicating that the state’s bear population will support a limited hunt.

Commissioners said they believe that science to be sound.

“I am confident in the science supplied by (the Nevada Department of Wildlife), and that is why I am supporting making this a permanent regulation,” said commission chairman Mike McBeath.

“Our job is to preserve, protect, manage and restore populations of game animals,” McBeath said. “Making this a permanent regulation helps us do that.”

Read the whole story