Bouldering event being launched in Meyers

The inaugural Climbing Festival & Bouldering Competition in Meyers is Sept. 17.

Joshua Welch of Safe Haven Chiropractic in Meyers is spearheading the event so people can watch and learn about the beauty and athleticism of playing on granite.

He says Lake Tahoe bouldering has exploded in the last few years.



Jesse Bonin on Pimp Juice V9. Photo/Jason Hogan

The event is free to attend, with a small fee to compete.

Many climbs will be included in the contest ranging from 5.6 to V10 and beyond. Limited guides will be included in the competition format. The contest is for all ability levels. More than $2,000 in prizes will be awarded.

The free climbing festival starts at 2pm. Get some food, check out climbing booths and meet the athletes. Listen to great music and hang out in the beer garden.

The awards ceremony starts at 4pm, with a bouldering demo competition at 5pm.

More information is online, including how to sign up to compete, or call (530) 577.5433.

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3 Barton doctors to receive philanthropy award

Barton Foundation will honors three doctors with the 2011 Spirit of Philanthropy award. The award is presented each year to an outstanding individual, group or family that has demonstrated extraordinary dedication to the health of the South Lake Tahoe community and in particular to Barton Health.

The foundation is honoring individuals who, since the 1980s, have been giving back to the South Lake community – doctors Paul Rork, Greg Bergner and Brooks Martin. They have given their time and talent to patients, including those less fortunate, and have also actively sponsored, volunteered and participated with many local organizations.

They will be honored at the Festival of Trees and Lights Gala on Dec. 3.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Ninety-six percent of California boaters say their watercraft leak oil most of the time or every time they go out on the water. Here is the boater survey.

• California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson wants U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to provide state schools with immediate relief from what he calls the flawed policies of the No Child Left Behind Act. Here is a copy of the education letter.

• Washoe County sheriff's Capt. Darin Balaam is now commander at the Incline Village substation.

• Kiwanis Club of Tahoe Sierra's annual SeptOberfest is Sept. 23 at 6pm at MontBleu in Stateline. Tickets are $35.

• Geocachers can ride Squaw Valley's cable car up to High Camp to find 10 caches hidden among the mountain's peaks. Geocaching is free with a Cable Car ticket and GPS units are available for rent at the High Camp retail store for $10 per day.

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Opinion: Welfare rules should reflect modern reality

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Aug. 20, 2011, Sacramento Bee.***

For California legislators who want to help the unemployed get back to work and provide relief to financially strapped counties at the same time, Assembly Bill 1182 moves our state in the right direction.

The measure by Assemblyman Roger Hernandez, D-West Covina, would eliminate the $4,650 vehicle asset limit for welfare eligibility. Fifteen other states have already done so. But in California, a person is not eligible for welfare if they own a car worth $4,650 or more, a limit that has not been adjusted in 15 years. It is among the lowest in the nation. Only Texas and Idaho are stingier.

Beyond denying government assistance to needy people, the car asset test imposes a costly burden on counties whose welfare eligibility workers spend an estimated 15 to 30 minutes determining the worth of a car every time they process a CalWORKs application, and again and again at every six-month CalWORKs renewal period.

The rule also hurts people trying to get a job. The lack of reliable transportation is a major barrier to employment. Any car worth $4,650 or less is likely to be a piece of junk, unreliable, constantly in need of repairs.

It's that reality that prompted Assemblyman Kevin Jeffries, R-Lake Elsinore, to break with the majority of his GOP colleagues and vote for the Hernandez bill. Jeffries says he would have preferred a bill that raised the cap, not eliminated it. Nonetheless he voted for it because, he said, "This is California, you need a reliable vehicle to seek work or maintain a job."

Five other Republicans in the Asssembly joined Jeffries to support the bill. Assemblywoman Beth Gaines of Roseville was not one of them.

Read the whole story

Audit: Lax land oversight cost California millions

By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – For 17 years, giant Dow Chemical Co. leased state property near the Bay Area community of Pittsburg without

paying any rent. A boating marina in nearby Crockett has paid nothing for the government parcel it has used since 1989 – while subleasing the land to another firm. A Southern California Gas Co. pipeline runs through 48 acres of the Mojave Desert, but the utility did not pay a dime for five years.

Those businesses and dozens of others have benefited from officials' mismanagement of more than 4 million acres of public land, according to a state audit released Tuesday. The cost to taxpayers could easily be in the tens of millions of dollars, the auditors say, at a time when the state has been forcing teacher layoffs and cutting aid to the poor.

The State Lands Commission, made up of California's lieutenant governor, controller, finance director and a staff of dozens, has failed to perform the basic duties of any landlord – renewing expired leases, keeping rents at market level and evicting delinquent tenants – the study found.

The commission controls river and lake beds, tidelands along the coast and school property, land acquired from the federal government at statehood. But it "has not always managed its more than 4,000 leases in the state's best interest," auditor Elaine Howle wrote to the Legislature, which solicited the report.

The agency didn't collect 22 years of back rent from Ship Ashore Resort, on the California coast just south of Oregon. It failed to raise rents on Red Wolf Lakeside Lodge at Lake Tahoe or on Atlanta-based Georgia-Pacific Gypsum LLC, which leases land on the San Joaquin River in Northern California. Auditors found more than $8 million in lost revenue in the 158 leases they reviewed.

Read the whole story

Barn dance benefits Alpine County firefighters

The 8th Annual Barn Dance and BBQ hosted by Al & Patty Moss in Markleeville is Sept. 10 from 4-9pm.

Proceeds benefit the Eastern Alpine County Fire Department (Woodfords and Markleville) and also the South Tahoe High School football team.

Al Moss and the Rip Tides will be the entertainment.

Tickets are $35 per person and kids under 12 are free. Call Al Moss at (530) 694.2508 for more information.

New leader implements big changes to Calif. National Guard

By Charles Piller, Sacramento Bee

Adjutant General David S. Baldwin returned in April from a tour of duty in Afghanistan to lead the California National Guard – and inherited a force plagued by mismanagement and freighted with scandal.

Neglect had reduced Camp Roberts, a giant training site near San Luis Obispo, to decrepitude. An auditor had accused Guard

members of skimming extra fire-duty pay. And a criminal inquiry had been launched into pilots who allegedly enriched themselves by violating safety rules. Baldwin's two immediate predecessors were under investigation for improper double dipping — two days' pay for a single day of work.

Dwarfing those problems, an estimated $100 million in dubious or illegal payments to Army Guard members had been made from incentive funds meant to boost recruiting and retention of soldiers. That alleged fraud — like the other cases, exposed in recent *Bee* investigations — is the subject of a major criminal probe by four federal agencies, including the FBI and IRS.

"The problems were monumental," said Baldwin. He said they had to be tackled without neglecting the Guard's responsibilities to serve in overseas wars and respond to local emergencies.

To reform a culture that had "lost its focus on the value of selfless service," Baldwin dismissed past leaders and said he installed others who have fought in today's wars and experienced their soldiers' sacrifices.

Baldwin also has moved aggressively to address the Guard's ethical lapses, particularly in the Recruiting and Retention Command. He's trying to recoup millions of dollars paid to Guard members improperly or illegally, and, under his command, three recruiting leaders were removed from their posts.

Brig. Gen. Charlotte L. Miller was ousted from the Guard altogether because, Baldwin said, "I had lost faith, trust and confidence in her abilities as a senior leader." Miller declined to comment.

Col. Diana L. Bodner and Lt. Col. Jodee A. Rowe were shifted into jobs with less responsibility. Each of them declined to comment, other than denying wrongdoing.

Baldwin also has tackled ongoing graft and extravagance that

suggested a stubborn culture of impunity.

He removed Command Sgt. Maj. Bobby L. Rollins, a top assistant to Rowe, from full-time employment in the Guard for involvement in recent schemes that improperly rewarded recruiters with gift cards and Apple iPads — and for intimidating a subordinate who pushed back against the order, according to an official report obtained by the *Bee*.

Rollins did not respond to requests for comment.

Guard officials said four other officers involved in the iPad scam, whom they declined to name, were reprimanded, fired from their full-time jobs and removed from recruiting duties. On appeal, two were retained outside of recruiting.

Finally, Baldwin canceled an extravagant conference for recruiters and their families, planned at a Lake Tahoe resort, that Guard members likened to an extended party.

He voiced frustration that his crackdown has been delayed by the need to cooperate with a slow-moving federal investigation, whose officials seized most of the incentive-fraud evidence. But Baldwin said he already knows enough to identify the genesis of the problems: “Incredible pressure that came from above” to increase Guard membership.

Read the whole story

Sheriff’s volunteers add manpower to streets of El

Dorado County

By Kathryn Reed

Walking around the house they look to see if the doors and windows are secure – that no one, not even a bear – has broken in.

It's all part of the job – these checks on homes where people are on vacation or the house is for sale. (It's free for the homeowner.)

Dick and Joan Young are two of the 20-member Sheriff's Team of Active Retirees. They don't carry guns. A radio is their biggest weapon, so to speak. Had there been something amiss at this house off North Upper Truckee they would have radioed it into dispatch so a deputy could take over.

"STARs are our eyes and ears. They are not our hands and feet," is how El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Les Lovell puts it. "It's a volunteer program to assist the sheriff's office with providing services to the community."



Joan Young checks on a house to make sure it is secure. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Although the program started in 1994, the Youngs have been doing it for a handful of years, with Dick starting first.

Two people always are in the vehicle at the same time – acting as partners for each other like sworn officers do.

They put in about 16 hours a month. This particular Thursday the South Lake Tahoe couple is on a four-hour patrol shift. Another team had taken a morning shift.

No two days are alike – just like with sworn personnel. They might be asked to take a vehicle to Placerville or a local shop for repairs. Perhaps it's another sort of delivery between the offices.

Lovell says the STAR volunteers allow deputies to be patrolling the streets – doing more critical law enforcement work.

While some might say STAR volunteers do the more mundane things in terms of all the duties involved in operating a sheriff's department, there is excitement.

A few years ago when a man put a gun to his head in the middle of Riverside Avenue it was STAR volunteers who put their vehicle in the middle of traffic to stop people from getting closer.

Traffic patrol is a big thing for these volunteers. They helped out during the Angora Fire of 2007, too.

No one tells them where they have to go unless there is an emergency. The Youngs have been called up to the parking lot at Vikingsholm to clear the lot so a helicopter on a search and rescue mission could land there.

Most people, though, have probably seen these men and women at special events. They had a booth at the air show Aug. 27 at Lake Tahoe Airport in addition to being responsible for parking cars.



Dick Young drives through El Dorado County looking for possible trouble.

Before the air show this year the hours STAR volunteers in the basin have put in are:

• Administration-reception – 135

• Patrolling – 1,060.5

• Station meetings – 294.5

• Cape Program – 56

• Special Events – 254

Total hours – 1,800.

Special events they help with run the gamut from providing overnight security for the Fine Arts Festival to working on the Drug Store Project to being at veterans events to providing security on Election Day.

Dick Young said it’s never boring; just some days are slower than others.

His wife likes being able to drive around to parts of the county she wouldn’t otherwise see.

On this day they drive through the North Upper Truckee area to

Tahoe Mountain Road, around Angora Highlands, down to Fallen Leaf Road and into two U.S. Forest Service operated beaches.

They notice traffic has slowed and the beaches are less crowded. So many schools are back in session.

But with Lake Tahoe Unified students returning to school this week it will mean being visible around bus routes. STAR volunteers take down the license plate numbers of drivers not obeying the flashing red lights or speed limits in school zones.

While no law enforcement background is needed to be a STAR, they take on the traits of seasoned officers.

“The one thing I’ve learned is you do a lot of looking,” Dick Young said. “You pick up on things that are not in order, like a window that is broken out.”

To be a STAR volunteer you must be at least 50 years old and not be a felon. Then you must go to a two-week STAR academy that is about four hours a day, five days week. For more information, call Sgt. Pete Van Arnum at (530) 573.3002.

Opinion: Garden tour committee thankful for successful event

To the community,

The Lake Tahoe Historical Society’s 8th annual garden tour was a success despite a very late spring and a long, cold winter.

We lost one large and lovely garden due to storm damage, and we thank our homeowners who persevered and worked hard to present their gardens.

Thanks you also to our many garden attendants and to our garden centers who supported us once again.

LTCC generously allowed us to show their demonstration garden and patio, and many thanks to Harrah’s/Harveys for refreshments.

Thank you to Dirk Yuricich who gave us the beautiful photo for our flyers and a framed photo “won” by a local USFS employee.

Finally, our gratitude to all the people who bought tickets, which keeps our museum alive.

If you would like to “nominate” a garden for next year, call us at (530) 541.8526.

Thank you,

Catherine Whelan, Lynne Bajuk and committee