Construction begins on first student union at STHS

By Kathryn Reed

Five years ago when Ivone Larson became principal of South Tahoe High School her dream was to get rid of the building in the middle of campus that originally housed the auto and wood shops.

That wish came true this summer. And an even bigger dream was realized Monday with the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Student Union. The nearly 20,000-square-foot L shaped building should be ready for students for the 2012-13 school year.



A year from now a student union will cover the dirt at South Tahoe High School. Photo/LTN

No one was particularly fond of the structure.

“The shop building was the biggest piece of crap on this campus,” architect Steve Newsom said.

He added the new building will “reinforce the pedestrian traffic spine here. Ultimately, it would be great if that were

a covered walk.”

The structure is a joint endeavor between Lake Tahoe Unified and South Lake Tahoe because of the grant from the state to fund the building that is situated behind the gym and in front of the Stadium View building.

The city will have access to meeting room space, which is something the town lacks. The three rooms may be opened into one.

In 2008 when voters passed Measure G, the school facilities bond, the budget called for $3.5 million to renovate the building. Then the prospect of the joint use grant from the state surfaced and was applied for. That brought in $4 million in matching funds.

Now the budget for the Student Union is $9.5 million. This is a rendering of the Student Union.

“This will pull people together,” Superintendent Jim Tarwater said July 25 during the festivities.

This will be the first time there will be room to feed all the students. Plus, it gives them a gathering spot instead of being dispersed throughout the campus.

Tarwater said the student culinary arts program would be able to provide breakfast and lunch fare for meetings and events, with the district’s food services backing up the students.

Nothing of the old building remains. It’s a dirt plot waiting for a foundation. About 75 percent of the structure was able to be recycled at South Tahoe Refuse.

This will be the final entirely new building to be erected at South Tahoe High.

The sports medicine facility will be an 8,000-square-foot addition to the gym. Plans for it are headed to state agencies

next week for approval.

In addition to the ground breaking, city and school district officials also toured the Theater Arts and Design Academy that will open next month at the start of the 2011-12 school year.

Expect the first performance in the new theater this winter – probably in December.

Barton Hospital turns to Disney for lesson in guest services

By Phil Galewitz, Kaiser Health News

Barton Memorial Hospital sent its 900 employees back to school in June to learn how to provide better service. Their instructor: The Walt Disney Co.



“Disney understands guest services,” said Kathy Cocking, Barton’s vice president of operations. “And we’re not as good as we want to be.”

In classes at the hospital, two Disney consultants taught employees how to think more creatively and improve their attitudes toward their jobs. They stressed that patients want not just good clinical care, but personal attention, too.

Barton is one of a growing number of hospitals seeking help from the entertainment giant whose theme parks and resorts are

famed for meticulous landscaping and rigid employee service standards.

Since October at least 25 hospitals have signed on for multi-year consulting agreements that can include visits to Disney World to observe customer service operations as well as employee training sessions at the hospitals, said spokeswoman Stacey Thomson.

Disney officials attribute the increase in health consulting business to a provision in the new federal health law that requires Medicare payments to hospitals in 2012 reflect patient satisfaction ratings.

Medicare has been publishing patient satisfaction scores on its Hospital Compare website since 2008. Starting in October 2012, Medicare will begin withholding 1 percent of its payments to hospitals. That money – $850 million in the first year – will go into a pool to be doled out as bonuses to hospitals that score above average on several measures, including patient satisfaction.

“Everyone understands these scores will impact our livelihood and our future,” Cocking said. “That’s why we had Disney come here.”

In response to advice from Disney, the South Lake Tahoe has revamped its employees’ dress code, improved its landscaping and changed its hiring to focus on applicants’ attitudes, she said.

Read the whole story

Camp during meteor shower

The Perseids meteor shower comes every year beginning in late July and stretching into August. On Aug. 12, camp under the stars and watch the night sky light up at Squaw Valley High Camp.

On this night, sky watchers can witness colorful fireballs, occasional outbursts and long hours of gracefully streaking meteors.

Perseid Meteor Shower campers can upload the Cable Car between 5-6:30pm. Upon arriving at High Camp, guests have the option of starting off the evening with a self-led sunset hike around Squaw Valley's upper mountain peaks or eating dinner at the resort's mountaintop café (not included in price). Following, there will be an informational briefing on telescopes as well as campfire activities, with meteor shower viewing beginning at 10pm. In the morning is a continental breakfast from 7:30-8:30am before downloading the Cable Car.

Reservations for the Perseid Meteor Shower Campout are required and this event does sell out. Those interested in more information or in making reservations may call (530) 583.6985.

Cost is $75 for adults, $50 for children 15 and younger.

South Shore meeting about Measure R

The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers

Authority will have its regular annual meeting July 29 at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.

At 10:30am, the JPA will adjourn into a continued special meeting from July 13 to further discuss Measure R, the revision of Measure S that will be on the Nov. 8 ballot. Measure R discussion will include a proposed ballot argument in favor of Measure R, and the process and schedule for appointing Bicycle and Fields Advisory committees. The committees would be appointed if voters approve Measure R.

Wildfire burning in Alpine County

Updated July 25 4:40pm:

The Airport Fire burning north of Markleeville is now estimated at 80 acres, but officials said fire crews on the scene should be able to contain the blaze.

The fire, which started about 1:15pm, is burning in the Indian Creek Reservoir area. The Indian Creek Campground facilities and Alpine County Airport facilities were evacuated, but there were no structures being threatened.

The fire was holding at 80 acres, and crews were making good progress on knocking it down, Sierra Front Interagency Dispatch Center spokesman Helen Frazier said.

_____

By Reno Gazette-Journal

As of 2:15pm the Indian Creek Fire had grown to 70 acres and

is burning uncontrolled with no estimate of control or containment, according to the Sierra Front Fire Protection District.

The fire in Alpine County south of Gardnerville required the evacuation of Indian Creek Campground and the Alpine County Airport facilities.

The fire is being battled by 10 engines, three air tankers, one helicopter and three hand crews.

Read the whole story

Author Borg releases next thriller based in Lake Tahoe

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

Owen McKenna is at it again, which means Todd Borg is at it again, as well.

McKenna is a fictional detective who bailed out of the San Francisco PD and is living on the east side of Lake Tahoe, fated to end up trying to solve twisty murder mysteries.

Borg, meanwhile, is McKenna's inventor, and he's just come up with the latest chapter in the detective's life, "Tahoe Hijack," (Thriller Press, $16.95 paperback) the ninth in a series of Tahoe-based mysteries.



South Lake Tahoe author Todd Borg has released another book. Photo/LTN file

“I’ve learned from feedback and emails, people will tell me what they love about the books and that teaches me about the unspoken covenants of authors with readers,” said the Lake Tahoe resident. “It makes it so I have to deliver within the range of expectations readers have, but I still have to surprise them. I have to come up with new surprises, but I can’t stretch too far or they’ll be disappointed.

“I can’t kill off a main character or hurt Spot,” he said. “In ‘Tahoe Killshot,’ Spot was shot; he was banged up. I heard from readers.”

Read the whole story

Special Vikingsholm tour

Emerald Bay State Park offers a behind-the-scenes tour of Vikingsholm Castle and talk with longtime park historian Helen Smith, who frequented the property as a child, on July 28 from 6-8pm as part of their Conversations with History’s program. Tickets are $40/person.

Court allows USFS to log in Angora burn area

Updated July 25 at 1:30pm:

The U.S. Forest Service today was given approval by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to begin logging the Angora burn when judges denied an emergency injunction sought by conservation groups.

_____

U.S. Forest Service officials intend this week to begin removing dead trees from the Angora burn area on the South Shore.

In documents filed Friday with the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, the agency says it is not required to ensure black-backed woodpeckers have adequate habitat in Lake Tahoe.

Earth Island Institute's John Muir Project and the Center for Biological Diversity say otherwise.

They have sought an injunction to prevent the $3 million, 1,398-acre project from continuing after losing in U.S. District Court.

The Forest Service owns most of the 3,000-plus acres that were burned in the June 2007 Angora Fire. The federal agency contends removing a bulk of the trees will help prevent a future catastrophic fire and is the next step in its restoration plans.

The conservation groups believe preserving the woodpeckers' habitat needs to be addressed before the logging can begin –

if ever.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Troublesome bears keep Nevada authorities busy

Nevada Department of Wildlife officials have been busy in the last 24 hours dealing with bears in Lake Tahoe and Carson City.

A bear wondering around the Raley's shopping center off Highway 28 in Incline Village on Sunday was killed by wildlife officials. They said this was necessary because it was the third time the bear had been deemed a nuisance.

In Carson City this morning, authorities tranquilized a mom and two cubs caught in a trap on West Washington Street. The trap had been set the night before when the animals were seen in the neighborhood.

Officials are trying to determine if the mama bear has caused problems before. If not, all three could be released Tuesday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tahoe's Ritz-Carlton bought

by lending group

By Mark Anderson, Sacramento Business Journal

The lending group that held the note on the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe bought the note for $85.5 million in a foreclosure auction Monday morning at the Placer County Courthouse.

Bank of America, primary lender on the development, first filed a notice of default on the property in March 2010. In that notice last year, the bank claimed Highlands Hotel Co. LLC was $18.6 million in default on the hotel and a neighboring parcel. The default involved two loans totaling $157 million.



Ritz-Carlton at Northstar has new owners. Photo/LTN file

The luxury hotel opened Dec. 9, 2009 to what was a good ski season but also the depths of recession.

Read the whole story