Survey: Most small businesses operate out of owner's home

More than half (51.6 percent) of all businesses that responded to the 2007 Survey of Business Owners were operated primarily from someone's home in 2007, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau released this month.

Only 6.9 percent of these home-based businesses had $250,000 or more in receipts, while 57.1 percent of home-based businesses brought in less than $25,000. About 23.8 percent of employer respondent businesses and 62.9 percent of nonemployer respondent businesses were home-based.

"Most businesses are started by people who dig into their own pockets for at least some of their start-up capital," Census Bureau Deputy Director Thomas Mesenbourg said in a statement. "This is true for both firms with employees and those without them. Furthermore, more than one in five (20.8 percent) of respondent businesses used no start-up capital at all."

Roughly three in 10 (30.6 percent) of the respondent firms that required start-up capital launched their business with less than $5,000. Of the firms that needed start-up capital, 17.5 percent of employer firms needed less than $5,000; for nonemployer firms, the figure was 35.8 percent. At the other end of the spectrum, 1.5 percent of the firms needing start-up capital required $1 million or more for this purpose.

Other highlights from the reports include:

· In 2007, more than half of women-owned businesses (58.2 percent) and equally men- and women-owned businesses (58.1 percent) were home-based; for businesses owned by men, the figure was 49.1 percent.

· Most nonminority-owned (54.4 percent) and equally minority-

and nonminority-owned firms (56 percent) were home-based, while 46.5 percent of minority-owned firms were home-based.

· Among firms with payroll any time during 2007, 75.4 percent had full-time paid employees and 58 percent had part-time paid employees. In addition, 5.3 percent of employer firms used paid day laborers; 7.3 percent used staff from a temporary help service; 1.3 percent used leased employees; and 36.1 percent used contractors, subcontractors, independent contractors or outside consultants.

· About 2.1 percent of all firms operated as a franchised business.

· E-commerce sales were reported by only 6.6 percent of firms.

· About 28.2 percent of firms were family-owned.

· About 62.9 percent of owners reported working 40 or more hours per week in their business; the same was true for 34.3 percent of owners of nonemployer firms.

· Business owners were well educated: 50.8 percent of owners of respondent firms had a college degree.

· About 36.5 percent of owners were 55 or older, with another 29.6 percent between the ages of 45 and 54. On the other hand, 31.7 percent of owners of firms were between the ages of 25 and 44 and only 2.2 percent were younger than 25.

The Survey of Business Owners is conducted every five years as part of the economic census. The 2007 survey collected data from a sample of more than 2.3 million businesses.

Toddler survives fall from S. Tahoe window

A South Lake Tahoe 3-year-old girl who fell out of a second floor window has been released from Renown Medical Center in Reno.

Police responded to an apartment at 1801 Lake Tahoe Blvd. at 9:25pm July 9. The toddler was airlifted from the scene by Careflight to Reno.

At this time no foul play is expected, according to police Sgt. Josh Adler. However, the investigation is ongoing.

– Kathryn Reed

Free Lake Tahoe celebrity golf tickets

Lake Tahoe News has tickets to the July 12-17 annual American Century Celebrity Golf Tournament at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.



All *Lake Tahoe News* subscribers are eligible to win. If you aren't a subscriber, it's free. Just enter your email address at the bottom right of the home page.

The winner of the pair of tickets must answer the question below and then the winner will be picked randomly from those

who respond:

What is your favorite memory of one the previous 21 celebrity golf tournaments at Lake Tahoe?

Tahoe man caught in CalPERS scandal knows his wine

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Alfred Villalobos might be in hot water over his dealings at CalPERS, but the man knows his wine.

The Lake Tahoe businessman, implicated in the pension fund's bribery scandal, is selling his French wine collection to an Orange County wine merchant for $160,000.

The collection consists of 300 bottles of Bordeaux, at an average price of $533. The sale to Hi-Time Wine Cellars of Costa Mesa was approved by a U.S. bankruptcy judge in Reno earlier this week.

Josh Hoover, operations manager and French wine buyer at Hi-Time, said the Villalobos collection consists of "great wines, not blow-you-away type of wines. … It's a very nice collection."

Read the whole story

Diabetes becoming a disease of the young

By Mary Brophy Marcus, Reno Gazette-Journal

Some people say aiming to look sleek in your swimsuit or wedding duds is the biggest motivator for losing weight. But Mike Durbin's incentive for dropping pounds beats all.

Three years ago, at age 24, Durbin's doctor told him he had type 2 diabetes and congestive heart failure. More than 300 pounds at the time, Durbin knew that if he didn't take action, he faced the possibility of an early death.

"I was probably pushing about 340 when I was first diagnosed. As far as the physical changes go, within about three months or so of being diagnosed I dropped about 40 pounds," said Durbin, of Fort Wayne, Ind., who takes a dozen medications now.

Always a meat-and-potatoes kind of guy, he said he had to learn to eat in moderation and now opts for sugar-free foods more often.

The experience has changed how he looks at his personal life, too. Durbin and his girlfriend of nine years postponed the idea of marriage, and he is not sure about starting a family.

"I don't like the thought that I could have a kid, and he could end up with diabetes down the road. And one of the troubling thoughts I have is if something were to happen to me, (his girlfriend) would be left alone as a mother. You really have to stop and think about these things," Durbin said.

Read the whole story

CalPERS fraud case against Tahoe businessman can proceed

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

For nearly a year, Alfred Villalobos has been able to use the bankruptcy laws to sidestep a state lawsuit accusing him of bribing officials at the California Public Employees' Retirement System.

Now California officials have won the right to pursue the $95 million case against Villalobos.

A federal judge in Reno has ruled that the Lake Tahoe businessman can be sued over fraud allegations by the California attorney general's office, even though he has filed for bankruptcy protection.

"This is a great victory for law enforcement, and we're moving forward," said Lynda Gledhill, a spokeswoman for Attorney General Kamala Harris.

But a bankruptcy law expert, Lynn LoPucki, said it's unclear whether the state could collect any money from Villalobos even if it wins the lawsuit. That's because Villalobos' assets would normally be controlled by the bankruptcy judge and would be divided among all of his creditors, LoPucki said.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Tahoe Tallac Association committed to keeping culture alive

By Ginger Nicolay-Davis

On behalf of the nonprofit Tahoe Tallac Association, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the numerous volunteers and supporters of our efforts to keep the arts and culture alive in South Lake Tahoe. As president of the TTA board, I can attest to our ongoing financial challenges and that our board members continue to do the best job possible with the limited resources available. We, like so many organizations in town, have been hit hard by the current economic reality. Arts grants across the country are scarce and our board members consistently seek effective ways to bring in funding.



In the spirit of volunteerism and to help keep the annual Valhalla festival going, we, like previous board members over the past 30 years, are up for the challenge to secure funds. The work we do is a real labor of love – from our board, staff, volunteers, and our partner, the U.S. Forest Service – and this is why we are in it for countless hours. We are grateful for the new local Forest Service administration, as they've been working with us diligently to help us through our current financial situation.

As many of you know, the Valhalla site is a true gem in our community and most appreciate the unique talent offered in the summer festival line-up. When people step onto our site and into our theater, they tell us they're in awe of the experience. It connects them to performing arts, culture, the environment and beauty of Lake Tahoe. What most don't realize are the day-to-day, behind-the-scenes efforts to raise the

critical and necessary funding to keep the effort going. This is our ongoing reality and challenge as a nonprofit performing arts entity.

Losing board members can be difficult as we all aim for the higher goal of keeping our amazing site open and available to the community for the arts, culture, and historical preservation – this is our mission. It is with this mission in mind that we would like to continue the dialogue and invite more people in our community to participate with ideas, volunteerism, and financial contributions. Only together can we be successful. We thank you for your support over the years to help make TTA work and look forward to providing many more years of performing arts at this site.

Ginger Nicolay-Davis is president of the Tahoe Tallac Association.

CalFire: Planning for a fire could save life and property

Publisher's note: ***This is the second of three articles from the Amador-El Dorado Unit of CalFire regarding the "Ready-Set-Go!" fire and life safety campaign.***

By Teri Mizuhara

CAMINO – Making sure your family and your home is set for an approaching wildfire and a possible evacuation is the second part of CalFire's Ready-Set-Go fire safety program.

"Right now is a good time to review your evacuation plan (Wildfire Action Plan) with your family. Don't wait until the

smoke is swirling around your home because by then it is too late," Kelly Keenan, CalFire's Amador-El Dorado unit chief, says. "Practicing your evacuation plan now if you have one or creating an evacuation plan and practicing it now will ensure a much smoother departure in the face of a wildfire or other major emergency. Failing to plan is planning to fail. Are you willing to risk the health and welfare of your family?"

If an evacuation is imminent, have your evacuation kit(s) and other valuables in your car. Have your car backed into your driveway with your doors and windows closed (this way you can drive forward out of your driveway). Keep your family and pets close by. Dress in appropriate clothing (natural fibers versus man-made fabrics), have goggles and a mask to protect you from the smoke. Alert your family and neighbors. Drink plenty of water and stay tuned to your local television/radio stations and news websites for updated news.

If time allows, prepare the interior of your home by doing the following:

• Shut off gas at the meter and turn off all pilot lights.

• Leave your lights on in the house so firefighters can see your home through the smoke.

• Shut all your windows and doors; be sure to leave the doors unlocked.

• Remove flammable curtains and window shades. Close metal shutters.

• Move furniture to the middle of the room, away from window and doors.

• Shut off your air conditioning.

Then prepare the exterior of your home:

• Move flammable items such as patio furniture, door mats, and children’s toys inside the house or far away from the side of your house.

• Shut off your propane tank.

• Do not leave your sprinklers on; they deplete the local water pressure.

• Leave your exterior lights on.

• Seal exterior vents if time permits.

Survival tips if you are trapped:

• Stay calm, do not panic. Focus on what you need to do to survive.

• Shelter yourself and your family members away from outside walls.

• Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers.

• Stay hydrated. Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply.

• Place wet towels under doors to keep embers and smoke out.

• Make sure you can exit your home if it catches fire but remember that it will be four to five times hotter outside than inside your home.

“It is always best to leave your home well ahead of the wildfire. Roads quickly become clogged with vehicles (people evacuating and emergency service equipment responding to the fire) and the smoked filled air can cause people to become disoriented and panic. Protect your loved ones and get set today and rest easy tonight because it is not a matter of if a wildfire will happen but when a wildfire will occur,” warns Keenan.

For more detailed information on what you have read, visit CalFire's website www.readyforwildfire.org or call (530) 644.2345 to receive a free brochure on the Ready-Set-Go program and evacuation tips for your family and pets.

Hotel Internet charges add up for travelers

By Christopher Elliott

As I reviewed my hotel bill at Harveys Lake Tahoe recently, I noticed something unusual: Instead of charging me $11 a day for wireless Internet, they were asking for three times as much.

"This can't be right," I told the clerk.

She called a manager, who firmly explained it was right: Harveys charges for wireless access not by room, but by device. Although it isn't disclosed on its website, it is on the terms and conditions when you log in. I had glossed over it when I got online.

As for reducing my bill, the manager was equally firm in his "no": The property outsourced its Internet to another company, and if I didn't pay, Harveys would be on the hook for the full amount. The bill was paid, but I'm still puzzled that it could cost more to check email than to park my car.

A survey by market research firm BDRC suggests wireless Internet costs British hotel guests $2.2 billion a year. Best Western, which offers free wireless access, released those numbers last week along with a petition to give guests free

access.

The average hotel guest now pays an average of $22 for wireless access, according to BDRC. The study also noted that some hotels that used to offer free access have now reverted to a paid model. At the same time, the need for a reliable wireless connection has “surged” in recent years, according to Tim Sander, BDRC’s research director.

Christopher Elliott is the ombudsman for National Geographic Traveler magazine.

Read the whole story

More people going to celeb golf event for free

Congratulations to Ron Zehren, Irene Kaelin and Cathy Vogelgesong – they are all going to next week’s celebrity golf tournament courtesy of *Lake Tahoe News*.



They all know Aaron Rodgers has won $21,932 at the tournament to date.

There will be one more opportunity to win tickets via *LTN* on Sunday. The winners will be announced Monday.