Great stage performances belie reality of Tallac Assoc.

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – The Tahoe Tallac Association board and staff could take some pointers from the characters on stage at the Boathouse Theatre.

The five woman starring in the play "Dixie Swim Club" are fabulous in how they capture the nuances of a friendship born in college that lasts into their 70s when there are only four of them left.



Sheree Hollinger (Teri Leve), right, consoles Jeri Neal McFelley (Amy Sando) who is the least likely of the friends to become pregnant. Photo/Kathryn Reed

They laugh, they yell, they console, they cry, they endure – they find a way to make their lives work as individuals and as a team.

The behind the scenes maneuverings of the Tahoe Tallac Association – the 30-plus-year-old organization that oversees the annual Valhalla Music and Arts Festival – does not resemble a team.

Lake Tahoe News in September reported the financial difficulties the South Shore organization was having.

It's only gotten worse. Grants have not been secured – which is the major source of income to pay the acts, employees and keep the lights on. Marketing seems to be a foreign word to the group. Press releases are sent by the acts coming, if at all, not the association – which makes for a lack of cohesive message or no message.

A once robust volunteer corps was not to be seen July 8 on the second night of "Dixie Swim Club." Instead it was Executive Director Lori Cramer selling tickets. Volunteers used to receive regular emails about when to sign up for work detail. That hasn't happened this year.

Unfortunately the realities of TTA sound more like the ingredients board member and theatrical director Dave Hamilton could write into a script. Instead, he and those left behind must figure out a way to dig themselves out of financial hole that seems to keep sucking them under.

On July 7, Eric Taxer resigned from the board. Last month the board met without the executive director – a highly unusual move. The next meeting, presumably with the board and staff, is July 11 at 5:30pm – most likely in the Twin Cabins in front of the Valhalla Grand Hall.

In Taxer's letter to the board that was obtained by *Lake Tahoe News* he writes, "We will be starting our new Fiscal Year with

approximately $38,000 of debt. The only immediate source of income with the new fiscal year will be the holiday faire and gala, expected to generate $12,000 in income. But, we will have snow removal expenses, winterization expenses, continued insurance, utilities, and payroll. I have repeated in prior meetings for over a year the importance of fundraisers. I have stepped up to the plate and organized such. Other members who have committed to do so have basically bailed on their responsibility."

If the workings of the nonprofit, which is run by a volunteer board and an executive director who is owed thousands of dollars is back pay, were near the caliber of the programs put on at the various venues near the shore of Lake Tahoe, it would have coffers overflowing with greenbacks.

Cramer is the TTA's fifth executive director. She was a board member before taking over for Steve Farnsley, whose services the board said it no longer needed. Before Farnsley it was Kathy Farrell at the helm. She embezzled from the organization, though the board chose not to press charges.

Hamilton and Taxer have loaned the association thousands of dollars that have yet to be repaid.

The remaining board members, according the TTA website, are: Norm Glenn, Hamilton, Ginger Nicolay-Davis (who is worth catching in one of the remaining six performances of "Dixie Swim Club"), Bruce Rettig, Frank Riley (catch him with Tahoe Improv Players on Aug. 2), Pam Taylor and Kim Wyatt.

Nicolay-Davis and Cramer were sent an email last week by *Lake Tahoe News* asking some general questions – nothing about the financial situation. That day, July 1, Nicolay-Davis responded, "We will get info over to you shortly." The deadline to answer was July 7. *Lake Tahoe News* never received answers to its basic questions – Like what is new this year?

One thing *LTN* knows is new is greater access to the lawn area

– including free concerts on select dates.

Another new thing is better dialogue with the U.S. Forest Service, which owns the land just beyond Camp Richardson. Taxer deserves a great deal of credit for being tenacious in researching documents and getting the appropriate people to listen. When Deputy Forest Supervisor Jeff Marsolais was hired he helped foster an atmosphere of cooperation between landlord and tenant.

While the board figures out how to function more effectively, the shows will go on. Here is this year's festival schedule.

Report: Parole officers failed to supervise Garrido

By Robert Salonga, Contra Costa Times

A newly released report reads like a laundry list of oversights by agents charged with monitoring Phillip Garrido's federal parole in the 1990s, when he kidnapped and began his 18-year imprisonment of Jaycee Dugard.

The confidential review released Friday by James Ware, chief district judge for the Bay Area, was meant to bring attention to improvements made in monitoring parolees still under federal watch.

Written in December, it echoes a 2010 audit of Garrido's supervision by state parole agents, outlining a general lack of close supervision of the now imprisoned two-time kidnapper and rapist.

Among the report's criticisms are that agents:

- Downplayed repeated drug violations and substituted therapists' assessments for their own
- Never made sure Garrido registered as a sex offender
- Kept such loose track of him that when he started habitually raping the captive Dugard in 1991, his parole check-ins were at the agents' office rather than his home near Antioch.

Garrido was the charge of federal officers between 1988, when he was released from prison for the 1976 kidnapping and rape of a South Lake Tahoe woman, and 1999, when his parole was transferred to the state.

Read the whole story

Laurel Lake hike worth the effort, detour

By Adam Blauert, Sacramento Bee

To John Muir, the Sierra Nevada was "The Range of Light." This year, it has become "The Range of Water."

The waterfalls are better than ever. Creeks and rivers are running higher and faster than they have in years. Meadows are flooded and water plummets, splashes and drips down nearly every rock face.

On a few parts of the Tioga Pass Road the runoff is overloading the culverts and flowing onto the road. Not enough to close the road, but enough to make drivers cautious. While this week's high temperatures will melt more snow, many popular areas are still difficult to reach.

Last weekend my buddy John and I backpacked to Laurel Lake on the northwestern edge of Yosemite. At 6,490 feet, this large pine-ringed lake is peaceful and just warm enough for a comfortable swim. It’s a good destination for a year when snow lingers in the higher elevations.

The easiest access point is from Lake Eleanor. The road is paved up to Cherry Lake, but becomes gravel and dirt as you cross the dam. Follow signs for another three miles to a parking area just outside the park boundary. The final mile is rough and high clearance is needed.

Read the whole story

DAs get cash to fight workers comp fraud

By Darrell Smith, Sacramento Bee

Sacramento-area district attorneys will get more than $1.4 million in state grants to fight workers compensation insurance fraud in 2011-2012, the state Insurance Commissioner’s office announced Tuesday.

Sacramento County will receive $900,000. El Dorado County was awarded $330,000. Yolo County will get $245,960.

The grant awards total $32 million to DAs across California and will fund fraud investigations and prosecutions. The funding still must be approved in the final state budget, insurance officials said.

Read the whole story

Stoned driving is uncharted territory

By Ralph Vartabedian, Los Angeles Times

It was his green tongue that helped give away Jimmy Candido Flores when police arrived at the fatal accident scene near Chico.



Flores had run off the road and killed a jogger, Carrie Jean Holliman, a 56-year-old Chico elementary school teacher. California Highway Patrol officers thought he might be impaired and conducted a sobriety examination. Flores' tongue had a green coat typical of heavy marijuana users and a later test showed he had pot, as well as other drugs, in his blood.

After pleading guilty to manslaughter, Flores, a medical marijuana user, was sentenced in February to 10 years and 8 months in prison.

Holliman's death and others like it across the nation hint at what experts say is an unrecognized crisis: stoned drivers.

The most recent assessment by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, based on random roadside checks, found that 16.3% of all drivers nationwide at night were on various legal and illegal impairing drugs, half them high on marijuana.

In California alone, nearly 1,000 deaths and injuries each year are blamed directly on drugged drivers, according to CHP data, and law enforcement puts much of the blame on the rapid

growth of medical marijuana use in the last decade. Fatalities in crashes where drugs were the primary cause and alcohol was not involved jumped 55% over the 10 years ending in 2009.

“Marijuana is a significant and important contributing factor in a growing number of fatal accidents,” said Gil Kerlikowske, director of National Drug Control Policy in the White House and former Seattle police chief. “There is no question, not only from the data but from what I have heard in my career as a law enforcement officer.”

Read the whole story

Caltrans expects traffic delays next week near Truckee

Caltrans is alerting motorists that pavement repairs may delay traffic in Truckee the week of July 11 crews repair pavement at various locations on highways 89 and 267.

Motorists can expect traffic controls on Highway 89 at Deerfield Drive from 6am to 6pm Monday through Wednesday while works crews replace damaged asphalt in the intersection. On Thursday and Friday, from 6am to 6pm, work crews will replace asphalt on Highway 267 at Northstar.

Drivers can expect uneven pavement and delays of up to 20 minutes. The California Highway Patrol will also be on scene to assist with traffic control and enforce all traffic laws.

South Tahoe initiating neighborhood meetings

South Lake Tahoe is beginning to schedule neighborhood meetings. The city wants to partner with local citizens to help increase communication with neighbors and businesses to help facilitate improvements in their neighborhoods.

The July 20 meeting is from 6:30-8pm for the neighborhoods of Al Tahoe, Bijou Pines and Pioneer Village at the Senior Center (3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd.)

The Aug. 23 meeting is from 6:30-8pm at Bijou Elementary School multipurpose room (3501 Spruce Ave.) The neighborhoods are Rancho Bijou and Bijou Acres.

More information is online.

This map shows how city the city has divided South Tahoe neighborhoods.

Free health clinic in Truckee

A free medical clinic will be at Gateway Urgent Care at 11105 Donner Pass Road in Truckee on July 23 from 8am-noon.

Patients will be seen on a first-come, first-serve basis and receive consultations for all medical issues. X-rays and medications are not included.

Dennis Chez, owner and sole doctor of Gateway Urgent Care, has been practicing medicine in the Tahoe-Truckee region for more than 35 years, making him the longest practicing physician in

the region.

For more information about Gateway Urgent Care, call (530) 582.2070.

Court deals Caesars setback in $8.6 mil. tax refund case

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – The Nevada Tax Commission has won a procedural battle with Caesars Entertainment related to the casino company's pursuit of $8.6 million tax refund.

Caesars sued the state, arguing it should not have paid tax on the aircraft it purchased in 2006 because the planes' first flights were to locations outside Nevada and during the first 12 months of operation, they were used for interstate commerce – ferrying corporate executives and casino patrons around the country and globe.

An administrative hearing officer and the Nevada Tax Commission rejected the company's argument late last year. Caesars, then known as Harrah's, appealed, filing a complaint in District Court in Clark County.

Now, the state Supreme Court has ruled that Clark County District Judge Kenneth Cory should review the Tax Commission's decision to deny the refund. Cory initially ruled that there should be a new hearing as sought by Caesars, allowing more issues to be introduced rather than adhering only to what was presented to the commission.

Read the whole story

Farm to Table Dinner

Tahoe City’s inaugural Farm to Table Dinner is July 19 from 6-9pm at Commons Beach.

More in formation is online.