Donner Museum construction startles area residents

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

Construction of a new museum at Donner Memorial State Park in Truckee is shocking many residents and visitors despite years of warnings that the project would disturb the site.

“Since last week, I’ve been getting calls and hearing it every day on the bus,” bus driver Rick Stafford, a longtime resident and history buff, said of the project, which was first planned about 15 years ago and has been in the preliminary stages for eight.

“Nobody saw it coming,” Stafford said. “They thought it was dead because of the budget crisis.”

The construction site – with large piles of uprooted tree trunks and boulders – is quite visible from the historic park’s Donner Pass Road entrance. A bulldozer stands near the debris in a recently cleared area between the museum parking lot and buildings used for maintenance and seasonal employee housing.

On the other side of the parking lot, near the current Emigrant Trail Museum, the Pioneer Monument statue peers over a few standing stumps of recently cut trees and through a wire fence.

The 9,324-square-foot, $6.8 million High Sierra Crossing Museum – now expected to be completed in early 2013 – will stand between the much-smaller current museum and Donner Pass Road.

Read the whole story

Judge sides with state; Kindertown to close

By Kathryn Reed

The last class of preschoolers may have graduated from Kindertown.

Kindertown Preschool and Daycare is being forced to lock its doors at the end of the day June 24.



Maria Barrows-Crist hands Danika Yuzbick her preschool diploma June 17. Photos/Kathryn Reed

While most of Friday morning was about proud parents taking pictures of their little ones dressed in pink and blue caps and gowns, a meeting afterward had their faces turn almost ashen.

Maria Barrows-Crist read a letter to them and then handed each a copy. It talks about her day in court, the future, who they

can write letters to, and suggestions for where to take their children if, in fact, this South Lake Tahoe institution does lock its doors for good.

Barrows-Crist has been fighting the state Department of Social Services since September 2009.

Just when she gets over one hurdle, another is put in front of her.

“I’m not perfect, I don’t do everything right, but I’m not a danger,” she told parents June 17.



Parents receive the news June 17 Kindertown must close.

The state believes otherwise. The biggest issue is a child was able to get out the gate at the center and wander onto the walk along Highway 50. The state has no leniency for this child having a history being an escape artist at other locations.

Barrows-Crist won a stay in February, with the idea she would get her day in court again. With her lawyer Mike McLaughlin and his office trying endlessly to get the court to set a briefing schedule, time kept passing.

On June 2 a management conference was set of June 3. From there the June 16 date was set. Attorney Kara Thiel

represented Barrows-Crist in El Dorado County Superior Court in Placerville on Thursday before Judge Warren Stracener because McLaughlin was out of town.

The thinking was Stracener would extend the stay, allowing Kindertown to stay open, and a date set to hear the evidence. Instead, Stracener said close and you can have your say later if you want.

McLaughlin, who called *Lake Tahoe News* from the road, said he isn't giving up. He plans to spend the weekend researching options.



Maria Barrows-Crist helps preschoolers to their seats June 17.

"I hope to get before him Wednesday and convince him of the error of his ways," McLaughlin said of the judge. "I think it would be hard for (Barrows-Crist) to keep up the fight once the doors are closed."

Barrows-Crist is unable to hold back tears on the phone or in person as she talks about the situation.

"This is not just my business. This is my life. These families are my family," she told *Lake Tahoe News* as she arrived at the center Friday.

One thing that might save her is the buyer who is interested

in the 30-plus-year-old facility. If the business trades ownership, the doors would stay open.

Summer jazz at Valhalla

Summer Jazz in the Park with longtime local musician Bart Libby on June 19 from 11am-2pm on the Valhalla Grand Lawn on the South Shore.

Bring a picnic basket, lawn chairs and sunscreen and relax near the shore of Lake Tahoe.

Cost – free, but donations accepted.

Log on for directions.

Movie about Pacific Crest Trail to be aired in Incline

The Pacific Crest Trail Association and the Tahoe Rim Trail Association are presenting the National Geographic Film "America's Wild Spaces: The Pacific Crest Trail" on June 28 at 6:30pm.

There is no charge.

This hour-long film chronicles the peaks and valleys of this epic 2,650 mile long trail that stretches from Mexico to Canada, cutting through seven national parks and 24 national

forests. Each year more than 300 backpackers attempt to complete the entirety of this grueling route, hiking through the states of California, Oregon, and Washington and experiencing elevation changes equal to that of 10 Mt. Everests.

The film will be shown at the Tahoe Environmental Research Center at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village. Seating is limited. Register online for a seat.

Quilt show on South Shore

Outdoor quilt show on July 16 frm 10am-5pm at Fabrics Unlimited, 155 Shady Lane, Stateline.

For more information, call (775.) 588.3211.

Party at Riva Grill benefits El Dorado County SAR

Riva Grill's 6th Annual Pray for Sun and Deck Opening Party is June 22 from 5-7pm.

An $18 donation benefits El Dorado County Volunteer Search and Rescue.

Participants get an all you can eat buffet and live music. Plus, Wet Woody Wednesday – so the drinks are $5.25.

Riva Grill is in the Ski Run Marina at 900 Ski Run Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

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South Lake Tahoe.

Landscaping with less water becoming the norm

By Kate Galbraith, New York Times

AUSTIN – At a botanical research center here, slender-bladed grasses that are soft on bare feet fill a round patch of lawn, which has held up despite getting trampled by hordes of visitors all spring.

This is a demonstration plot showcasing a mix of native grass species, and it is part of researchers' efforts to find a lawn that will require less water, and less mowing than conventional Texas lawns.

"Our perspective was – let's investigate alternatives," said Mark Simmons, director of the ecosystem design group at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Lawn management is "counterintuitive," he said, because it requires too many resources, like water and fertilizer.

The research in Texas, which is financed by the retail giant Wal-Mart Stores, is an effort to address an increasingly pressing problem: How to manage lawns when local water supplies are badly stretched.

Texas is in the throes of a serious drought, as are much of southern Europe, Britain and other parts of the world. And lawns take up vast amounts of water – in the United States, more than half of the water use in some cities goes toward watering the landscape, though this varies considerably, depending on climate and other factors.

Lawn management is "a huge industry," Mr. Simmons said. "It's not a sustainable industry as it stands."

Read the whole story

Opinion: Boat inspections the right thing for Nevada

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the June 17, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

By this time next year, an ambitious program to inspect boats statewide to protect Nevada’s lakes and streams, rivers and reservoir from aquatic invaders is expected to be underway.

Some boaters undoubtedly will find the inspections an added hassle that they’d rather avoid. Some surely will complain about the cost, which will determined in the coming months by the Nevada Wildlife Commission, as the agency works out the details of the plan approved by the Legislature and signed into law this week by Gov. Brian Sandoval.

But make no mistake: If Nevada doesn’t take action to stop the advance of such invasive species as the quagga mussel, the potential damage the invaders from Eastern Europe will cause much greater hassles, and much greater costs.

Read the whole story

Great Whitewater Rivers of the World lecture

Squaw Valley Institute is sponsoring the Great Whitewater Rivers of the World lecture June 29 at 7pm at the Cedar House Sport Hotel in Truckee.

Laurence Alvarez Roos, a worldwide river runner and explorer, will talk about his experiences on rivers from Africa to the United States to South America.

Tickets are $10 and limited. Call (530) 581.4138.

A no host social hour begins at 6:30pm.

Click on flyer for more information.