Letter: TAP thanks the community

To the community,

Tahoe Arts Project would like to thank everyone who helped to make Dancing with the Tahoe Stars a huge success. A big thank you to MontBleu and staff for providing the showroom for the event. Dreu Murin of Dreu Murin Productions and Maddie Feldman of Prestige Productions did a fabulous job producing the show.

Our judges, Marcia Sarosik, Paul Middlebrook and Don Bosson kept the audience amused while doing their very important job of helping to select the winner.

Thank you to Lake Tahoe's Shining Stars, Forever Dance and South Tahoe High School Drama Students for providing entertainment – you were all awesome!

Thank you to our professional dancers who worked so hard getting our "stars" ready for the big night. Of course, this event could not have happened without our "Tahoe stars." Thank you from the bottom of my heart to Klaus Utecht, Sean Sweeney, Liz Niven, Jodi Stewart, Eric Taxer (People's Choice winner), Chris Proctor, Amy Thompson, (the big winner), Frances Caro, Roberta Benvenuto and Tom Davis. You are so amazing for doing this for TAP.

Thank you to Tahoe Arts and Mountain Culture, *Tahoe Daily Tribune, Lake Tahoe News, Tahoe Mountain New*s, KRLT/KOWL and KTHO for helping us get the word out.

A big thanks to our volunteers, advertisers and the committee. A huge shout out to all of you who attended this entertaining community event. People are saying it was the most fun they've had in a long time.

Peggy Thompson, executive director Tahoe Arts Project

No suspect nor cause in S. Tahoe house fire



Not much could be salvaged from this house after it burned in January. Photo/Denise Haerr

The cause of a fire that completely destroyed a house in South Lake Tahoe in late January remains unknown.

“We are investigating it as an arson. It has been characterized as suspicious,” South Lake Tahoe police Detective Jeff Roberson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

His agency is working the investigation with Lake Valley Fire because South Lake Tahoe Fire doesn’t have an arson investigator.

The modified A-frame on Long Avenue was being repaired because of damage from burst pipes earlier in winter, so no one was living there. Days before the fire a repairman reported to the fire department and Southwest Gas that he smelled natural gas

and saw gas valves on various appliances had been turned on.

Evidence from the fire was sent to a lab for analysis. The main thing to determine is what type of accelerant was used. Roberson is not revealing what the lab found because at this time there is no suspect and releasing the info could jeopardize the investigation.

Roberson would like anyone who saw anything suspicious in the neighborhood or at the house the week prior to Jan. 29 to call him at 530.542.6100.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

WHS test scores on a steady decline

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Despite the show of support from staff and board members, the news out of Whittell High School is not good. Student test scores are going down.

Principal Crespin Esquivel delivered the numbers April 8 at the school board meeting. Math and reading scores have been tumbling at all grade levels to the point that most are not at the proficient level in reading, math or science.

Esquivel said in part it has to do with seventh- and eighth-graders being in some combined classes. This is because the student population is so low – there are 208 kids in the 7-12 school – grade levels have to be combined. It means the rigor is not there for all students.

The Zephyr Cove school in many ways is run as though it is two schools – as a middle school and high school.

Asked by board member Cindy Trigg if there is one thing that could make a difference to help turn things around, Esquivel said a vice principal. He also said it's imperative teachers are retained even if fewer students are on the attendance roll. He said having someone else on board would give him more time to focus on critical issues, even visit classrooms more often.

While hiring another administrator is not likely to happen based on budget constraints, money is being spent to assess some of the issues that are going on and to help come up with solutions. Ray Sidney's entire donation for the basketball renovation was not spent and he said it would be fine to use it on other things.

One of those other things was hiring consultant Bev Ducey to "examine successful small schools and identify several for further research into their keys to successful student learning outcomes."

Those schools that Esquivel will be contacting are in Telluride, Colo., Chester and Quincy. The goal is to dig deep to see what they have done to be successful and to ideally find ideas that would work at WHS.

Esquivel also recognizes the need to get some mentoring for himself to help learn how to satisfy the ongoing mandates from the state, balance the need for better oversight of teachers, and focus on getting students the help they need to achieve at a higher level.

The positive info delivered Tuesday afternoon was that in 2013 93 percent, or 40 of the 43, students graduated. This year the school earned state championships for the girls' ski and boys' basketball teams for the first time.

In other news:

• Nancy Cauley, principal at Zephyr Cove Elementary, said her students are making progress in growth and proficiency on standardized tests.

• No offers have been made to purchase Kingsbury Middle School. The item will be back on the agenda in May.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Time to find deals at Après Wine in South Lake Tahoe because the shop is closing.

• The 30th anniversary of the movie “Hot Dog” will be celebrated at Squaw Valley on April 26. Doors open at 5:30pm, a Q&A with 10 original cast members is at 6:30pm and the film starts at 7:30pm. Tickets are $25 and are available online.

• Tahoe Regional Young Professionals is having a retirement planning workshop on April 16 from 5:30-6:30pm at New York Life Insurance, 408 Doria Court, Round Hill. It’s free to members and $5 for others.

• More than 140 runners braved the unpredictable weather March 29 for the inaugural Sugarloaf Stampede benefiting the Sugarloaf Station Foundation – a nonprofit organization that grants partial scholarships to students who attend the Sugarloaf Fine Arts Camp during the summer. El Dorado County Office of Education organized the fundraiser, which raised

more $17,000 for the foundation.

Cream cheese trying to be a bit more healthy

By Alexander C. Kaufman, Huffington Post

Philadelphia Cream Cheese Spread is trying to move its schmear a smidgen closer to the green slot on the food pyramid.

Kraft Foods Group Inc. has retooled the packaging on the iconic cheese product, swapping the round, gray containers for oblong tubs designed to promote newly added natural ingredients.

This marks the third revamp in four years of the brand's marketing strategy, after previous efforts touted cream cheese's use as a cooking ingredient and an old-timey food tradition. But, for the first since Philadelphia's whipped cream cheese spread hit the market in 1982, Kraft has made major changes to the recipe in an attempt to woo health-conscious shoppers, the Wall Street Journal reported last week.

Now, existing fruit and vegetable flavors are seeing a significant increase in ingredients like berries, carrots and peppers.

Americans have shied away from fat, cholesterol and sugar in recent years, and breakfast foods are seeing some of the biggest changes. Consumption of eggs has sunk nearly 70 percent since its peak in 1945 as dieters feared cholesterol in yolks. Even orange juice, once a staple praised for its

rich vitamin C content, is losing its place at the breakfast table as Americans cut out sugar – and sometimes breakfast altogether.

Read the whole story

More homeowners becoming landlords

By Tim Logan, Los Angeles Times

The real estate market has long worked on a simple system: If you want to buy a new house, sell the old one and use the equity for a down payment.

But the last few years of low ownership costs and rising rents have some move-up buyers trying a new approach: Buy the new house. Keep the old one. And rent it out.

Real estate firm Redfin recently asked 1,900 prospective home buyers nationwide what they planned to do with their old house when they bought a new one. As you'd expect, the majority said they would sell. But 39% said they'd rent it out. In Western markets like Los Angeles that have seen big price growth lately, the percentage was even higher.

It's the first time that Redfin has conducted this kind of study. But real estate agents and property managers say they're seeing the same thing: a noticeable uptick in the number of home buyers who want to rent out their old place.

If this trend holds, it could mean even fewer homes for sale in an already tight market. But for a certain type of homeowner, becoming a landlord could make a lot of sense.

Read the whole story

Sage grouse, wild horses dominate BLM budget

By Martin Griffith, AP

RENO -– Wild-horse fertility control and sage-grouse habitat conservation are among top priorities in the proposed $1.1 billion budget for the federal Bureau of Land Management.

President Obama’s request for the 2015 fiscal year calls for an increase of $2.8 million in funding for the agency’s wild horse and burro program, and would allow it to continue studies to develop more effective contraceptive drugs and techniques.

The BLM has pledged to step up the use of fertility control as an alternative to controversial roundups of what it calls overpopulated mustang herds on U.S. rangelands in the West.

If approved by Congress, the request would further the BLM’s implementation of recommendations made by an independent panel of the National Academy of Sciences in 2013, agency officials said.

In a report highly critical of the BLM, the panel said the agency should invest in widespread fertility control of the mustangs instead of spending millions to house them.

It concluded the BLM’s removal of nearly 100,000 horses from the Western range over the past decade is probably having the opposite effect of its intention to ease ecological damage and reduce overpopulated herds.

The BLM treated about 1,000 mares in 2012 but only about half that last year, records show, far short of the annual goal of 2,000 then-BLM Director Bob Abbey announced in 2011.

Anne Novak of California-based Protect Mustangs questioned the value of fertility control and called on Congress to embrace "holistic" land management by keeping mustangs on the range to rebuild soil and reverse desertification. She thinks the agency's horse roundups have caused the herds to have an increased birthrate.

"Throwing more drugs, sterilizations and pesticides on native wild horses is a backwards approach," Novak said. "It's time to help our American wild horses contribute to the thriving natural balance of the ecosystem using fresh science."

The budget also seeks to maintain funding for the BLM's initiative to conserve sage-grouse habitat across the West to avoid the bird's listing as an endangered or threatened species. The agency plans to complete the plan in the upcoming fiscal year. Such a listing would have economic consequences for ranching, mining and alternative energy development across large swaths of land.

Another top budget priority is authorization of a nonprofit foundation to help provide the BLM with new ways to work with the public on landscapes and programs, including wild horse and burro management.

"The BLM carries a great responsibility in its stewardship of roughly 10 percent of the nation's land," BLM Principal Deputy Director Neil Kornze said in a statement. "We strive each day to strike the right balance under our multiple use and sustained yield mandate."

Kornze testified on the budget at a hearing Friday before the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies.

Significant rock slide closes trail in Yosemite

By AP

Officials at Yosemite National Park say a massive amount of rock has fallen from a cliff, closing a hiking trail.

The National Park Service said Monday that nobody was hurt when the 16,000 tons of rock fell 500 feet from a cliff near Hetch Hetchy Reservoir on March 31. Many boulders tumbled into the water.

Officials say the rock crashed down from a cliff east of Wapama Falls. The rock broke into numerous boulders, crushing trees and sending up a small dust cloud.

About 400 feet of the Rancheria Falls Trail were destroyed and park staff says it will remain closed for now. Park officials say hikers can still get to Wapama Falls starting at O'Shaughnessy Dam.

Aerosmith, Train to play at Harveys in August

Aerosmith and Train are coming to Lake Tahoe.

The legendary rock band out of Boston will be at Harveys Outdoor Concert Series on Aug. 8 at 7pm. Slash will be

opening. Tickets are $89.50-$235.50

Train will be on stage July 25 at 7:30pm. Tickets range from $49.50-$99.50.

Tickets for Aeroosmith go on sale April 11 through Ticketmaster.

I-80 rest stop closed on Tuesday

The westbound Interstate 80 Gold Run Safety Roadside Rest Area will be closed today from 8am-8pm.

The eastbound rest area will remain open.

The closure is necessary so a contractor can do utility connection work and Caltrans crews can do routine maintenance.