State parks in Tahoe looking for volunteers

Several volunteer opportunities are available in the Tahoe-Truckee area through the California State Parks system.

While none of the parks in the Sierra District is part of the 70 parks slated to be closed, they face funding cutbacks. Volunteers help fill that gap.

Here are the current needs:

• Vikingsholm accessibility escort docent

• Visitor service intern/park greeter

• Living history day at Sugar Pine Point

• Garden restoration volunteer at Ehrman estate.

For more information about volunteering, contact Heidi Doyle at hdoyle@parks.ca.gov or call (530) 583.3074.

Increase in Hispanic high school graduation rate

Proportionately more young Hispanic adults are completing high school and fewer are dropping out than were doing so a decade ago, according to an analysis of enrollment trends by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds, 22 percent were not enrolled in high school and lacked a high school diploma or

equivalent in 2008, compared with 34 percent in 1998.

These statistics come from a new analysis, School Enrollment in the United States: 2008,which examines a number of trends among the U.S. population enrolled in school. The analysis focuses particularly on the issue of enrollment below modal grade, resulting from students being held back or made to repeat a grade.

Among Hispanics who had been enrolled in high school in October 2007, 5 percent reported being out of school with no diploma or equivalent in October 2008, compared with 6 percent for blacks. The percentage for non-Hispanic whites was 2 percent, and for Asians it was 4 percent. The percentage of Asians who left school without a high school diploma is not statistically different from the percentage of non-Hispanic whites, blacks and Hispanics.

Fourteen million Hispanics were enrolled in schools at all levels in 2008 out of a total enrollment of 76 million students across the United States. The Hispanic portion of all students (18 percent in 2008) increased by 5 percentage points from a decade earlier (13 percent in 1998).

Nineteen percent of students ages 6 to 17 were enrolled at a grade level that is lower than the typical grade for their age in 2008, often referred to as “below modal grade.” The below modal grade rate for Hispanic students was the same as for the white-alone, non-Hispanic population.

Migraine research suffers

from lack of funding

By Linda Shrieves, Orlando Sentinel

Migraines affect more Americans than diabetes and asthma combined, but funding for migraine research is low. Without an infusion of research dollars, researchers say, it will be hard to conquer migraines.

Migraine specialists attending the American Headache Society meeting in Washington last weekend said they believe more government money for migraine research holds the most promise for winning the battle against the disease.

When asked to rank four areas of research need, 40 percent of those attending the conference said increased public funding is more important than understanding basic aspects of the disease. And public research dollars also were considered more important than early intervention in a migraine attack, migraine genetics or the role of the thalamus.

“The infusion of public money in migraine research is central to the conquest of this disease,” said Dr. David W. Dodick, president of the American Headache Society. “Even researchers funded by private grants from academia or industry are calling for increases in allocations in federal spending for this disease.”

NIH allocates less than $13 million a year to migraine reasearch. “Given the burden this disease carries and the great number of people who suffer with it, it should be more like $260 million,” Dodick said.

Read the whole story

Placer County adopts tentative $720 mil. budget

Placer County Board of Supervisors adopted a proposed 2011-12 budget to ensure the county has a spending plan in place when the next fiscal year begins July 1.

The $720 million budget is down 4.9 percent from the final 2010-11 budget. The county budget has dropped by 16.8 percent since the 2008-09 fiscal year.

Board Chairman Robert Weygandt noted the decline of the construction industry has had a major impact on Placer County, one of the state's fastest growing counties over the last decade.

The county budget team expects property tax revenue, the county's largest revenue source, to drop by $4.8 million next fiscal year.

The size of the county workforce will be 13.5 percent smaller next fiscal year than in 2007-08, largely as a result of a hiring freeze approved by the board in 2007.

The hiring freeze has helped Placer County avoid the large-scale layoffs experienced by many counties and cities. Over the last three years, Placer County has laid off 17 employees due to reduced workloads or insufficient state funding, representing 0.6 percent of the workforce. Most were land-development staff whose workloads dropped significantly in response to the construction industry slowdown.

A small number of layoffs may be necessary during the 2011-12 fiscal year due to reduced workloads and funding reductions.

Adopting the proposed budget completes the first phase of the county's two-phase budget-approval process.

The two-phase approach allows the county to adopt a final budget after final estimates of available funding have been determined. The board plans to hold budget workshops in August and is tentatively scheduled to adopt a final budget Sept. 13.

Placer County still could face substantial revenue shortfalls and service disruptions if the state reduces funding for mandated county programs and shifts responsibility for some state programs to counties without accompanying funding. The budget team estimates the county has from $30 million to $60 million at risk in the state's budget battles.

Placer County still does not know whether its Redevelopment Agency will survive the state budget battles. Gov. Jerry Brown has proposed eliminating local redevelopment agencies throughout the state.

In a report to the board Tuesday, Finance and Budget Operations Manager Graham Knaus said the proposed budget maintains critical services to county residents, aligns service demands with available resources, and is balanced without reliance on general fund reserves. In addition, the proposed budget preserves additional mitigation options to address state budget impacts that will be presented to the board during the August workshops.

Unread bills slide through Nevada Legislature

By Anjeanette Damon and David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Any lobbyist will tell you it's much easier to kill a bill than to get one through the Nevada Legislature.

But there is a golden hour at the end of every legislative session that is the exception, particularly for industries and individuals with the right connections to a small circle of connected lobbyists.

The end of every session is a frantic rush to close the 120-day process, when lawmakers, lobbyists and reporters have their attention diverted in a thousand directions. And as a result, with the right legislator on your side, the right lobbyist can bypass the political fights, public hearings and debates and slip through legislation, almost unnoticed.

To wit: Five minutes after midnight Tuesday – a mere 55 minutes before the constitutionally mandated close of the 2011 legislative session – lawmakers introduced a policy that could cost NV Energy ratepayers $1 billion.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Casual, informal sailboat racing on the South Shore takes place every Wednesday night. Go online for all the details.

• Discount tickets for the celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline are available at Raley's, Bel-Air and Nob Hill Foods supermarkets throughout Northern California and Northern Nevada through July 17.

• Looking for things to do in El Dorado County? A map that

lists events and other tidbits can be downloaded.

• Tahoe Arts Project needs volunteers for its annual July 9-10 Fine Arts Festival. Contact Nancy Muller at nancym96158@yahoo.com.

• This is the 31st year Granlibakken resort in Tahoe City is hosting a summer Nike Tennis Camp, July 10—Aug. 12.

• Here is Caltrans' Sierra roadwork schedule for the coming week.

Tire recycling grant benefits STHS

By Sacramento Business Journal

A tire recycling grant program by the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) has made several grants in the Sacramento region.

Out of $7.5 million to be sent to local agencies, four of the 83 agencies selected are in the region.

"By promoting and developing markets for waste tires, we stimulate the state's economy while helping to conserve natural resources and protect the environment," CalRecycle acting director Mark Leary said in a statement.

According to CalRecycle, California generates more than 40 million waste tires each year, and 11 million end up in landfills or illegally dumped. The agency estimates 2.1 million tires will be kept from landfills by using them in the grant programs.

Funding comes from the $1.75 recycling fee charged for each new tire sold in California. CalRecycle gets $1 of that money, and the rest is used for tire-related emission programs.

Cities, counties, special districts, American Indian tribes, schools and universities are eligible to apply for grants that include using products made from waste tires.

In Sacramento County, three parks districts will receive money to make improvements with recycled rubber. Arden Manor Recreation and Park District received $104,352 and will replace wood chips with rubber bark. The North Highlands Recreation and Park District got $24,120 to install rubber safety surfaces. The Fulton-El Camino Recreation and Park District received $149,223 for installing rubber park at five highly used playgrounds.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District was awarded $91,434 for a multi-use synthetic field at South Lake Tahoe High School. It will replace a grass field and save water.

Opinion: Retirement savings should start at young age

By Rick Rodgers

When our generation was growing up, we were taught about Social Security, and many of us had grandparents who were reasonably comfortable with a combination of their investment income and their government checks.

Today, not so much.

Over the last few years, we have seen the market crash and

burn, and Social Security is on its way toward doing the same. So, if we're scrambling to salvage our retirement income, imagine what it will be like for your kids. If you haven't done that already, one expert has some good news for you.

When we were just starting out in life, our parents told us to start saving money right out of the gate, but we didn't listen. Instead, we ran up our credit card debt, spent more than we earned and bought more house than we could afford. But our kids can and should learn from our mistakes and helping them to start saving now could give them a nest egg or millions instead of thousands.

Here's some advice:

• **Start at 16** – Just $5,000 contributed to a Roth IRA each year for five years starting at age 16 could be worth more than a million by the time the reach age 65. In a Roth IRA all that growth would be tax-free when withdrawn.

• **10 Percent Rule** – Everyone should save a minimum of 10 percent of their take home pay.

• **Shelter Early** – Ideally, you should save in a Roth IRA account at the beginning of your career. When you reach your peak earnings (usually around age 40), switch to a tax-deferred account like a 401(k).

• **Fun or Fund?** – Take half of what you have been spending on gifts (toys, games, etc.) and invest it in a mutual fund for your child.

• **Birthday Booster** – Encourage friends and relatives to contribute to the mutual fund account you've started instead of buying gifts for birthdays and holidays.

• **Every Little Bit Helps** – Contributing small amounts on a regular basis is a better strategy than waiting to accumulate a larger sum. Get in the habit of saving something regularly.

• **Use the Refund** – Let the government help. Currently the child tax credit is $1,000 per child until they reach age 17. Discipline yourself to save the credit when it is returned to you as a refund.

It doesn’t take a lot to give your kids long term security. The magic of compounded interest can do more of the heavy lifting as long as you start early and contribute often.

Rick Rodgers is a certified financial planner, chartered retirement planner counselor, certified retirement counselor, and member of the National Association of Personal Financial Advisers.

Weather didn’t keep riders from Bike Challenge

In spite of the snow, rain and cold, more people participated in this year’s Lake Tahoe Bike Challenge than in 2010.

Here are some of the highlights:

Total number of trips: 3,077

Total miles: 10,592

Number of North Shore riders: 79

Number of South Shore riders: 213

Most elevation by a North Shore individual: 22,010 feet, Laura Traeger,

Most elevation by a South Shore individual: 20,468 feet, Twain Berg

Most trips per employee: Sierra Nevada Alliance – 18.09

Team results – most total miles: 1,314, TRPA

Team results – most elevation: 80,763 feet, Alta Alpina Cycling Club and Northstar-at-Tahoe with 53,293 feet.

Economy not stopping wineries from opening in Fair Play

By Mike Dunne, Sacramento Bee

California's wine trade hasn't been immune from the nation's lingering recession – witness the deep discounts on high-end wines – but sales nevertheless have remained surprisingly strong.

What's more, people still see enough hope in the industry to continue to open wineries.

Just take a drive into the Sierra foothills east of Sacramento. Around any bend, you are apt to be startled by the flapping and snapping of bright banners heralding the debut of another winery.

So it was earlier this spring as we wound our way through southwestern El Dorado County. As we approached Fair Play, a newly paved drive and a sign with a winery name we didn't recognize caught our eye.

We moseyed up the hill, past a handsome new steel-and-stone winery and on to its neighboring tasting room. The arrangement reminded me of one of the Mother Lode's old gold mines, with a large stamp mill looming over the site and a tiny assay office

off to one side.

The pay dirt being exploited here, however, is rows of vines rather than veins of quartz, though a seam of Gold Rush history runs through the property.

The sign high on the winery says “Skinner Native Wine & Brandy.” This is a slight alteration of the sign “J. Skinner Native Wine & Brandy” that hung on the winery of one James Skinner in western El Dorado County starting in the 1860s.

Read the whole story