Barton sports physicals

Tahoe Center for Orthopedics and Barton Health are offering free student sports physicals to South Tahoe and Whittell high school and Pop Warner athletes playing fall, winter and spring sports. The event will take place on June 8 from 4-6pm at Barton Family Medicine.

Questions, call (530) 543.5660.

Brown's budget – schools spared, redevelopment agencies out

By Kevin Yamamura, Sacramento Bee

With state revenues rising, Gov. Jerry Brown reframed his call for tax extensions Monday, saying they are still necessary to help the state whittle down an accumulated "wall of debt."

The Democratic governor announced that California can count on $6.6 billion in surprise tax revenues through June 2012, thanks to more money flowing into state coffers this year and a higher growth expectation for next year.

The deficit has shrunk to $9.6 billion against a current $91.6 billion spending plan, thanks to earlier cuts in health and welfare and the new cash.

But Brown still wants to maintain a higher tax rate on sales and vehicles, as well as a smaller income tax credit for dependents over five additional years.

He also wants to reinstate a 0.25 percent income-tax surcharge in 2012 for four years, while eliminating it for 2011. The governor wants all subject to voter approval “as soon as possible.”

Schools, which had been bracing for doomsday cuts, now stand to gain $3 billion more than they are getting this year.

Read the whole story

Opinion: A call for disclosure by the League

By Rochelle Nason

The League to Save Lake Tahoe has filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, asking it to release public documents regarding the expenditure of public funds. The recipient of those funds, South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman/TRPA member Claire Fortier, says the League’s FOIA request is an “attempt at bullying”, and an “attempt to discredit me”.

What is going on here?

On April 13, 2011, the TRPA disclosed that in 2010, it had paid $9,681 to Fortier’s company, Laren Inc. Wondering why TRPA would make payments to a political activist/researcher, the League reviewed copies of the economic disclosure forms that she had filed with TRPA to see if we could learn more.



Rochelle Nason

The payment from TRPA to Laren, and from Laren to Fortier did not appear on the form. We therefore wrote to Ms. Fortier and the agency, pointing out the omission and asking that she correct it before participating in any more of TRPA's meetings. On April 27, 2011, before participating in the TRPA's meeting on that date, Fortier indeed corrected her economic disclosure statement to show the payment to Laren. The corrected statement declared, "Laren Communications completed a project for the TRPA on the history of the agency in Jan[uary]2010."

That same day a story ran in the *Tahoe Daily Tribune* in which it was reported that: "According to both Fortier and TRPA spokesman Jeff Cowen, the planning agency paid Fortier the $9,681 for research on a 40th anniversary project. Fortier said the research revolved around the TRPA's pre-1980 history."

The League praised Fortier for the disclosure: "[t]he League is glad Claire has stepped up and done the right thing in disclosing her financial dealings with the TRPA. We are encouraging her to be proactive about contacting the Fair Political Practices Commission and making sure she has made all the disclosures required by state law as well."

We pointed out that: "We are still concerned with the question why TRPA would spend almost $10,000 for historical research on its 40th anniversary. All that information has been assembled repeatedly in the past, in connection with the 30th, 25th, 20th, and 10th anniversaries of the agency." We noted would be

seeking the documentation on the project – and that is why we filed our FOIA request.

Why does Claire Fortier consider a request that a government entity release public documents relating to its expenditure of public funds to be an act of "bullying" against her? She asks, "Is this a pissing match or an unabashed attempt by the League to intimidate me?"

Well, it is neither one. It is what it is: a request for public documents about a matter of the public interest.

We encourage everyone with an interest in all that is going on between the city and the League – or in the broader issues of land-use and environmental planning in the Lake Tahoe Basin – to spend a few minutes viewing my presentation to the City Council on May 3, 2011.

You can find the presentation by moving the "slider" at the bottom of the video to 1:07.10 (1 hour, 7 minutes, 10 seconds into the meeting).

You will see that the League is *not* seeking to obstruct the economic development of the city of South Lake Tahoe when we try to assure that regional planning achieves environmental goals, nor when we seek to enforce the laws that protect Lake Tahoe. We *do* believe that by working together, we can keep Tahoe's local communities sustainable – and that we can and we will Keep Tahoe Blue.

Rochelle Nason is the executive director of the League to Save Lake Tahoe, also known as Keep Tahoe Blue.

The great California caviar rush

By Stinson Carter, Wall Street Journal

On a breezy April afternoon in the grassy delta flatlands of Galt, fins and tails were churning the waters inside raised tanks the size of above-ground swimming pools.

The bellies of the 100-pound, six-foot-long sturgeon of the Fishery aquaculture farm were white, their vacuum cleaner-nozzle mouths toothless and slightly be-whiskered. The fish have shark-like skin. Down their wide flanks run reptilian spikes, called “scutes,” ancient prototypes of fish scales. They are brutal in appearance, ugly even, living fossils from a prehistoric evolutionary crossroads.

Sturgeon – Acipenseridae – have outlived whatever killed the dinosaurs. They’ve survived everything in the past 250 million years, only now to fall prey to man’s desire for their clusters of glistening roe. Their eggs sell for as much as $270 per ounce in gourmet shops world-wide, and garnish the $50 entrees of white-tablecloth plates everywhere.

Caviar—the other black gold—sublimely salty, sweet, earthy, an acquired taste, to be sure, and pleasant to the eye, has been a delicacy of khans, tsars, monarchs and aristocracy for millennia. But in the past decade the market for wild sturgeon caviar—the crème de la crème of the delicacy—has been wracked by poachers, smugglers, polluted waters and the threat of extinction for the most prized of the world’s 27 sturgeon species, those producing wild beluga caviar.

Besides protecting endangered sturgeon, import bans on Caspian Sea caviar have another upside. They created an opportunity for a group of entrepreneurial biologists and fish farmers in California’s Central Valley region, where cattle ranches have

given way to sturgeon farms. Now domestic roe farmers have birthed a sustainable caviar industry, winning over, however reticently, the collective palate of the haute-cuisine stratosphere. And greenmarket grocery chains such as Whole Foods Market have dropped Caspian Sea caviar mainstays for the sustainable domestic brands.

Read the whole story

Toccata plans chamber music events

Toccata presents Trio Brio in “Chamber Music Charmers” June 12-19.

Featured performers are David Brock, piano; Pat Crane, violin and viola; and Darrell Moore, clarinet performing works by classical, romantic, and 20th century jazz/impressionist composers including Mozart, Schumann, Bruch, Milhaud and Villiers Stanford.

Performances are:

June 12, 6pm at Squaw Valley Chapel, Olympic Valley.

June 18, 4pm at the Steinway Piano Gallery of Reno.

June 19, 7:30pm at the Valhalla Boathouse in South Lake Tahoe.

Tickets are $20 adults and $35 preferred, and are available at the door or at www.ToccataTahoe.com. For the Valhalla Boathouse, tickets are available online. Preferred seating includes a wine and cheese gathering one hour prior to the concert.

For further information or questions call (775) 313.9697, (775) 781.4702 or go online.

Kids’ health, safety event in Meyers

Kids Day Tahoe is May 21 from 11am-3pm. The event will provide essential information on health, child safety, and environmental awareness.

Many local businesses will be present with activities for the children.

Joshua Welch will provide free health screenings, and will be distributing vital information on disease prevention and health promotion.

The event is free.

It will be in the West Gate Building (3170 Highway 50), Meyers.

Call (530) 577.5433 for more information.

Common sense approach to staying safe in outdoors

By Tri-County Newspapers

The California Department of Fish and Game reminds campers, anglers and hikers enjoying the outdoors to take precautions to limit black bear encounters. A key element to safe camping and recreating in bear country is to limit food odors that attract bears.

“Bears are constantly in search of easily obtainable food sources,”said Marc Kenyon, DFG statewide bear program coordinator. “A bear’s fate is almost always sealed once it associates human activity with potential food. It’s always unfortunate when a bear has to be killed because people either haven’t learned how to appropriately store food and trash, or simply don’t care.”

California’s growing black bear population is now estimated at more than 40,000. Black bears are located in most of the state where suitable habitat exists and bear/human encounters are not isolated to wilderness settings. For example, last year black bears stirred up trouble in one of California’s premier tourist destinations, as DFG staff logged more than 5,200 hours handling black bear nuisance issues in the Lake Tahoe region alone.

Read the whole story

Avoiding Echo Summit – scenic, but definitely longer

By Kathryn Reed

Scenic – definitely. An hour longer – without a doubt. More windy – no avoiding it. Tiresome – if you have to do it more than once.

That’s the report on having driven the Highway 50 scenic detour – so named by local officials. Road closure is not the phrase they want to use even though that is exactly what is going on.



Detour signs are throughout the route. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Echo Summit shutdown May 11 for 10 to 14 days while a construction firm hired by Caltrans fixes the deteriorated rock wall that links the South Shore with points west. Of course if the work isn’t done, it will be more than a two-week closure.

Although the work was interrupted for more than 24 hours because of snow, Caltrans said the gang was back at work Monday. But that could be short-lived with the winter weather advisory that is in effect until 10 this morning – which is calling for more than a half foot of white stuff above 7,000 feet. Echo Summit is at 7,382 feet.

Road well traveled

Making the trek from Contra Costa County to Kirkwood Mountain Resort via back roads, and mostly highways 4 and 88 was commonplace growing up because that’s where my dad liked to ski. In many ways it’s still easier than dealing with Highway 50 or Interstate 80.

But it’s not the way most people choose to come all the way to the South Shore. That’s because 50 is faster, shorter – and, actually, more scenic. Something about that American River Canyon never gets tiring.

Still, headed for San Francisco on Saturday we had few options for getting there. We opted to follow (for the most part) the Caltrans route over Highway 88.

It was a good thing the Amgen Tour de California never intended Luther Pass to be part of the route because the debris on the west side looked treacherous and the water coming off the opposite side onto the road was no better. Of course then there are the numerous potholes, but cyclists in the Lake Tahoe Basin are accustomed to those on highways and city streets.

More traffic than usual for a Saturday in May is headed to Hope Valley.

Watching the Carson River gush it’s hard to tell where its bank is – the water is that high.

Atop Carson Pass the lots are full. Backcountry skiers are eager to get in some runs. With the amount of snow the season – and it still dumping – wildflower season is something to only dream about.

Ice is melting on Caples Lake, with shades of blue piercing the surface like an iceberg. By Monday, the blue is gone – covered with a fresh layer of snow.

A group of snowmobilers is gathered at the 8,000-foot mark. Winter is not over for them. Spots near the Carson Spur have drifts of snow 20-feet high.

Farther along is the Bear River Reservoir, which may have part of the Kirkwood Mountain Resort power line going through it.

Panther Creek is off to the left. Back in a ways reportedly is

a waterfall worth seeing. But the road was closed a few weeks back when we were thinking about scouting it out.

Dirt roads continuously connect with Highway 88. It looks like a mountain bike and ATV haven.

Snow is getting spotty at 6,000 feet and is gone at 5,000 – at least on May 14.

Omo Ranch Road is on the right. This is the back way to Fair Play wineries. Get on those roads and you can find your way to Placerville. Just have plenty of time.

Finally, the road is improving at about 4,000 feet, just past Cooks Station. The terrain is changing. Not so many pine trees. More filler trees that are too hard to name whizzing by.

New signs to read – like, “Owl and Bat Houses”, bars touting karaoke, Saturday prime rib, “Food, Gas, Sporting Goods,” “Haircuts $12” – and all those fruit and vegetable stands.

A little more pro-active marketing by these folks might get people to stop.

Jackson Rancheria seems out in the middle of nowhere. Maybe because it is. But just driving by it is more inviting than any gaming venue on the South Shore.

Making our own detour

We zip through Jackson. On the outskirts is the Highway 50 detour sign that we ignore. It leads people to Highway 49. Instead, we stay on Highway 88. Going back to the childhood route.

As we leave Jackson the terrain flattens out. Definitely ag land. Hills are turning golden, with only faint hints of green lingering.

Homes near Ione are selling for $159,900. Don’t want to know if our house in Tahoe is worth more.

Sign for Pardee Reservoir brings back memories of a camping trip a few years back when we were in search of warmer weather and just started driving.

Tasteful sign says, “Thank you for visiting Amador County.” El Dorado, Placer, Douglas – are you listening?

Cows cover the grasslands.

Lake Camanche is another refuge for Tahoans looking for warmth.

At the intersection of highway 88 and 12 we go right.

Vineyards, apple trees, cherry trees and row crops cover the landscape.

Most of the small towns we hit have gas prices similar to Lake Tahoe.

The scenic trip to agriculture land turns urban on the outskirts of Stockton.

From Highway 88 we take Highway 99 south, then quickly onto Highway 4 west, which merges with Interstate 5.

We pass a sign for Highway 120 at Manteca. For now, this is the main road into Yosemite National Park because Tioga Pass isn’t likely to open until July.

Off I-5 we merge onto Interstate 205, which leads us to Interstate 580, then to Interstate 80 over the Bay Bridge.

It took 208 miles and four hours.

Headed back to Tahoe

With about the same miles driven, the route we took May 16

back to South Lake Tahoe seemed faster. But with stopping at a winery and for lunch, we're not really sure of the exact time.

We left The City, and in Sacramento took Power Inn Road. This leads to Highway 16 toward Jackson.

Allow your passenger to sleep through this section of road.

As the golden hills full of oak trees emerge it becomes that scenic route people keep touting.

Up ahead is Highway 49, where we turned right. Not far up is Drytown Cellars. It's the only winery actually on the detour that doesn't require turning off on a non-designated road. Business is picking up, according to Jon.

Jon is pouring us sips of red. He tells us this area at about 2,300 feet had several inches of snow over the weekend. We recommend the house red for 10 bucks a bottle.

Fresh snow covers the green grass in Pioneer at 3,000 feet. It wasn't there two days before.

Clouds are forming. Sky darkening. Trees at 6,000 feet are full of snow.

Flurries are falling at the Kirkwood Inn. We stop for a bite and to decompress in front of the roaring wood fire. Built in 1864, the dark wood interior looks like it has stories to tell.

Our waitress says it's the weather that is keeping people away. Thursday and Friday business had picked up, but by Monday it was so-so. Such are the hazards with snow in the parking lot and no plow to clear it.

Sue raves about the chicken tortilla soup. Their portabella mushroom sandwich is one of the better ones I've had.

Back on the road, back over Luther, back into South Lake.

Fingers crossed Echo Summit opens soon.

AAA's Sierra Nevada map is good one to carry while traveling this scenic route.

Susan Wood contributed to this story.

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Hard Rock helping to fill Bread & Broth's shelves

Hard Rock International is turning 40 years old. As part of the milestone, Hard Rock will host 40 Days That Rock, where Hard Rock Cafes around the world will host local-market events, concerts and promotions for rockers of all ages.

This month, Hard Rock's 40 Days That Rock will kick off in cities around the world, including Lake Tahoe, with Hard Rock Cafe Lake Tahoe's "40,000 pounds of Food in 40 Days" event. Beginning May 18, Hard Rock Cafe Lake Tahoe will partner with Bread & Broth; an all-volunteer program in South Lake Tahoe that provides hot, well-balanced meals to those in need; to help collect 40,000 pounds of food in 40 days.

Non-perishable donations will be accepted at the Hard Rock. To thank its loyal guests, Hard Rock Cafe Lake Tahoe will offer a 20 percent same day discount off food, non-alcoholic beverage and retail at Hard Rock Cafe to all who donate.

Monetary donations for Bread & Broth will also be accepted in the cafe and will be recorded at 4 pounds for each $1 donated conversion.

Hard Rock Lake Tahoe is inside Harveys at Stateline.

‘Be Ember Prepared’ movie

During a wildfire, thousnads of embers can rain down on your home. This is a common reason why homes are destroyed during a wildfire.

See the movie “Be Ember Prepared” on June 3, from 2-2:30pm to see how safe your house is.

It will be shown at Explore Tahoe: An Urban Trailhead Visitor Center located at 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd. in the Stateline Transit Center.