Mother Nature delays California's strawberry season

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

When it comes to this spring's strawberry season, it's better late than never.



In Northern and Central California, the unusual spring weather delayed planting – and picking – by two to four weeks. Despite hail and freezing temperatures, the crop will come through relatively unscathed.

"We won't even put the plants out until next week," said Jim Armstrong of Snowy Peaks Farm in Foresthill. "For us up here at 4,000 feet (elevation), we're a month behind where we're usually at. … Even in the Central Valley, they're two to three weeks behind normal. It's quite a big deal."

We Californians are spoiled. With winter and early season crops coming from Ventura County and coastal areas, we can buy state-grown fresh strawberries virtually year round.

Local strawberry season usually lasts April through July – and those berries are a special treat because growers can pick the fragile fruit when it is more ripe.

But this year, Mother Nature put the chill on growers. "We had 4 feet of snow three times this year," said Armstrong, who has been growing strawberries hydroponically for six years with his wife, Ginger, at their pick-your-own farm.

Tahoe Bike Challenge adding fundraising component

The 6th annual Tahoe Bike Challenge 2 Work, School and Play is May 23 to June 3.

This annual event challenges everyone to ride their bike in lieu of using an automobile to go to work, school or just riding for errands and enjoyment. In 2009, more than 700 people, 87 company teams and six schools registered online to log their trips and miles for a total of 23,000 miles.

Last year's event added an unforecasted challenge – snow and cold temperatures that significantly reduced participation.

For this year's Bike Challenge, the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition is inaugurating a community program called Bucks 4 Bikes. Bucks 4 Bikes is being promoted to raise dollars for the purchase of bicycles for Tahoe's youth who might otherwise not have one. Individuals and teams will be asked to consider pledging a dollar per mile they ride during the Challenge for this program.

Individual and Team awards will be given to those who raise the most dollars.

More details will appear online.

Hip hop artist Wiz Khalifa to play in Stateline

What do black and yellow and bleu have in common? Billboard’s Top 100 hit “Black and Yellow” will be performed by Pittsburgh hip hopper Wiz Khalifa at MontBleu casino in Stateline on June 21.

Khalifa has been selling out stadiums across the country following the release of Rolling Papers, his freshman album. It debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard “Top 200 Albums,” second only to Britney Spears’ recent release, and was at No. 1 on Billboard’s “Top R&B/Hip Hop Albums” and “Top Rap Albums.” His two most recent singles, “No Sleep” and “Roll Up” are currently No. 17 and No. 28, respectively, on Billboard’s Hot 100.

Born Cameron Thomaz, Wiz Khalifa began recording and producing records in his father’s Oklahoma studio at the age of 12. When he moved Pittsburgh as a teen, Khalifa laid down the groundwork to begin a solo career by recording music in a local studio, I.D. Labs. Khalifa stood out among the studio’s regulars, bringing him to the attention of Benjy Grinberg, a former executive assistant to L.A. Reid at Arista Records, who had started up a new independent label, Rostrum Records, and signed Khalifa.

Tickets are $39.50 plus taxes and fees. Doors open at 8pm and the show starts at 9pm.

Opinion: Important to teach stories about life

By Gene Kahane

While the well-meaning grown-ups in Sacramento discuss and debate the merits of creating an LGBT curriculum for our state's schools, it should be noted that on the local level, where I teach, it has been happening for a while. And the way it worked at our school was fairly simple: We gave kids a chance to read great stories.

The first step took place several years ago when I received a grant to buy a class set of "The Laramie Project." I had read the play, seen the HBO film version and was deeply moved by the story of Matthew Shepard, his murder and the town of Laramie, Wyo. As it turns out, so were my students, and so have they been every year since then.

More than any other text we study, this piece of dramatic literature compels more kids to raise their hands and offer to read aloud. They want to participate, to know this story about homosexuality and intolerance. The play is honest, balanced and real, and about how we should treat each other. The play is now part of our core curriculum.

My "agenda" in bringing "The Laramie Project" to my students was this: It's not OK to hurt people. Kids get that.

Gene Kahane is an English teacher at Encinal High School in Alameda.

Read the whole story

Kite explains thoughts on TRPA, 100% support of guv

By Anne Knowles

Lake Tahoe News sat down with Assemblyman Kelly Kite, R-Minden, to discuss the issues facing the 2011 Legislature. Kite represents Douglas County and portions of Carson City and Washoe County. He is a retired businessman who served on the Douglas County Commission from 1997 to 2008. Kite sits on three Assembly committees: Natural Resources, Agriculture and Mining; Judiciary; and Commerce and Labor. This is his first legislative session. He can be reached in his Assembly office by email at kkite@asm.state.nv.us or by phone at (775) 684.8843.

Lake Tahoe News: ***You've co-sponsored a bill with Sen. James Settelmeyer, Senate Bill 271, to remove Nevada from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Why did you sponsor the bill?***

Assemblyman Kelly Kite: I had several requests from businesspeople as well as residents. I was on the county commission for Douglas County for 12 years and there were many things that would have been beneficial to the lake that were road blocked by the two-thirds vote that California has. I think we can get a lot more done through a smaller, more responsible local coverage. My intent is not to do away with the TRPA or destroy the TRPA, but to make it more responsible to Nevada citizens.



Kelly Kite

Q: *How do you respond to critics of the bill that the time and money required for Nevada to set up its own mechanism for replacing the TRPA could slow development at the lake and cost the state more in the end?*

A: Our goal there is not to reinvent the wheel. We want to take the same organization and set up, but make it more centralized to Nevada's issues and, again, not to destroy the TRPA, but to make it more accessible and open to Nevada residents.

Q: ***How do Nevada's issues differ from California's?***

A: For many years we wanted to help with fuel loading and it was blocked until we had a fire. There were a lot of projects, including NDOT's (Nevada Department of Transportation), that would have helped run-off into the lake and helped lake clarity, but those were blocked and drug out for years with millions of dollars of extra expense. Those types of projects could have gone forward.

Q: ***You've also sponsored a number of bills dealing with firearms. What are you trying to accomplish with all of this legislation and where does it stand?***

A: Protect our Second Amendment rights. That's the best answer I can give you. Most of (the bills) have survived. To the best of my knowledge, most of them have or will pass through the Assembly floor and go to the Senate, and vice versa.

Q: ***Where do you stand on Gov. Brian Sandoval's proposed budget, in particular his proposed cuts to the state's education budget and his vow to not raise taxes?***

A: I support him all the way.

Q: ***So, you are opposed to looking at the mining industry for***

additional revenue or, say, a services tax?

A: I'm not averse to looking at anything. I'm going in with an open mind, but as it stands right now I am 100 percent behind Gov. Sandoval's budget and his tax policies.

Q: ***What do you think the state needs to do to revitalize its economy?***

A: Stabilize. And stabilization means a lot of things. But in order to get new businesses to come here, one of the things that scares businesses the most is uncertainty. Businesses will deal with a lot of things, but one thing they do not like is not knowing what's ahead of them. Until we can get a stabilized tax structure, get our education stabilized, which is important, we're not going to see a lot of new businesses. And I think the most important part of economic growth comes back to one word: stabilization.

Q: ***What do you mean by stabilize the education the system?***

A: There are two different schools of thought. We keep throwing more money at it, getting the same results, or reform and stabilization, and by stabilization I mean, they're talking about cutting $1.2 billion out of education, but they knew a year ago that that was stimulus money that was one-time only money. They did not look ahead to see the conditions that were coming when that money was not there. To the best of my knowledge, we've only cut education once or twice in the last 20 years, every year has been an increase in funding and I don't think we're seeing the results that we need from it.

Q: ***The economy is an almost all-consuming issue this session, but are there other issues you consider to be vital as well?***

A: Redistricting is going to be huge. Right now, my district covers all of Douglas County and every grain of sand in the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe is in my district. I don't know whether that will be my district next time or not. I'm pretty

sure the South Shore will be; Incline Village and Crystal Bay, I don't know. We've got to make sure that Douglas County and the lake portion is not split up into different districts. I think they need and deserve representation and Lake Tahoe issues are Lake Tahoe issues, whether it's Washoe County or Douglas County. And I think it's imperative that they have contiguous representation.

Q: ***How do you influence such a thing when you are not on the committee that deals with redistricting?***

A: It'll come down to a vote. Both sides of the houses will present theirs. The governor will present his, and, to be honest with you, I think the judge will do the decision-making. Shouldn't be that way, but I believe that's how it will turn out.

Q: ***This is your first session. What have you learned so far?***

A: I've learned a lot. As 12 years as county commissioner, I was familiar with the way things work, I was here for a lot testifying and lobbying, if you will, for the citizens of Douglas County. There is frustration the first 60 days, seems like we do nothing, the last 60 days, it's all crammed into there. I think it could be run smoother. I have my own ideas about that, but being a freshman in the minority party, so far you're the only one to listen to me about this.

Q: ***Are you concerned that things that have previously been the responsibility of the state will be put on to the counties and towns?***

A: Absolutely. It worries me a lot. Probably it concerns me more after working in county government for 12 years, being responsible for a county budget and all the things that counties do. Kicking the can down the road to the counties is not solving any problems. We need to solve our own problems without passing them on to someone else. I've talked with leaders in county government and there are some issues they

feel that they can handle better and cheaper than the state can, but there are some that they are just not equipped to handle. What Washoe and Clark counties can handle, the rural counties cannot.

Q: ***Finally, what is the best way for your constituents to be heard?***

A: Email us, directly in. Go to the state's website, pick the bill that they're interested in, make their comments and send those directly to the people who are involved. The shotgun-blast emails are not nearly as effective.

History talk at Camp Richardson

Margie Daum, long-time resident of Lake Tahoe and member of Lake Tahoe Historical Society, is the featured speaker at the society's meeting April 26.

Daum attended the one-room Lake Valley School in the 1940s.

She will show a film made by the casinos to promote the area and will share stories about early Tahoe life. Members and friends of the society will meet at 7pm at Camp Richardson's meeting room. The museum's traveling mini bookstore will be open for business.

Contact the museum for further information, (530) 541-5458.

Tahoe investment group buys Denver firm

By John Rebchook, Denver Post

A Nevada-based investment group has purchased DRI, a Denver-based disaster restoration firm that late last year received a shout-out from Dr. Phil.

The price that Jenmar Investment Group, LLC of Lake Tahoe paid for DRI was not disclosed. DRI has completed more than $60 million in re-construction and restorations during the past 25 years.

“Jenmar could not be more pleased by the acquisition of DRI,” Jenmar spokesman Phillip Knowles, said in a statement released this week. “DRI is poised in the marketplace with the best infrastructure and technical expertise to become the dominant company in the Mountain West market. They make a great addition to the Jenmar portfolio.”

Read the whole story

Andean trio to play in South Tahoe

Tahoe Arts Project is bringing Andean music trio Chasinakuy to Lake Tahoe Community College on April 30 at 7pm at Duke Theatre.

Chaskinakuy will be performing for local students April 25-29 as part of Tahoe Arts Project’s performing arts in the schools

program.

Tickets are $10 for adults and $5 for children and seniors and can be purchased in advance at the California or Nevada visitors centers. To charge tickets by phone, call (530) 542.3632. Tickets will also be available at the door.

For information, call (530) 542.3632.

Tough Mudder at Squaw Valley

Athletes will be tested on an extreme on-mountain obstacle course on Squaw Valley's legendary terrain for the 11th Tough Mudder event Sept. 17-18.

Chosen for its challenging landscape, Squaw Valley is one of 10 Tough Mudder venues across the country and this fall marks the second time the endurance event has come to Northern California.

Mudders will scale the Sierra throughout the 10- mile long course complete with 19 obstacles.

The military-style event challenges are strategically placed across the peaks that make up Squaw Valley. With more than 10,000 men and women expected to participate, those interested are encouraged to register early for the event with other comrades. Spectator tickets are also available for friends and family who wish to cheer on participants and enjoy the resort.

The top 5 percent of finishers will qualify for the World's Toughest Mudder, a 48-hour death race Dec. 17–18 in Englishtown, N.J., in which the winner will receive $10,000.

For more event details, go online.

Arts for the Schools’ student show

Dragonfly Restaurant will host the Arts for the Schools’ 6th Annual Student Art Show May 5 from 4-6pm.

For those who choose to stay for dinner, Dragonfly will offer half-off all entrees.

This year’s show titled “Artists in Bloom” will showcase more than 400 pieces of Tahoe Truckee children’s artwork. Art pieces were selected from a variety of elementary school classes throughout the region, including artwork created in the Arts For the Schools Artist-in-Residence program.

The art pieces, which include drawings, portraits and perspectives, will be on sale and proceeds benefit Arts for the Schools.

Dragonfly Restaurant and Sushi Bar is located upstairs at 10118 Donner Pass Road, in the heart of downtown Truckee.

Arts For the Schools raises funds throughout the year so that art education can be part of the local school curriculum.