Ski report: Changing conditions



Blue skies this morning could quickly change – layer up and be prepared for anything. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Opinion: Shedding light on the Invisible Children

By Morgan Kaufer

I am a sophomore currently attending South Tahoe High. I was just wondering, have you heard about the invisible children?

Recently, a crew from the Invisible Children Foundation visited my school and I was truly inspired to do all I can to help out this amazing organization. I hope I can inspire you too. Check it out.

Kids in Uganda and all over Central Africa are being abducted and forced to fight. And if they resist, they die. They live in intense fear and have no way to protect themselves or know when the brutal rebel army is coming for them… With Invisible Children's new event to free Africa of 25 years of war, I need to raise as much money as possible by April 25th.

Your donation will provide these rural areas with radio systems, rehabilitation centers for the recovered child

soldiers, and a search and rescue program for the poor, unheard children who had no choice but to try and escape the clutches of Joseph Kony- the man behind the rebel army. Imagine how many heads we would turn if we fully implemented the Protection Program. Think about how much peace we could bring to this planet.

No child should ever have to go through this kind of fear. What is happening over there is just unthinkable… Some are even forced to shoot friends and family. It's absolutely horrible and they need you. They don't have a voice. So lets work together to give them one.

For more information on the Invisible Children Foundation, please visit www.invisiblechildren.com and learn about their new event called 25.

What these people are doing to try and bring peace to this world is just phenomenal. They put their heart and soul into their work and they need your help now. Please go online and donate to my page. This is so important to me and I want to make it important to you as well. And, once you have donated, create your own fundraising page so we can work together to stop Joseph Kony, and free the defenseless children from fear and death. They are screaming out to you… listen. Silence the violence and increase the peace.

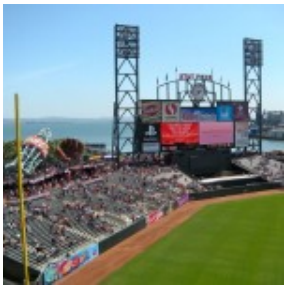
Morgan Kaufer is a South Lake Tahoe resident who is active in the Invisible Children Foundation.

Family entertainment costs

continue to rise

By Steve Rushin, Via

As a father of four, I may as well stuff all my cash in a confetti cannon and fire it into the air on arrival at the next ballpark, theme park, or movie theater my family visits, simply to expedite the inevitable process by which my wallet is drained of every last dollar for the sake of entertainment. When did family fun become so expensive? VIA's analysis of ticket prices at major theme parks between 1965 and 2011 shows an increase of more than 2,200 percent—and that even figures in the AAA discount, which has become a saving grace for card-carrying families. By comparison, since 1965 the price of gasoline has gone up 658 percent and milk is up 371 percent. Even before setting foot in most theme parks, the modern parent can feel taken for a ride.



Families still attend San Francisco Giants games despite the cost. Photo/LTN file

And theme parks seem a bargain next to ballparks. Watching a game played by the Boston Red Sox, the Major League Baseball team nearest to my home in New England, cost a family of four an average of $335 for tickets, parking, food, drinks, and

merchandise in 2010. This is not entirely a lament. Increases in insurance, property taxes, and consumer appetites for new attractions keep costs escalating for family entertainment providers everywhere. SeaWorld's Shamu—and her human equivalent, Red Sox slugger David Ortiz—have to eat (if perhaps not quite so well). There may be other reasons for such precipitous increases, but the theme parks aren't telling.

High prices haven't deterred consumers so far. Historically, people will pay a premium to see their major Mickeys, be they Mouse or Mantle. The Red Sox have been sold out for years. Though the global economy has melted down like a $5 waffle cone in the trembling hand of my 5-year-old, the three theme parks we visited last year were bursting at the seams. In fact, according to the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, attendance has increased nearly every year for almost two decades.

Read the whole story

Police explorers come home with trophies

The South Lake Tahoe Police Explorers won in several categories at the Central Valley Explorer Competition in Tulare a few weeks ago.

After months of training in preparation for the event, the Explorer Scouts demonstrated their competency and professionalism as they performed in several scheduled events. Explorer competitors consisted of Explorer Cmdr. Joey Acker, Explorer Sgt. Jose Silva, Explorers Allison Roberts, Hector Vasquez and Vanessa Perez.

Under the supervision of Officer Rebecca Inman, the SLTPD Explorer Scout coordinator, these young people competed in 13 events against approximately 275 explorers from police and sheriff's departments from all over California and Nevada.

The South Lake Tahoe Police Explorers brought home trophies in eight of the 13 events. Among them were:

1.Vehicle Search, first place.

2. Crime Scene Investigation, first place.

3. Explorer Ride-A-Long skills, second place.

4. Oral Board Examination, second place.

5. Written Police Officer's POST Entry Exam, second place (with a score of 97 percent)

6. Physical Agility Tests, one second and one fifth place.



Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Prescription drugs in the household may get in the wrong hands or prompt abuse. For that, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department has agreed to take back unwanted pharmaceuticals on April 30 from 9am to 1pm in the Safeway parking lot at 1020 Johnson Blvd.

•The South Lake Tahoe Police Department would like to remind motorists to be aware of parking in spaces designated for the disabled. The current fine for unlawfully parking in properly marked handicapped space in the city is $450.

• The Tahoe Choir will present music from Broadway shows on May 6, 7 and 8 in the Duke Theatre of the Lake Tahoe Community College. Concerts start at 7:30pm on Friday and Saturday with a matinee showing slated for 2pm. For more information, visit www.Tahoechoir.org.

• The Markleeville Plein Air event is planned for June 21 through June 25 inviting spectators to watch 12 artists paint Markleeville and other areas of Alpine County. A collector reception is slated for June 25 at 2pm. All artwork is available at the Markleeville Art Gallery, 14841 Highway 89. Information can be obtained by calling (530) 694.ARTS or visiting www.markleevilleartgallery.com.

• A Historical Haunted Walking Tour is slated for Oct. 20 and 21 starting from Moody’s Bistro & Lounge, 10007 Bridge St. in Truckee. Walk to the most historic and fascinating haunts in town. Visit www.truckeehistorytour.org or call (530) 305.4231

Fire weather station going up this summer

By Susan Wood

Come summer, Smokey Bear could be more accurate on forecasts than weather reporters. And he's probably kept his job longer – since 1944.



The fire weather prediction station LTBMU will install this summer resembles this photo.

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit plans to erect in Meyers a fire weather station that looks like a cross between a tripod and a spaceship. Still, this $15,000 device reads levels of relative humidity, precipitation depth, fuel moisture, solar radiation, along with wind speed and direction. It sends those readings to a computer program that provides fire danger for the U.S. Forest. From there, Smokey Bear signs will indicate fire hazards that include the five levels: "low, moderate, high, very high and extreme."

The most commonly seen sign exists in front of the South Lake Tahoe visitor's center off Highway 50 next to Campground by the Lake. One may also call the LTBMU fire danger recorded line at (530) 644.6048.

In contrast, "red flag" fire warnings originate with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A similar weather station now stands at the Meyers fire station, but it's so old it no longer meets National Fire Danger Rating System guidelines, and it can't be repaired. Moreover, structure development has hindered the satellite readings from the 29-year-old unit referred to by the Forest Service as RAWS (Remote Access Weather Station).

Fire resources will be managed by the readings – including those crews out in the woods cutting. On dry days, machinery even intended to reduce fire fuel can start one.

"That's where we locally see our fire dangers. It's extremely important," said John Washington, LTBMU fuels division chief.

The Forest Service aimed to find adequate space, ground cover, air flow and sunlight. At a mere $500 in costs, the new RAWS will be installed at the end of Mohawk Street near Lake Baron. It will take up 400 square feet and will be fenced in. When the snow completely melts in the area, about 200 feet of vegetation must be cleared from the site. Crews will need to take down 25 trees under the proposal, which already passed its required comment period.

"It definitely does help because it helps us compile all our available resources," Lake Valley Fire Chief Jeff Michael said.

Much like the Lake Tahoe Basin sits at the cusp of heavy moisture between the El Nino and La Nina weather phenomena, the National Wildland Significant Fire Potential Outlook from April through July this year reports "equal chances" of a bad

fire season in this region of the Sierra Nevada. Fire officials will sometimes say when it’s wet more fuel for the fire grows. When it’s dry, the terrain sparks easily.

Predicting is one thing. Prevention is quite another.

“(The RAWS) will help – but we still knew we were in a high fire danger and had a red flag warning during the Angora Fire. Sometimes we can have all the technology in the world, but it still takes preventing and doing what we can and telling others to do what they can. Fire’s going to happen,” said Leona Allen, a former city dispatcher who was on the job when her father’s home burned in the devastating fire in 2007 that consumed 254 homes. The lot is now home to a commemorative garden, and Allen works for Lake Valley Fire.

Minorities soon to be majority among nation’s kids

By Carol Morello, Washington Post

A majority of the nation’s children will be minorities before the decade is out, crossing a demographic milestone more quickly than previously predicted, according to a new analysis of census statistics by a demographer with the Brookings Institution.

Demographer William H. Frey said unexpectedly rapid growth among Hispanics and Asians is creating a demographic age gap that already is visible in classrooms and playgrounds. The Census Bureau has estimated that most children will be minorities by 2023, but Frey said that landmark will be reached years earlier.

Frey said it also is likely that the nation's population overall will become predominantly minority before the census estimate of 2042.

Read the whole story

Much focus turning to Highway 50

Major changes are in store for Highway 50 in the coming months from Echo Summit to the Stateline area.

Among them, the groundbreaking is scheduled for April 26 on the first phase of the long-awaited Highway 50 project that for over a decade has called for curbs, gutters, sidewalks, landscaping, street lighting and a 6-foot wide bike lane alongside the major thoroughfare from Trout Creek to Ski Run Boulevard. The first phase alone is estimated at more than $48 million, with the city of South Lake Tahoe pledging $1 million.

The groundbreaking will likely beat the start of the highly anticipated work on the retaining wall at Echo Summit that's considered so extensive it will shut down traffic through the major entry into Lake Tahoe for two weeks. The $1.9 million project is funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Weather permitting, the work is scheduled to begin the first week of May and may continue into the Amgen bike race, the California Department of Transportation announced this week. First, the contractor must make a "cast" of the existing, splintered wall. Echo Summit is not on the route, but tourism

officials want to make it easy for thousands of visitors expected to arrive for one of the largest anticipated events going into peak season. The Amgen Tour is slated for May 15-22.

Despite other reports to the contrary, Caltrans contends it never provided a definitive date of the work start date, so it is "not delayed."

"There has never been a definitive date. The earliest start was always the first week of May. It's all driven by the weather," Caltrans spokewoman Carol Herman said.

To assist in navigating the multitude of state roadwork planned over late spring into summer, Caltrans has created a brochure and a website highlighting an alternative route to circumvent the Echo Summit closure. The route from South Lake Tahoe covers Highway 50, 89 over Luther Pass to Highway 88 to Jackson. North of there, a motorist may take Highway 49 north to Placerville or Highway 16 through the Gold Country.

As for work closer to the Nevada state line, the City Council unanimously approved this week to mount safety signs directing pedestrians to avoid walking alongside Highway 50 next to the defunct Chateau at Heavenly redevelopment site, also known for years as the convention center project. Caltrans has diverted liability of the property issue with the city.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Japan hit with 7.1 aftershock

There were no reports of damage from the aftershock centered off the northeast coast of Japan.

Officials warned of tsunami heights of up to 6.6 feet, but the warning was lifted after 90 minutes.

A nuclear plant in Miyagi lost three of its four power sources, while no damage was reported at the crippled Fukushima Daiichi plant.

—Los Angeles Times

Garrido decides to plead not guilty in Dugard case

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

In a surprise move today, Phillip Garrido entered a not guilty plea to charges that he kidnapped Jaycee Lee Dugard.

His wife Nancy entered the same not guilty plea after the judge indicated there were irregularities in the grand jury process that indicted the couple in September.

Stephen Tapson, Nancy Garrido's attorney, said the plan earlier this week was for Phillip Garrido to plead guilty but that a last minute hitch over the manner in which the grand jury selection was handled prompted the decision to plead not guilty.

Tapson would not elaborate on the problem, but said the matter arose when Phillip Garrido's attorney Susan Gellman brought the issue to his attention Wednesday night.

El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson confirmed that there was a issue raised in the manner in which the grand jurors were selected, but said such claims are common and he

expected the matter to be dismissed.

Read the whole story