Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Barton Health's staff and administration filled the Snowflake Lounge at Barton Memorial Hospital this week as they presented hospitalist Dr. Stefan Schunk with the "Doctor of the Year" award. Dr. Clint Purvance, Barton's chief medical officer, presented Schunk with a commemorative plaque on Thursday.

• Barton is hosting a free family day at the South Tahoe Middle School multipurpose room on April 30 from 11am to 3pm. The event features 30 interactive health-related activities and screenings by Barton Health and other local health-related businesses and nonprofits. A health fair is included and the CALSTAR helicopter air ambulance will be on hand. For more information, visit www.bartonhealth.org/events.

• A.S.A. High Sierra Softball registration is taking signups for girls and boys ages 4-1/2 to 16 years old on April 7 at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center at 5:30pm.

• South Lake Tahoe AAUW will host Dr. Jennifer Norris, a family medicine practitioner with Alpine Family Practice and Barton Memorial Hospital who is also trained in acupuncture. Norris will discuss her understanding of the practice and its place in medical care on April 9 at 10 am at the Aspen Room, Lake Tahoe Community College. For more information, call (530) 541.2799 or email slocumsrus@msn.com.

• Northstar's Tahoe Cross Country Center, which will be open through May 1, invites the public to ski with Olympians on April 14. A masters clinic is planned for 1:30-3pm and the juniors version at 3:30pm. On hand will be three U.S. skiers who compete at the World and Olympic level: Kikkan Randall, Kris Freeman, and Andy Newell. Cost is $40 per person plus

afternoon trail pass. Those interested may register at www.xcski.org.

• The Wild & Scenic Film Festival On Tour at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences on April 19 and Resort at Squaw Creek on April 22. Each screening offers a unique package of films and will begin at 7pm. The festival was started by the watershed advocacy group, the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) in 2003. For more information, call (530) 265.5961.

• Two new boutique style movie theaters have just opened in the Village at Northstar on Copper Lane near the entrance to the Village at Northstar across from TC's Pub. The Village Cinemas feature two screens, with one containing 96 elevated stadium seats and the second containing 45 elevated stadium seats. The theaters are scheduled to be open seven days a week through the remainder of the winter season. Show times can be accessed by calling (530) 562.8800.

• Carl Ribaudo, who runs Strategic Marketing Group in South Lake Tahoe, has joined the Tahoe Resources Conservation District board.

Northstar striving to be California's premier ski resort

By Susan Wood

TRUCKEE – Could Northstar-at-Tahoe be the next Beaver Creek? Or a Deer Valley?

Those are the questions Vail Resorts is posing as it plans to

invest $30 million in capital improvements into the Truckee-area resort for the 2011-12 ski season. Upgrades include a mid-mountain lodge at the top of the Tahoe Zephyr Express chair, more snowmaking off the Drifter run and another lift off the backside that services two new runs.

Once considered a modest family resort years ago, “Northstar has come a long way” in the last few years, Chief Operating Officer Bill Rock told *Lake Tahoe News* on a recent media ski day. “That’s what attracted Vail.”



Adding a lift next season will allow access to more of Northstar's backside. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Vail bought Northstar a few months ago from Booth Creek partners, who maintain ownership of Sierra-at-Tahoe on the South Shore. The acquisition comes on the heels of consistent minor- to-moderate upgrades and a major one that includes the building of the first five-star hotel in the Lake Tahoe region – the Ritz-Carlton situated off the Highlands Gondola.

Rock admitted the improvements were already on the drawing board but would have been finished years in the future. Now, the plans have been fast-forwarded with bringing a ski conglomerate like Vail to the North Shore. The Colorado-based

company expects to sink at least $83 million in improvements in all its resorts for next ski season.

“That’s what Vail brings to the table,” Rock said.

Vail also owns Heavenly Mountain Resort on the South Shore, along with Vail, Breckenridge, Keystone and Beaver Creek in Colorado. These resorts are considered to be some of most upscale by most U.S. standards. At some, tissue is handed out at the lodges, along with warm chocolate chip cookies and gourmet hot chocolate at the base and summit.

“We’re not interested in being a cookie-cutter resort,” Rock said, noting how travelers are seeking “the California experience” when they arrive. He hinted a chef with the reputation of the Ritz-Carlton’s Traci Des Jardins would be running the menu at the new lodge. It’s still unclear who will own the lodge at this point because Vail holds a 40-year lease to operations of the resort, while CNL Lifestyle Properties owns the land.

The aim is to relieve congestion at the top of the popular Big Springs Express Gondola, where hundreds gather at the day lodge or in front of three mid-mountain, high-speed lifts — Vista, Arrow and Tahoe Zephyr.

“From here (at the top of Tahoe Zephyr), you could ski the backside without ever returning (to the base),” Rock said.

While this “California” experience calls for amenities that go way beyond skiing the snow surface, it doesn’t mean Vail isn’t seeking uniformity in some of its properties. The signs of the new 500-seat, on-mountain restaurant show images that look precisely like Heavenly’s Tamarack Lodge, which was completed in February between its Tamarack chairlift and gondola.

Northstar’s is expected to break ground in June and will serve gourmet pizza, specialty soups and sandwiches, with a large salad bar.

Although the lodge cannot be seen off the mountain, the 200-foot deck will jut out from the ridge for a view that still excites veteran planner Tim Beck, who's worked for Booth Creek for 13 years before becoming the chief planner for Vail Resorts.

With all the changes, Beck views Northstar as a ski resort that splits its appeal and attention between the day skier coming up from the Bay Area feeder market and the destination skier who stays longer and spends more. The latter visitor expects more in venues as Beaver Creek has shown.

"We think this is a special spot," Beck told the media group at the site. A sign marks the spot. Northstar has already started tree thinning. About 60 will need to be removed, and still more thinned.

"I'd like them to focus more on the mountain," said Carson City resident Mike Johnson, who has skied around the lake at the various resorts for years. Northstar answered his call for more terrain opportunity with the other part of the improvements – a lift and two runs.

The project makes way for a detachable quad that runs through a wooded area overlooking the Martis Valley and Sawtooth range. One new run will be more traditional, while the other is tree lined. The runs will provide tree islands that add to the fun – much like its black diamond clad Martis run.

Placer County, Lahontan Regional Water Control Board and the California Department of Fish & Game oversee the resort. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has no jurisdiction on Northstar's plans. But with the extent of them, Beck and company enlisted the early support of Sierra Watch and other environmental groups, which have a watchful eye on Martis Valley development. The Sierra Watch website has called the collaboration "another great example of our strategic foresight." No authority for the group agreed to comment.

Northstar is in the process of creating the environmental-related documents.

Plans for the village include the opening of retail outlets Patagonia and Burton as well as an expansion for the North Face store.

Northstar-at-Tahoe is located off Highway 267 between Kings Beach and Truckee.

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Jitloff takes third in combined

By U.S. Ski Team

WINTER PARK, Colo. – Colby Granstrom (Lake Stevens, WA) produced a blazing second run through heavy snow to win the men's slalom title by 1.33 seconds to close the men's competition at the 2011 Putnam Investments U.S. Alpine Championships.

Tommy Ford (Bend, OR) was second in slalom but earned the combined title with the fastest added time from both super G and slalom. Ford was also victorious in both giant slalom and super G in Winter Park. NCAA giant slalom champion Seppi Stiegler (Jackson Hole, WY) was third matching his sister Resi's result in the women's slalom.

Top junior honors went to fourth place finisher Michael Ankeny (Deep Haven, MN). The Western Region produced 2929 points to top both the East and Rocky/Central Regions for the Tom Garner Memorial Trophy.

Official results, Putnam Investments U.S. Alpine Championships, Winter Park

Slalom

1. Colby Granstrom, Lake Stevens, WA, 1:42.67

2. Tommy Ford, Bend, OR, 1:44.00

3. Seppi Steigler, Jackson Hole, WY, 1:44.30

—

Juniors

1. Michael Ankeny, Deephaven, MN, 1:44.44

2. Juho-Pekka Penttinen, Finland, 1:46.94

3. Taylor Wunsch, Swanton, VT, 1:47.88

Combined

1. Tommy Ford, Bend, OR

2. Colby Granstrom, Lake Stevens, WA

3. Tim Jitloff, Reno, NV

—

Juniors

1. Michael Ankeny, Deephaven, MN

2. Taylor Wunsch, Swanton, VT

3. Bobby Farrell, West Windsor, VTa

Tom Garner Memorial Trophy

1. Western Region – 2969

2. Eastern Region – 1674

3. Rocky/Central Region – 1416

Santa Rosa junior comes in third

By U.S. Ski Team

WINTER PARK, Colo. – Sixteen-year-old junior racer Mikaela Shiffrin (Burke Mountain, VT) took a first run lead to victory in the women's slalom to close the 2011 Putnam Investments U.S. Alpine Championships in snowy Winter Park.

On Saturday evening, Shiffrin was awarded the Ski Racing Magazine Junior of the Year award at the annual athlete banquet sharing the honor with Ryan Cochran-Siegle (Starksboro, VT). Four-time Olympian Sarah Schleper (Vail, CO), 32, was second and earned the combined title with the fastest paired super G and slalom times. Resi Stiegler was third, matching her younger brother Seppi's result in the men's slalom. The top scoring region in the four-day championships was the West, earning the Tom Garner Memorial Trophy.

Official results, Putnam Investments U.S. Alpine Championships, Winter Park, April 3

Slalom

1. Mikaela Shiffrin, Burke Mountain, VT, 1:42.14

2. Sarah Schleper, Vail, CO, 1:42.14

3. Resi Stiegler, Jackson Hole, WY, 1:43.95

—

Juniors

1. Mikaela Shiffrin, Burke Mountain, VT, 1:42.14

2. Devin Delaney, North Conway, NH, 1:48.25

3. Lizzie Kistler, Santa Rosa, CA, 1:48.37

Combined

1. Sarah Schelper, Vail, CO

2. Laurenne Ross, Klamath Falls, OR

3. Kiley Staples, Park City, UT

—

Juniors

1. Sydney Staples, Park City, UT

2. Emma Naatz, Salt Lake City, UT

3. Lila Lapanja, Incline Village, NV

Tom Garner Memorial Trophy

1. Western Region – 2969

2. Eastern Region – 1674

3. Rocky/Central Region – 1416

Reno man on trail of Amelia Earhart mystery

By Frank X. Mullen Jr., Reno Gazette-Journal

A Reno man, who for more than 30 years has been searching for Amelia Earhart, has come up with a way that scientists may be able to isolate the lost aviator's DNA from spit left on seals of envelopes.

If Earhart's DNA is available, it can be compared with a bone fragment found two years ago on a remote Pacific island near where Earhart vanished in 1937.

"I watch the TV show 'CSI Miami' and thought about how they are always extracting DNA from evidence," said Elgen M. Long, an Amelia Earhart scholar and author of "Amelia Earhart: The Mystery Solved." "I said, 'hey, I've got these personal letters she wrote and probably sealed herself.' People used letter openers back then, and sure enough the envelope seals were never broken."

Long called Justin Long, his grandson and a student at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, Canada. Justin pitched the project to Dongya Yang, a genetic archaeologist at the university. Yang agreed to attempt to extract DNA from mouth-lining cells that would have been in the saliva Earhart used to seal the envelopes.

"One of the letters was written by Amelia on airline letterhead while waiting for a flight, so we can be fairly certain that she is the one who sealed the envelope," said Justin Long, whose public relations and design agency ACG Corp. is partially funding the research.

Read the whole story

Guest speaker brings Unity in soulful concert

Unity at the Lake hosts singer, songwriter, pianist Kathy Zavada at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center for an inspirational talk and concert on May 1.

The ceremonies start at 10am. A donation of $15 to $20 is suggested.

Call (530) 544-2266 for more information.

Ski report: Sunny spring day



It looks like a beautiful day to get out on the slopes. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



•El Dorado County Office of Education Superintendent Vicki Barber won the Ferd. Kiesel Memorial Distinguished Service Award from the Association of California School Administrators. This is the highest honor ACSA can present to an individual.

• The April issue of *Outside* magazine has a feature on what people close to departed outdoor icons have as a physical reminder of that person. Professional skier J.T. Holmes talks about Lake Tahoe's Shane McConkey.

• El Dorado Children's Dental Van will be at Bijou Community School April 18-29 and at Al Tahoe Learning Center May 9-20. Families with eligible children may register by calling 800.388.8690.

• One day golf season might arrive in Lake Tahoe. Here are some things to think about: Nearly 40,000 golfers are admitted to emergency rooms every year after being injured at play, according to Golf Digest's website. The Consumer Products Safety Commission reports that approximately 15,000 golf cart-related injuries require emergency room treatment every year.

• El Dorado County is accepting Senior of the Year nominations. Here is a form.

• Be aware – South Lake Tahoe Police and California Highway Patrol will join 225 other local agencies through April in cracking down on distracted drivers. Cellular telephone use has contributed to a number of incidents since their inception. Tickets for violating the hands free or no texting law costs a minimum of $159. The crackdown will start April 4.

• Wildland Fire Safety and Hand Crew Operations is a weeklong class scheduled from April 4-8 at Lake Tahoe Community College. The instructor is Keegan Schafer (kschafer@tahoefire.com), crew supervisor with Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District.

Food assistance in El Dorado County

Proper nutrition and human contact have so many positive effects for overall health. In El Dorado County programs are available to ensure these life sustaining necessities.

The Senior Nutrition Program offers nutritionally balanced, home style meals in seven community dining centers, as well as home delivered meals for a suggested donation of $3 a meal.

For more information, call (530) 621.6160.

Pre-Amgen event pits cyclists against legends on Tahoe route

Cycling enthusiasts can kick off the Amgen Tour of California in style during the Start at the Top – Lake Tahoe Legends Ride May 14.



The Legends Ride allows participants to ride the Stage 1 course and pedal elbow to elbow with cycling legends and dignitaries, including Bobby Julich, Sky ProCycling Race Coach and 2004 Olympic bronze medalist; and John Howard, who rode on the 1968, 1972 and 1976 Olympic teams, set the world 24-hour

cycling distance record of 593 miles and finished second in the Race Across America (1982), which he co-founded. Other legends include Max Jones, Mike Neel, David Brink and Roland Della Santa.

The Legends Ride is produced by TGFT Productions and Bike the West and is fully supported with rest stops, technical support, first aid and support and gear assistance.

Options include a 72-mile roadway route around Lake Tahoe and a 35-mile ride that transfers participants from South Shore to North Lake Tahoe via the Tahoe Queen paddle-wheeler to cycle around East Shore and finish in Stateline. A sightseeing boat cruise is available for non-cyclists.

The event is open to the first 1,000 cyclists who sign-up online by April 30. Registration is $125/person for the 72-mile ride, and $140/person for the Boat Cruise plus 35-mile option, which is expected to sell-out.