Blockbuster closing South Tahoe location

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe will be down to one video store in a matter of days after Blockbuster locks its doors for good.

Patrick Pearson, manager for the store, said an exact date has not been given for closing shop – it could Feb. 8 or Feb. 10.



"We had a good customer base, but not enough with the cost of rent," Pearson said Tuesday morning. "This town, there are so many people in tight spots."

He found out about the impending closure on Jan. 27.

Pearson said many of his customers are business owners who say they are also close to pulling the plug. On Monday, Ace Hardware closed. The Midas shop also ceased operation in January.

Pearson points to the economy, locals not having money and tourists not coming to town as reasons for the store's demise, more than Red Box and Netflix.

Pearson, who has worked at the store for 11 years, said at one time he was the owner's regional manager. The South Tahoe location is the last of the eight to close.

With Blockbuster's prominent location at the Y, it will be another blemish on town with another massive building sitting empty.

Until the doors close, the five employees will be selling

movies instead of renting them.

Ski report: Cold and sunny



Blue sky, chilly temps and a bit of wind are in the forecast for today.

He is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Vee Gay – 1938-2011

Longtime South Lake Tahoe resident Vee Gay died Jan. 29. She was 72.

Mrs. Gay suffered an aneurysm.

Her career as a nurse led her to be active in the medical community until the time of her death. In January she had been elected president of the Sacramento Valley Area Council, a regional group of hospital auxiliaries. She was a past president of the Barton Auxiliary.



Vee Gay and daughter Catherine Hembrow

Mrs. Gay put in more than 10,000 hours of volunteer time with the auxiliary. Part of that time was spent at the Attic, the thrift store the auxiliary runs. She was at the store on a monthly basis providing blood pressure checks for anyone who wanted one.

Mrs. Gay graduated from John Hopkins school of nursing in 1959, though at the time she was known as Vee Hall.

She worked for her first husband, Frank Hembrow, in his medical practice as a nurse in South Lake Tahoe.

Mrs. Gay was a past member of the Barton Memorial Hospital board of directors, was on the Tahoe Valley Community Plan team, and supported the choral group TOCCATA.

“Her contributions have been many,” her friend Judy Cefalu said. “This woman had a great laugh. She was happy, pleasant, easy to get along with … just a good woman.”

Mrs. Gay is survived by husband David Gay of South Lake Tahoe; daughter Catherine Hembrow; and grandchildren Samuel and Sarah.

Services are pending.

Clarification: Santiago explains Board of Supes chairmanship

Lake Tahoe News would like to clarify misinformation it posted recently about El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago.

Santiago is no longer chair of the Board of Supervisors based on the regular rotation of having the position for one year. Although she phrased it in a different manner while notifying the California Tahoe Conservancy board, of which she is a member, she has told *Lake Tahoe News* she regrets how she worded things at that meeting.

Santiago is chair of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board. Each jurisdiction around the lake has a representative to this board, usually an elected official.

Lake Tahoe News regrets writing any misinformation and has removed the original story.

Special ski days benefit North Shore schools

The Excellence in Education Foundation’s Skiing for Schools Days allows people on the slopes for $25 as a fundraiser for North Shore schools.

Participating resorts include: Tahoe Donner Ski Area, Feb. 28-March 6; Sugar Bowl, March 19; Homewood, March 20; Alpine Meadows, April 3; Squaw Valley, April 10.

The special lift tickets must be purchased in advance at a Porters Sports location (Truckee, Tahoe City or Incline Village), except the Homewood and Alpine events, which may be purchased at the resorts.

Brown argues for his budget plan in State of State address

By Evan Halper and Anthony York, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – Gov. Jerry Brown told lawmakers Monday that "it would be unconscionable" not to let voters decide whether to pay more taxes to help balance the budget, using his first State of the State address as California's 39th governor to press Republicans to agree to a special election.

Invoking the democracy movements in North Africa to bolster his bid that the people be heard, Brown warned GOP lawmakers against impeding a referendum that would allow voters to sanction – or refuse – extended income, sales and car levies to help close a $25-billion budget shortfall.

"When democratic ideals and calls for the right to vote are stirring the imagination of young people in Egypt and Tunisia and other parts of the world, we in California can't say now is the time to block a vote of the people," Brown said. "…The state belongs to all of us, not just the people in this

chamber.”

The governor, who unveiled no new policy proposals in his 14-minute address to a joint session of the Legislature, stayed focused on his wish to take the tax question to voters in the summer, which would require lawmakers to act by late March. But there has been little movement in the Legislature since Brown announced his idea several weeks ago.

Read the whole story

Familiar names dot U.S. Freestyle Team roster

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Ski Team

PARK CITY – World Cup leader Hannah Kearney of Norwich, Vt., reigning World Champions Patrick Deneen of Cle Elum, Wash., and Ryan St. Onge of Winter Park, Colo., as well as 2011 Winter X Games champions Sammy Carlson of Portland and John Teller of Mammoth Lakes headline the U.S. 2011 FIS Freestyle World Championship Team. The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association announced the roster Monday.

The U.S. will be represented by a strong crew of 37 skiers looking to compete with success on the World Championship stage. The four-day event will showcase the United States’ best, including Olympic medalists, World Champions and X Games winners, as well as a new event to the World Championships, slopestyle skiing. Slopestyle as well as halfpipe skiing are being considered for the inclusion in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

Among the team members are 2009 World Champions St. Onge, Deneen and 2005 World Champion Kearney. The World Championships medalists also include 2009 bronze medalist Jen Hudak of Salt Lake City.

2011 FIS World Freestyle Ski Championship Team

Aerials

Men

Scotty Bahrke (Tahoe City)

Nevin Brown (Streetsboro, OH)

Matt DePeters (Hamburg, NY)

Dylan Ferguson (Amesbury, MA)

Ryan St. Onge (Winter Park, CO)

Women

Ashley Caldwell (Charleston, SC)

Emily Cook (Belmont, MA)

Dual Moguls

Men

Jeremy Cota (Carrabassett Valley, ME)

Patrick Deneen (Cle Elum, WA)

Sho Kashima (Stateline)

Bryon Wilson (Butte, MT)

Women

Hannah Kearney (Norwich, VT)

Heather McPhie (Bozeman, MT)

Eliza Outtrim (Steamboat Springs, CO)

Kayla Snyderman (Winchester, MA)

Halfpipe

Men

Simon Dumont (Dillon, CO)

Tucker Perkins (North Hampton, NH)

David Wise (Reno)

Torin Yater-Wallace (Basalt, CO)

Women

Jess Cumming (Avon, CO)

Jen Hudak (Salt Lake City)

Devin Logan (West Dover, VT)

Brita Sigourney (Carmel, CA)

Moguls

Men

Jeremy Cota (Carrabassett Valley, ME)

Patrick Deneen (Cle Elum, WA)

Joe Discoe (Telluride, CO)

David DiGravio (Farmington, ME)

Bryon Wilson (Butte, MT)

Women

Hannah Kearney (Norwich, VT)

Heidi Kloser (Vail, CO)

Heather McPhie (Bozeman, MT)

Eliza Outtrim (Steamboat Springs, CO)

Skicross

Men

Pat Duran (North Fayston, VT)

Ethan Fortney (Tenino, WA)

John Teller (Mammoth Lakes)

Trevor Ricoili (South Lake Tahoe)

Slopestyle

Men

Sammy Carlson (Portland, OR)

Alex Schlopy (Park City, UT)

John Strenio (Salt Lake City)

Gus Kenworthy (Telluride, CO)

Women

Devin Logan (West Dover, VT)

Ashley Battersby (Park City, UT)

Keri Herman (Breckenridge, CO)

Megan Olenick (Carbondale, CO)

Kindertown faces state closure; owner going to court

By Kathryn Reed

Kindertown parents found out Monday night at an emergency meeting the state intends to shutdown the South Lake Tahoe day care center Friday.

This is the second time in 16 months the state Department of Social Services has issued such a notice.

Mike McLaughlin, who successfully defended owner Maria Barrows-Crist in El Dorado County Superior Court last year, intends to file a stay on Thursday. If granted, it would mean the center with 90 youngsters and 18 employees would at least temporarily remain open.



Maria Barrows-Crist on Jan. 31 tells parents Kindertown's future is in jeopardy. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Barrows-Crist, holding back tears at Kindertown, told the more than 40 adults and about a dozen children she is going to fight the current allegations just like she did the prior ones.

The most serious of the allegations in the 25-page document is a young boy with Downs syndrome wandering away from the facility to Highway 50, which parallels the facility a block away.

The report details how the boy was found by a family driving down the highway, how police were called, and the subsequent interview of Barrows-Crist and one of her employees.

In addition to a child being able to leave the premise unattended, the state says Barrows-Crist did not file the proper Unusual Incident Report.

“I thought he was hiding. We looked everywhere. I got in my car and searched the neighborhood,” Barrows-Crist said in an exclusive interview with *Lake Tahoe News* before the Jan. 31 meeting with parents. “I reported it. They said they didn’t get the Unusual Incident Report.”

Police officers are also obligated to report such incidents to the state, so it’s not like Barrows-Crist could hide what happened.

The paperwork ordering the license for the preschool and the license for the infant center be revoked was signed by Administrative Law Judge Ann Elizabeth Sarli on Jan. 3.

Barrows-Crist, unable to hire an attorney, represented herself at the late-November hearing that led to that decision. It was Jan. 26 that Frank S. Furtek, deputy director of the legal division for the Department of Social Services, signed the paperwork for the closure to be effective Feb. 5.

The state Department of Education will be at the center at

6:45 Tuesday morning telling parents where else they can enroll their children. Part of Barrows-Crist's funding is from the state through subsidies parents receive.

"We've got your back" and "we'll be here" were said by parents gathered on Monday. Many have been through this before.

John Cocores was at the Sept. 23, 2009, meeting Barrows-Crist conducted to let parents know about the first threat of closure. He was there Jan. 31, 2011, too.

Cocores took his 4-year-old son, Ryan, out of Kindertown for a bit during the uncertainty of whether is would remain open. The second day at the new place, which Cocores would not name, Ryan suffered a head injury.

"He is progressing wonderfully," Cocores says of his son at Kindertown. He only has good things to say about the care his child receives.

Cocores goes on to say, "At some point you have to wonder when it's harassment. Do they inspect all the schools as much as this do (Kindertown)?"

Kori Tomlin, senior staff attorney with the Department of Social Services, deferred comments to the public affairs section of DSS. A representative could not immediately be reached for comment.

Throughout the report Barrows-Crist's credibility is called into question.

The report says, "Respondent's attitude towards [sic] these two citations for lack of care and supervision demonstrated her lack of understanding of the seriousness of her violations. She maintained that the Department was unreasonable for citing her and was persecuting her because of her success in opposing earlier disciplinary action. She maintained that no child had been hurt in the almost 30 years

she has been operating her facilities. Her position was that she had been set up for license revocation. She completely disregarded the fact that the Department is obligated to respond and investigate when a child is found running into and along side Highway 50, choosing instead to view the investigation and citation as persecution."

In speaking with *Lake Tahoe News*, Barrows-Crist does believe she is being singled out. She also acknowledged the gravity of the charge, but says her site is not the first the child has run from, just the first to be closed because of it.

Barrows-Crist said the child's father continues to bring the youngster to Kindertown.

Barrows-Crist said the worst that will happen if the state prevails in shuttering the facility that opened in July 1973 is she files for bankruptcy, the children must find other care facilities, and the employees new jobs.

For now, though, she is counting on a judge issuing the stay this week. Then she needs to raise $20,000 to keep McLaughlin on as her attorney. She's already in arrears on paying Feldman, Shaw, McLaughlin LLP.

She has spent more than $100,000 in attorneys' fees in the last 16 months. The Kindertown bus is for sale. If Barrows-Crist can get through this chapter of turmoil, she plans to sell the center. She has a meeting with a real estate agent Tuesday.

Film fest celebrates winter on foot

By Maggie O’Neill, Reno Gazette Journal

They call themselves “human-powered.”

They are snowshoers, backcountry skiers and others who use their own power, i.e., their feet, to make their way through the winter outdoors.

No snowmobiles nor helicopters are used to access out-of-the-way places.

They believe that the most authentic way to experience the season is via their own locomotion and in the quiet and serenity of nature.

Gail Ferrell, president of the Snowlands Network, is an advocate of the human-powered experience, as is Elias Dechent, president of a Reno grassroots film organization called Artemisia.

Together, Ferrell and Dechent are promoting a backcountry film festival that encourages the human-powered experience in lieu of the motor-powered one. This Backcountry Film Festival is scheduled for Wednesday at the University of Nevada, Reno and will feature six films that focus on experiencing nature from a human-powered viewpoint.

“It’s like promoting art in the school,” Ferrell said. “You want to expose (people) to what is possible.”

The films, expected to take 90 minutes to show, will include the festival’s “Best of,” which is Teton Gravity Research’s “Deeper” and that features Jeremy Jones. Not sure who that is?

“He’s a famous snowboarder and he lives in Truckee,” said

Dechent. “His big thing is that he’s changed his philosophy (on) snowboarding. His way is to not use helicopters or snowmobiles to get to hidden places. He just climbs or hikes there. And also because he is doing that, he takes way longer. So he has to stay there for weeks or months, but it also gives him the possibility of getting to places where no one else is.”

Read the whole story

Clean Tahoe recycling discarded items

By Kathryn Reed

Recycling has taken on new meaning when it comes to garbage.

Clean Tahoe, the South Shore program on the California side that goes beyond what the regular garbage company does by hauling away debris dumped in meadows and emptying trash bins in public areas, is now in the furniture recycling business.

Ellen Nunes, director of the program, started Project Dinner Table last year. Her crews take furniture that has been illegally discarded that is still usable and gives it to the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center for their clients. The effort is supported by a grant from Soroptimist International.



Picking up abandoned couches is part of what Clean Tahoe crews do. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Nunes made her annual presentation to the South Lake Tahoe City Council at its last meeting.

“This upcoming year I would like the City Council to place more emphasis on code enforcement,” Nunes said. “Eighty percent of the cans in South Lake Tahoe don’t have lids.”

This has helped lead to one-third of the calls placed to Clean Tahoe being a result of animals in garbage.

What Nunes would like to see is for language in the code to be altered so the “mays” and “coulds” are eliminated. This, she says, would put some teeth into the laws.

She told the council she is not aware of any fines or mandates for bear-proof containers for people caught violating the law.