SNC creates series of dining events

“Tell me what you eat, and I’ll tell you who you are,” wrote renowned gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in 1825. Food is a form of communication that is rich with meaning.

Beyond merely nourishing the body, what we eat and with whom we eat can inspire and strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and even countries. Sierra Nevada College along with their partners Sodexo, are offering culturally diverse dining experiences, along with some light-hearted holiday meals, beginning Feb. 2 through May.

· Feb. 2 – Chinese New Year dinner; experience the Year of the Rabbit’s authentic customs and traditions.

· Feb. 14 – Valentine’s Day dinner; treat yourself and a loved one to mouth-watering “Surf & Turf.”

· March 2 – Dr. Seuss dinner; join Sam-I-Am for a yummy dinner jam.

· March 8 – Mardi Gras lunch; enjoy a carnival of Cajun cuisine and flavors.

· March 10 – St. Patrick’s Day lunch; get a lucky Irish lunch.

· April 1 – April Fools’ Day lunch; no shenanigans or tomfoolery guaranteed.

· April 6 – French Cuisine dinner; honoring the Tournées Festival of Contemporary French Cinema.

· April 23 – SNC’s Multicultural Festival; featuring diverse ethnic food, musical entertainment and more.

· May 5 – Cinco de Mayo lunch; come celebrate Mexican heritage

and pride.

Each feast is all you can eat and open to the public; community members pay $12.50 for lunch (11:30am-1:30pm) and $14 for dinner (4:30-7:00pm). Cash, credit or checks are accepted and SNC meal cards with standard pricing for students, faculty and staff apply.

Community member reservations are required for the Valentine's Day dinner and may be made by emailing bbwitzke@sierranevada.edu – put VALENTINE'S DINNER RSVP in subject line, or call (775) 881.7452.

Partial summer closure for state park near Graeagle

Plumas-Eureka State Park, located in the Sierra near Graeagle, will be partially closed this summer to allow for a cleanup of hazardous materials. Parts of the park will remain open, but the campground, museum area, and other selected sites throughout the park will temporarily be closed for clean-up.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has initiated a remediation effort to remove toxic materials, a legacy left behind from the days when the site was a working gold mine. Soils within certain areas of the park were found to be contaminated with arsenic, lead and mercury at actionable levels above federal standards.

The work will begin immediately after the spring thaw and will likely proceed into the fall. Should the work proceed without unforeseen problems and be completed sooner, State Parks will reopen portions of the park as soon as possible. The

campground will be the first site treated, in an effort to allow camping to resume as soon as possible.

Plumas-Eureka State Park is the site of a historic hard-rock gold mining operation and was a major producer of gold in the late 1800s. State Parks acquired the site as a park in 1959, inheriting 4,000 acres of a high Sierra forested watershed, but also a legacy of historic mine tailings left from the milling process.

Visitors holding reservations will be contacted by Reserve America's Customer Service to transfer their reservation to another date or another park, pending availability. If your reservation cannot be transferred, it will be canceled and a full refund issued.

Nevada state fair in jeopardy

By Jason Kellner, Reno Gazette-Journal

After a rebranding of the 136-year-old Nevada State Fair in 2010 as the Nevada Territory Wild West Fair, officials of the event say its finances may prevent the fair's return this year. It would be the first year without a state fair since it began in 1874, according to the fair's director.

Executive director of the nonprofit state fair, Rich Crombie, said that the organization already was on shaky ground before it went into the 2010 event and had been losing money. Crombie said that some situations with last year's fair hit hard, including a weak economy, and especially bad weather on the fair's peak days, which saw small crowds braving rain, overcast skies and temperatures in the low 50s – in the middle of August.

“I hate to point to it,” Crombie said, “but (the weather) led to a lot of it. I’ve got pictures of where people were standing in line bundled up, and we rely on the weekends.”

Crombie reported 2010 attendance figures at about 30,000. They had hoped to see closer to 50,000 visitors. But it wasn’t the weather and economy alone that put the fair in danger, rather a combination of those things, including lackluster attendance and a lack of cash reserves that built up over the years, Crombie said. Vendors from 2010 still are owned money.

Read the whole story

Debate in Incline circles on merits of roundabout

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

One day four years ago, Donald Kanare was waiting in traffic where Mount Rose Highway bottoms out at Lake Tahoe’s Nevada 28, “sucking exhaust,” when he had an idea.

The Incline Village resident, a native of New England, thought the place might benefit from a roundabout intersection of the type common where he grew up.

“I thought to myself, ‘why don’t we have a roundabout here? It seems like a perfect location,'” said Kanare, 55.

He pushed for the project, and state transportation officials agreed. With significant backing by the north Tahoe community, the Nevada Department of Transportation is designing a $2 million roundabout, with construction of the high-priority project expected to commence the summer of 2012.

“This is a good fit,” NDOT roadway engineer Nick Johnson said of the project, which will slow traffic, while also addressing dangerous turns onto Nevada 28 from an existing stop sign and the accidents that sometimes result. An added benefit will be a reduction in air pollution from vehicles idling at the intersection.

Roundabouts slow traffic but keep it moving and are effective in reducing accidents in areas with high traffic volumes, experts said.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Out of joint doesn’t work on the ski slopes

Publisher’s note: *This first ran in the January 2011 issue of Ski magazine.*

By Peter Shelton

I had hip replacement surgery one month before my first grandchild was born.

The decision to do it, to go for the new hip, had not come easily. Back and forth I went over the previous winters: I’m too young. I can still ski. (I was 59 at the time.) I can barely walk back to the car after a morning on the slopes, but I can still do it, damn it!

Then on the other side: I’m bone-on-bone. I’ve seen the pictures. Yoga isn’t doing the trick. I’m eating ibuprofen by the handful, day and night. That can’t be good. That isn’t good.

I can still sleep. Pretty well. Most nights. Except when I can’t because there are no more positions to try, no way it seems to silence the ache.

But what if the new hip turns out to mean an end to skiing? It could happen. Isn’t skiing, even skiing in pain, better than not skiing? I hadn’t missed a season since 1957. True, I hadn’t taught skiing for years, but I’d continued to write about it, dream about it, find grace in it.

One surgeon rolled his eyes when I said it was important to me to be able to keep doing this thing that was so much a part of life. I found another surgeon.

Read the whole story

Citizen survey: South Tahoe functioning at subpar level

By Kathryn Reed

Although some would argue a survey did not need to be taken, South Lake Tahoe officials believe having current data in writing gives them the authority to make changes people want, instead of guessing what they want.

City Manager Tony O’Rourke took his own analysis in September about the city. The new council did the same in late December-early January. The public was sent a survey in December, with results released this month.

Everyone is on the same page – the natural environment is

great, everything else needs improving. Less than half of the survey takers rated the direction of the city as good or excellent.

“Clearly, it’s not a surprise,” O’Rourke said of the entire survey. “Now we are developing a course of action to address those weaknesses and build upon the strengths. We’ll develop tactics and performance measures. Ultimately we need to build the public’s trust.”

From all this data and analysis of it, the council on Tuesday came up with five goals to work on.

Facts about the citizen survey:

• 1,200 utility customers were mail the survey – so not just South Lake Tahoe residents, but people affected by decisions the council makes;

• 390 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 35 percent;

• The National Citizen Survey compares South Lake Tahoe responses to about 500 jurisdictions elsewhere in the United States to provide a benchmark.

In the executive summary of the citizen survey it points out, “Of the 31 characteristics for which comparisons were available, three were above the national benchmark comparison, two were similar to the national benchmark comparison and 26 were below.”

South Lake Tahoe is dead last with its residents when compared against others in employment opportunity category. Ninety-four percent said “poor” on the survey.

Compared to the 2008 citizen survey, people today believe things in South Lake Tahoe have gotten worse when it comes to ease of traveling via bus, car, bike and foot.

One thing that has improved slightly between the years is people think traffic signal timing is better. Otherwise they are more disenfranchised with streets – the repair, cleaning, lighting, snow removal, and sidewalk maintenance.

Forty-eight percent believe housing costs are reasonable, 20 percent believe there is ample affordable quality housing, and 30 percent believe the variety of housing is adequate.

In two years, people's sense of community has dropped four percentage points to 46 percent.

Consultant Mike Levinson was brought in to decipher the volume of paperwork in front of the five councilmembers Tuesday, which went beyond the survey, to bring perspective to the material, and help them set goals.

"You have enormous potential with your amenities, in particular your airport," Levinson said. "Fourteen percent of your tourists you are attracting are from Southern California and they are driving eight to 12 hours."

He believes commercial air service will double that percentage.

Levinson said with three-fifths of all tourists coming from California, "You should do more to promote within that market. You are not taking advantage of that."

He also pointed out with 78 percent of the city's budget devoted to salaries and benefits, the council is going to have to address it if the city is going to be solvent.

"If you take all the data, you can build a case for change. There is a lot of room for improvement," Levinson told the council.

Willits firefighter saves boarder stuck at Sierra

By Linda Williams, Willits News

Despite the crowds of skiers and snowboarders on the slopes in the Sierra-at-Tahoe it took a Willits firefighter and his daughter to save a life two weekends ago.

Chris Wilkes and his daughter went skiing on a one day trip to Tahoe and on their last run of the day heard a cry for help off the groomed slope. With no one from the ski patrol in sight and none of the other hundreds of skiers slowing down to help, Wilkes went to investigate. They couldn’t find the injured man at first as he was buried in the snow, but they could hear him call.

The off trail snowboarder had fallen through the deep snow into an eight feet deep hole into an icy creek. Wilkes could only see a waving glove to direct him to the stricken man. Wilkes and his daughter carefully approached the victim and pulled him from the creek. The man was soaked in the icy water and already suffering from hypothermia. They covered him with their coats and then tried to flag down one of the other skiers zipping by.

Read the whole story

Truckee bookkeeper accused of embezzlement

Truckee resident Keri L. Campbell, 37, was arrested Jan. 26 on embezzlement charges.

Campbell is an independent contract bookkeeper for several businesses in the Truckee–Tahoe region. Campbell is alleged to have embezzled more than $80,000 from at least one business while employed as a part-time bookkeeper. Campbell was booked into the Nevada County Jail in Nevada City.

Truckee police are gathering additional information on this case and anyone who may have additional information is asked to contact Detective Arnie Lopez at (530) 550.2336 or Detective Danny Renfrow at (530) 550-2339.

Illegal lakefront wall met with $120,000 fine

A Zephyr Cove resident has one extremely expensive rock wall – that must be torn down.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board levied a $120,000 fine Jan. 26 against Edgar Roberts for 11 violations.

In addition to the fine, Roberts must remove the fill from his and the neighboring properties, rebuild the retaining wall correctly, and restore any disturbed areas. Of course he must do all of this with the proper permits from TRPA and other necessary agencies.

Roberts, years ago, approached the bi-state regulatory agency about rebuilding and moving the retaining wall into an area the agency deemed sensitive and near the lake's high water mark.

Three years ago, Roberts brought in more than 200 tons of granite fill material to build what he wanted without the necessary permits. Roberts also operated heavy equipment, relocated sand and failed to use lake-friendly construction methods all in highly sensitive lands, according to TRPA spokesman Jeff Cowen.

"We are pleased that the Governing Board agreed with us that this settlement and fine amount is appropriate given the extent of the violations and environmental harm attributable to the unauthorized construction project," TRPA attorney Nicole Rinke said.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Reno snowboarder realizes dream by competing in X Games

By Jim Krajewski, Reno Gazette-Journal

It took a long drive, but Chas Guldemond is making his dream come true.

Six years ago, Guldemond had a goal of becoming a world-class snowboarder.

With $3,000 in his pocket, he drove from his home in New Hampshire across the country to Lake Tahoe, to take advantage of myriad snowboarding opportunities.

Guldemond, 23, who now calls Reno home, hit it big when he won about $20,000 in the U.S. Open in March 2009. After that win, Guldemond acquired several sponsors and he now travels the world to compete almost year-round.

This week, he is one of a handful of area skiers and snowboarders competing in the 15th Winter X Games.

Read the whole story