Opinion: Axed LTCC employee reaches out to ex-colleagues

Publisher's note: ***This is an email sent by Craig Brinkman to Lake Tahoe Community College staff that was given to Lake Tahoe News by a college employee. See the Jan. 22 feature story for more insight about the issue.***

To the LTCC Classified Staff,

This is a note to say, simply, thank you for affording me the opportunity to be of service to you and students at Lake Tahoe Community College. While many of you were as uncomfortable with change at the beginning as the Board and Administrators, you stepped up to the plate and made it happen for the past two years. In the past 20 years of project managing systems implementations, I have not worked with a more dedicated, capable or professional group of people.

The events of the past week have, I know, been difficult and troubling and the way forward may, at this point, seem unclear, but as a group you can and will, as always, get the job done on behalf of the students.

A big part of the job of the Project Manager in the process of change is to "tell it like it is", because the failure to accept the realities of the present condemns the organization to failure in the changes that it needs to make. This is an often uncomfortable and contentious position to be in but I have long since accepted that successful change is not possible without a firm grip on reality.

The College faces significant problems because of years of the denial of reality by the Board and the Administrations, who have shoved the "tough problems" under rugs, into drawers and out of sight. As long as the facilities look okay and are clean, they must be okay … even if we don't spend anything on

the boilers, electrical systems, ventilation systems or controls. The same has been true in telecommunications systems, information systems and, most unfortunately, in the support for classified staff. How many years has it been since the Administration said to you “we will provide you with training to ensure that you can do the best possible job for our students” and then actually delivered?

Remember that you are uniquely qualified to assist in leading the College into the future…you are the only group of people on campus who are all of the following:

Staff

Management

Instructors

Students

Taxpayers

Voters

You, more than any other group on campus, hold the future of the institution in your hands. Your experience, commitment, knowledge and actions can change the College for the better. Use your CEA to make it clear to both Administration and the Board that the small, elite group composed of some of the Administrators, Faculty and Board members who have defined the College for the past 20 years have failed you and the students. South Lake Tahoe is hurting economically, yet the College is truly isolated from this reality, offering the community little in terms of economic development, vocational training or other programs to ensure you and your fellow citizens of a bright future.

Remember at the end of the day, you are the ones who can make the difference in real change at the College, because you understand the problems, can define solutions and, most

importantly, can vote. There is no more powerful tool in the toolkit of change than voting.

My best to each and every one of you,

Craig

PS: Note to the Administration – I have been saying for two years you should take the email addresses off of the College website and restrict the use of the All LTCC lists….maybe now you will. ;)

Students learn about outdoors by getting outside

Jori Turner's fifth-grade class from Lake Tahoe Environmental Education Magnet School in Meyers had no problem navigating through the unexpected stormy weather during the Winter Trek Environmental Education program earlier this month.



Classes from as far away as Grass Valley and Fallon have participated in this great outdoor learning program. The

three-hour curriculum based snowshoe program is sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Heavenly Mountain Resort, Explore Tahoe and the Tahoe Heritage Foundation.

It takes place at the top of the Heavenly Gondola Jan. 10 through March 31.

Flu starting to strike South Shore residents

By Kathryn Reed

Flu season has officially arrived on the South Shore.

The numbers are nothing to be alarmed about, according to Barton Health officials, but it's also not too late to get a flu shot. It's also early in the season, with the full onslaught far from being close.



Washing hands washes away germs.

One person this month had to be admitted to Barton Memorial Hospital because their influenza was so bad.

Barton reported zero cases of flu in November, 12 in December and 21 nearly three weeks into January.

This compares to the 2009-10 season that saw 71 cases in September, 159 in October, 79 in November, 44 in December, and 52 in January.

These are not the total number of flu cases in the South Lake Tahoe area, but the number of people with flu who went to

Barton’s urgent care or emergency room.

“The majority of the cases that we are seeing in California are in the population that is under 65. That group is not the group that usually gets super ill with the flu,” said Darcie Carpenter, director of Emergency Management and Infection Control for Barton Health. “It’s our working age population that is coming down with it this year.”

Usually people older than 65 and younger than 4 are hit the hardest.

Although no one has pinpointed the reason for the switch in age groups getting sick, Carpenter said fewer people went to flu clinics this season offered by El Dorado County and Reno.

Barton urgent care will be offering vaccinations Feb. 9 from 2-5:30pm for $20. Local doctors also have the vaccine.

Last year people were urged to get the regular flu shot and the H1N1 vaccine. This year that strand has been combined into the regular shot so it’s only necessary to get poked with a needle once.

Carpenter suggests doing all the basics to try to stay healthy – eat properly, get exercise, enough sleep and wash your hands.

“You can never wash your hands enough,” Carpenter said.

She also says stay at home and don’t share your germs at work.

U.S. Ski-Snowboard teams not lacking in academics

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Ski Team

SALT LAKE CITY – More than 50 U.S. Ski Team and U.S. Snowboarding athletes have been taking full advantage of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association's partnership with Westminster College in Salt Lake City. In a snow covered town with the trees and ground glistening with white sparkles as the sun shines down, 22 athletes are taking the time to not only excel on snow, but also in the classroom.

Because most athletes are on the road from October to April, athletes attend the spring, summer and fall terms. In a most conducive environment that doesn't make athletes choose between sport and school, Westminster caters to the needs of student-athletes at the highest level.

Most impressive, they have maintained an overall grade point average of 3.66, as well as two athletes that are proud to call Westminster their alma mater.

"Before and after class I still had time to enjoy summer life in Utah, even during breaks in the class I could go outside and do some rock climbing on the wall on the side of my classroom," U.S. Alpine Ski Team member Travis Ganong of Squaw Valley said. "Westminster has such a fun and rewarding environment."

Now with the season fully under way, the student-athletes hope to carry their academic success into their athletic careers.

"It is awesome to have a place like Westminster where I can go to in the off season to follow my educationally goals," said Ganong, who is currently in Europe for alpine races. "The classes are very interesting and the teachers are very

flexible with my crazy schedule.”

Elimination of LTCC position fuels distrust among staff

By Kathryn Reed

Unrest is brewing at Lake Tahoe Community College among staff, the board and the president.

One classified employee on Jan. 21 told *Lake Tahoe News* privately, “Morale has always been in the toilet, now it’s in the sewer.”

College board member Kerry David isn’t surprised staff would be disgruntled based on continued cutbacks by California, increased workloads and years without raises.

“Morale in higher education is tanking across California when you look at the proposal the newly elected governor has put on the table,” David said.

The best-case scenario as proposed by Gov. Jerry Brown for LTCC is $650,000 in cuts. The worst case is more than $1.7 million cuts for the next school year. What compounds the problem is the outcome may not be known until June, weeks before the 2011-12 budget must be approved and takes effect July 1.

(The board is meeting with state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, on Monday in Sacramento to discuss the budget.)

Although budget constraints and the uncertainty that looms plays a role in creating an atmosphere of gloom, interim President Steve Maradian is not helping the situation, according to some LTCC employees.

Upon his recommendation, the board at its last meeting unanimously did away with the position of the Title III project manager. This in turn means Craig Brinkman is without a job. He was putting the Datatel software system in place.

“First of all, it is a personnel matter. To me it was not a performance issue. It was a position not needed by the college to get the work done,” Maradian told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Maradian brought in three firms to assess how Datatel is working. Two were independent. According to Maradian, all said the college needed better technical support to make the grant funded software upgrade come to fruition. That is why he recommended doing away with the job held by Brinkman.

At the Academic Senate meeting Friday afternoon on the campus of the South Lake Tahoe two-year institution, Senate VP Steve Adams was adamant in his belief the dismissal of Brinkman was not handled correctly.

“When things happen this way, it affects all of us,” Adams said at the meeting.

He and fellow instructor Jon Kingsbury are upset College Council did not know about it beforehand. Shared governance is what they kept reiterating. Shared governance gives a voice to faculty and staff before the board takes action.

LTCC board policy 5.12 Subsection B states, “Except in unforeseeable emergency situation, the Board of trustees shall not take action on matters significantly affecting staff until it has provided staff an opportunity to participate in the formulation and development of those matters through appropriate structure an procedures.”

Although the Academic Senate did not vote on the matter related to this situation, Kingsbury and Adams briefed the more than two dozen people in attendance that their opinion is the board did not follow proper procedure. The Academic Senate is expected to address the board at the Jan. 25 meeting.

Maradian left the Academic Senate meeting before all of this was said. Reached by *LTN* by phone afterward, the president adamantly stood by this being a personnel matter, which would mean it would never go to College Council or Academic Senate.

As to whether the Jan. 11 agenda item was worded correctly, Maradian said, it was written per what attorneys advised. The item reads, "Public Employee Discipline/Dismissal/Release: Project Manager, Title III, and Interim Manager, Information Technologies."

Some interpreted this as the firing of the person, not the elimination of the position, which is what the board voted on.

David said, "This is not something that happened overnight."

People speaking at the Academic Senate meeting said it was a surprise when the agenda was posted.

Maradian said with all the meetings involved with people assessing the program he couldn't see how anyone would be surprised by what transpired last week.

The college board meetings and College Council meetings are available on podcast on the college's website.

The day after the board meeting, *LTN* received an email from an anonymous source that in part says, "(Maradian) has now LIED to the Board about following publicly available policies for the termination of a staff member – Craig Brinkman. It's a mess and there is rampant talk of a vote of no confidence against the president and the Board. The staff is afraid to speak up for fear of being the next to see their name on a

public agenda for dismissal.”

On top of the strife between Maradian and LTCC, he had problems just before leaving Los Angeles City College.

The Los Angeles City College paper in November 2010 talk about a sexual harassment lawsuit filed by a male student against Maradian while he was president of the college. It was settled out of court.

Garrido’s attorney asks for delay in trial

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Phillip Garrido’s public defender is seeking a postponement of his scheduled mental competency trial, saying an overwhelming amount of evidence still must be reviewed and that she is still studying whether to ask that the trial be moved out of El Dorado County.

A jury trial is set to begin Feb. 28 to determine whether Garrido, the accused kidnapper of Jaycee Lee Dugard, is mentally competent to stand trial.

But public defender Susan Gellman, in court documents filed Thursday and made public today, indicated that she will ask for a postponement at the next hearing in the case, which is set for Feb. 3.

In the court documents, Gellman said she continues to receive discovery evidence from prosecutors, the latest a package on Jan. 7 that “contained several hundred pages of documents, as well as a video that is almost six hours in length.”

Read the whole story

Correctional officer threatened in grocery store

On Jan. 21 at about 3:50pm, the South Lake Tahoe Police Department received a 911 call from a correctional officer who is employed by the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office. The officer, who was off duty and shopping for groceries at Raley's at the Y was reportedly approached from behind and shoved by a prior inmate, Patrick Solomon.

Solomon, 46, of South Lake Tahoe called the correctional officer by name and continued with a verbal barrage for some unknown reason, officers said.

Solomon reportedly resisted arrest and had to be taken to the ground by Officer Jake Herminghaus. Solomon received minor lacerations to his head and was transported by ambulance to Barton Memorial Hospital for treatment.

Solomon has a violent history with local law enforcement and was charged with battery on a custodial officer and resisting arrest, both misdemeanors in California.

Winberg & Stevens bring opera

to South Tahoe

Tahoe Arts Project is hosting international opera singers Annalisa Winberg & Roy Stevens on Feb. 4 at 7pm at Lake Tahoe Community College Duke Theatre.

Joining them on stage will be the South Lake Tahoe Children's Choral Society; Blue Ribbon Choir and Tahoe Belles.

This is not your traditional "Opera" performance, but an evening of voice and song.

Since their debuts in 1987, Winberg and Stevens have had professional engagements with opera companies, in recitals and in concerts with symphony orchestras in 23 countries and on five continents. Though they have performed with many of the leading performing organizations in the world (Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Dallas Opera, San Francisco Symphony, New York Opera Orchestra), they have taken particular pleasure in performing with many unusual and off the beaten track organizations.

Tickets are $10 for adults and $5 for children and seniors and can be purchased in advance at the Visitors Centers. To charge tickets by phone for information, call (530) 542.3632. If available, tickets will be sold at the door beginning at 6pm.

Reno calls for change to be able to compete

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette Journal

Nevada must improve its struggling education system and

develop a skilled workforce if it wants to attract business and create new opportunities for long-term economic growth and diversity, those at an economic forum hosted by UNR on Wednesday said.

The forum, held as part of the Reno Gazette-Journal's Reno 2020 project, convened a panel of experts that will lead teams charged with formulating action plans for four issues deemed crucial to improving the local economy.

The four areas are education, innovation, green energy and the state's fiscal structure. Each team will present its findings Feb. 2, during the second part of the forum.

"We have a dropout epidemic," said Heath Morrison, Washoe County School District superintendent and leader of the 2020 education team. "The vast majority of Nevadans looking for work today don't have a high school diploma. And by 2020, 50 percent of people looking for work will need education higher than a high school diploma."

Young educated people, as well as a business-friendly environment, are important in developing imaginative, cutting-edge startups that eventually grow as billion-dollar enterprises, said Darik Volpa, Understand.com CEO and leader of the 2020 economic innovation team.

Read the whole story

Giving locally in the name of Rep. Giffords, other Ariz.

victims

Shortly after the Tucson incident of Jan. 8, Emily Rankin, director of Alumnae Relations at Scripps College in Claremont, was in contact with the congresswoman's husband, Capt. Mark Kelly. She inquired how the Scripps community could best show its support for Gabby Giffords and the other victims.

Kelly replied his wife's pet project is food banks. January and February happen to usually be the lowest donation months.

Rankin sent an email to grads and current students – some of whom live on the South Shore – to see if they might support this effort in their communities.

Christmas Cheer and the South Lake Tahoe Women's Center are taking donations in Giffords' name in honor of all the shooting victims.