Reno high school student dies from fall at Mt. Rose

By Steve Timko and Jaclyn O'Malley, Reno Gazette-Journal

Relatives of a 15-year-old snowboarder – who died Wednesday after crashing into a tree while walking down a slick ski resort mountainside – remembered him Thursday as an amazing and sweet boy.

Galena High student Maison T. Ortiz had been snowboarding with a friend at Mount Rose Ski Tahoe after they had finished one of their final exams at school, said his uncle Chris Hicks. They decided to make one of their final runs of the day on the Slide Mountain side of the resort, Hicks said. But the conditions were incredibly icy, which forced the boys to remove their helmets and boards, and walk down the mountain.

Ortiz lost his footing on the ice and slipped, crashing into a tree, Hicks said.

"They thought it was safer to walk down the mountain," Hicks said.

Mount Rose Spokesman Mike Pierce said the accident occurred about 1:55 p.m. after the boys entered the Gold Run slope. The ski patrol was on scene within a few minutes and he was taken to Renown Regional Medical Center by Care Flight helicopter with serious head injuries, Pierce said. The resort learned Thursday he had died, he said.

Read the whole story

Search is on for man who never made it to S. Lake Tahoe

By Kristin Hanes, Fox 40

VACAVILLE – A spattering of cell phone calls are all family members and police have to go on as they try to find Jose Ruben Valdez. Valdez, 57, was supposed to have arrived in South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday when he left his Anaheim home. But, he never arrived.

Since then, Valdez has called family members several times on his phone, telling them he's lost. One of those phone calls came from Vacaville, the others, he didn't say where he was. Apparently, Valdez has dementia, and family members say he often gets confused or lost.

Read the whole story

Barbera Festival in Amador County

Cooper Ranch in Plymouth (Amador County) is site of the first Barbera Festival on June 11 from 11am-4pm.

This outdoor wine and food festival will host more than 70 wineries from the Sierra foothills, Paso Robles, Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake County, the Santa Cruz Mountains, Ventura County, Lodi and the Bay Area. Approximately 1,500 people are expected to attend, with top area restaurants and caterers

providing the best in cuisine.

The Barbera Festival is a Green Event and has taken measures to minimize the environmental impact of the festivities, including waste and transportation. The organizing team is also investigating renewable energy purchases and carbon credits. The Barbera Festival is intended to be an annual event with net proceeds going to charity.

Tickets will be available March 1 and are $30/person in advance and $40/person at the door.

For more information about the event, a list of participating wineries, map and directions, along with local lodging and tasting tips, click to the official website.

TOCCATA’s sixth anniversary concert series

TOCCATA – Tahoe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – sixth anniversary Winter MusicFest concert series istitled “Viva Vivaldi”.

This series features a return performance of Elizabeth Pitcairn performing on the world famous “Red Stradivarius Violin” in Vivaldi’s most beloved work, “The Four Seasons”. The program features additional soloists Virginia Bowman, concertmaster; Heather Gallagher, principal second violin; cellist, Charles Taggart; and continuo organist David Brock.

Opening the concert will be baroque trumpets Mark Lord, Mark Hoke and Josh Dunlap performing Vivaldi’s Concerto for 2 trumpets in C major and the TOCCATA Chamber Chorus will

perform Vivaldi's most well known choral work, "Gloria" with vocal soloists Anna Helwing and Joy Strotz, soprano; and Stuart Duke, baritone.

Performances are:

Feb. 3 at 7:30pm at St. Theresa's Catholic Church in South Lake Tahoe;

Feb. 4 at 7pm at Trinity Episcopal Church in Reno;

Feb. 5 at 2pm at St. Francis Catholic Church in Incline Village;

Feb. 6 at 3pm at the Resort at Squaw Creek-Olympic Valley;

Feb. 9 at 7pm at St. Thomas Aquinas Cathedral in Reno. Maestro James Rawie will conduct all performances.

Tickets are $30 adults, $25 seniors, $5 students and can be purchased at the door or online. Preferred seating is available for $40. Children under 12 are free.

For more information or preferred seating, visit www.ToccataTahoe.com or call (775) 313.9697.

Giffords standing, ready to move to rehab facility

By Jennifer Medina and Marc Lacey, New York Times

TUCSON – Representative Gabrielle Giffords, who survived a gunshot through her head on Jan. 8, is likely to leave a hospital here on Friday and move to the TIRR Memorial Hermann rehabilitation hospital in Houston to continue her recovery, a

spokesman for Ms. Giffords said Wednesday.

In a sign of her significant progress, Katie Maass, a spokeswoman at University Medical Center, said Ms. Giffords, with the help of medical personnel, left her bed Wednesday and stood by the window of her room. She looked out the window, Ms. Maass said, although doctors have cautioned that they do not yet know the extent of her vision.

Ms. Giffords's aides said the timing of the move to Houston might change depending on her health. Her doctors have said repeatedly that she was making remarkable progress, considering the severity of her injury, but that it was impossible to predict how she would recover.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Sharpen your edges



Spring conditions with all the sun, though reports are the runs are hard, not soft and slushy.

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

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Amador Stage Lines is offering a season pass on its buses for people traveling between the South Shore and the Reno airport. For more information, call (775) 691.2788.

• Placer County this month changed its retirement benefits.

• Steven Hemphill has been hired to be the communications manager at Sierra-at-Tahoe.

• Plans are moving forward so in 2012 or 2013 construction of the 9.5-mile Martis Valley Regional Trail between Truckee and Lake Tahoe would be under way.

• Luigi’s Tahoe Pizzeria is open at the bottom of Kingsbury Grade in Stateline.

• Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra is working on the Solar Cooker Project to help refugees who have fled the genocide of Darfur. For information about donating to the cause, email Mandy Kendall at mandykendall1@gmail.com.

Heavenly looking for Kinder Kup participants

The Heavenly Ski and Snowboard Foundation will kick-off the 11th Annual Kinder Kup Race Series at Heavenly Mountain Resort on Jan. 23 from 8am to 2pm.

Open to all skiers and snowboarders age 6 and under, the Kinder Kup series is designed to introduce young athletes to competition in a friendly environment. No previous race experience necessary. Entry is $20 and includes a World Cup only competitor lift ticket.

Seventy competitors are expected at each event.

Kinder Kup is a three event series with races Jan. 23, Feb. 20 and March 20. All races take place at Heavenly Mountain Resort on the World Cup chairlift located at the California base across from the Heavenly Tram. Registration is $20 per event and registration forms can be found online. Advance registration is recommended.

Onsite registration is available the morning of the event at the Heavenly Foundation building from 8am to 9am. Practice begins at 9 am, each competitor is allowed two practice runs; the race starts at 10 am. Every competitor is awarded a participation medal and a swag bag filled with goodies. Overall champions will be awarded trophies at the final event.

The foundation will serve coffee and bake sale items throughout the morning. The barbecue begins at noon and combos include a burger or hot dog, chips and a drink for a $7 donation to the foundation.

Ferret lovers want to own pets legally

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

It’s a new year, a new administration at the Capitol, and the

ferret lobby has a new strategy.

Short on cash and support in the Legislature and stymied by procedural requirements at the Fish and Game Commission, a coalition of ferret legalization supporters is hoping a new argument on the cost of the state's ban on the pet will gain traction.

"I think that there's very little doubt that the ferret ban is doing economic harm," said Pat Wright, founder of legalizeferrets.org. "But the question is how much economic harm?"

California, which first prohibited ownership and transportation of the species in 1933, is now the only state in the continental United States where the slender European polecat cousins are outlawed. Despite decades of lobbying by ferret owners and enthusiasts, the state maintains its stance that legalizing the small carnivores presents environmental and safety concerns.

Estimates on the state's illegal ferret population vary significantly, but pet industry experts estimate one quarter of ferret supplies sold in the country come from California shelves.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Initiative for Calif. to secede from the

United States

By Steve Kubby

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to re-examine the political bonds which have connected them to their government, and to reassume among the powers of the Earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of humanity requires that they should determine whether or not there are sufficient and irreconcilable causes which shall impel them to a separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among people, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for

their future security.

Such has been the patient sufferance of our people; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former system of government. The history of the present federal government is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over our people. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

The federal government has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance. Our people are forced to pay the highest taxes in our history, plus countless fees, fines, tickets, citations, and penalties wherever they travel and whatever they do.

The federal government has passed laws censoring free speech and restricting religious freedom, in direct violation of Article I of the Bill of Rights.

The federal government has made sobriety the state religion and now jails over a half a million people a year for the "crime" of using unapproved substances to alter their consciousness.

The federal government has openly defied popular, citizen-led initiatives on drug policy reform, refusing to allow any change in their law. In complete disregard for democracy, they have used public money to campaign against these initiatives and now, having lost, threaten physicians and patients who violate their law, leaving our people no choice but to engage in civil disobedience.

The federal government has declared war against its own citizens, if they so much as possess certain unapproved plants, bringing to bear the fearful might of its military and over one hundred different federal agencies empowered to use deadly force against our people.

The federal government has suspended our constitutional right to be secure in our persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures, allowing police to search and seize whatever they wish, so long as they are acting on “good faith” that a crime has taken place or that evidence is being destroyed.

The federal government has authorized police to seize private property, without due cause or compensation or even filing charges, directly violating Article IV of the Bill of Rights.

The federal government has charged, convicted and jailed citizens who have already served sentences for identical state crimes, in direct violation of Article V which forbids such “double jeopardy.”

The federal government has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing to inform Juries of their right to vote their conscience, or to allow Juries to exercise their constitutional right to judge not only the accused, but to judge the soundness of the law itself.

The federal government has made judges dependent on its Will alone, ordering judges to make their decisions based upon “mandatory minimum sentences,” thereby violating the separation of powers between the judicial, executive and legislative branches, which is so fundamental to our form of democracy.

The federal government has emptied our Treasury, creating so vast a debt, that forty percent of the personal taxes collected by the government must be paid just on the interest.

The federal government has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies of secret police, narcs, undercover agents, and paid informants, to spy upon and to coerce our people into obeying drug laws which are based upon puritanical beliefs that defy common sense.

The federal government has affected to render the military independent of and superior to the civil power of local communities who are regularly subjected to aerial assaults by heavily armed drug agents. Our people are powerless to stop or in anyway protect themselves from repeated violations of their human rights and private property. Military raids now occur throughout our land against anyone who dares to grow Hemp, even though our Founding Fathers, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, both grew and praised this remarkable plant.

The federal government has made a mockery of the election process, staging contrived political conventions which have already been bought and paid for by special interests, under the burden of a corrupt system that offers little choice on election day.

The federal government no longer serves the will of the People and has become a cancer, unable to stop growing and unable to stop spending, stealing from the future with massive debts that will take generations to repay.

The federal government has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction which is in direct violation of our Constitution and in direct violation of our Bill of Rights; giving the false appearance of public assent to their acts of pretended legislation:

For protecting Agents of the DEA, FBI, CIA, and BATF by mock trials from punishment for murders which they committed on the Inhabitants of these states:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent and empowered a terrorist organization, the IRS, to obtain our compliance though coercion:

For squandering our public funds on exotic weapons and foreign wars, often to keep dictators in power and defense contractors employed, while our children go hungry, our Schools are neglected and our cities decay.

For depriving us in many cases of the benefits of trial by Jury:

For imprisoning millions of otherwise law-abiding citizens for the pretended offenses of commerce in psychoactive plants:

For abolishing the free system of Tort laws, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its powers far beyond the scope granted to it by the Constitution, and in direct violation of Articles IX and X of the Bill of Rights:

For taking away our independence as sovereign citizens, abolishing our most valuable laws and altering fundamentally our form of government, demanding blind obedience to the failed policies of the past:

For suspending our own right to govern our bodies and our consciousness, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

For spraying poisons on our Hemp crops with the evil intention of doing great harm to our people who wish to use this natural herb for their medical relief or personal enjoyment.

For trafficking in cocaine and armaments as instruments of foreign policy, violating not only our Constitution, but the very trust which our People have placed their federal government.

For creating a climate of fear, intimidation and misery in order to obscure the failure of The federal government to address to real problems of poverty, violent crime, racism, pollution, and AIDS which now threaten the health and safety of our citizens.

For fouling the air, poisoning the soil, clear-cutting our forests, and contaminating our water, all for the economic gain of a privileged few.

For knowingly releasing radioactive and toxic wastes upon our

people, resulting in an epidemic of cancer, birth defects and causing untold pain and suffering.

The federal government has abdicated government here by declaring us out of its protection and waging war against us.

The federal government has plundered our private property, invaded and seized our homes on the slightest of evidence, and destroyed the lives of our People, broken apart loving families, all in the name of a “War on Drugs.”

The federal government is at this time militarizing the “War on Drugs,” to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy a civilized nation.

The federal government has constrained our fellow citizens to become the informants and executioners of their friends and brethren, or to incriminate themselves through the widespread use of urine testing.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms. Our repeated petitions to reduce or eliminate the cruel and unusual punishments for the use of drugs, to practice our own religious beliefs, including the sacred use of sacramental plants, and our right to use whatever medicines we wish have been answered only by repeated injury and acts of violence upon our people. A government, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our federal officials.

We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their congress to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us.

We have reminded them of their oath of office, “To uphold and

defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic.”

We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity to end this war on our own People and to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably bring about our downfall as a democratic society.

They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. All efforts to obtain justice for those persecuted for hemp crimes has been met with determined resistance to change. Even democratically passed initiatives have not altered their blind opposition to change. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, friends in peace.

Faced with such overwhelming and unresponsive tyranny, the people of California hereby authorize and demand that their state government officially secede from the United States, as provide for by the Ninth and Tenth Amendments of the Bill of Rights. In those amendments, the rights and powers not specifically granted to the federal government and not forbidden by the Constitution are reserved for the states and the people. We claim secession as a natural right of our people and as a constitutional right of our state.

We, therefore, the sovereign citizens of the free and independent California Republic, voting as a free people in a free election, appealing to the supreme judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of California, solemnly publish and declare.

That the California Republic be, and of right ought to be free and Independent; that citizens of the California Republic are absolved from all allegiance to The federal government, and that all political connection between them and The federal

government is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent Republic, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do.

Furthermore, no citizen of the California Republic shall be required to pay any tax to the federal government, nor shall they be indebted, in any way for the financial liabilities of the federal government.

Upon the successful passage of this initiative, the federal government will have one year to vacate all lands, bases, and property within the Republic. Recognizing the hardship and financial burden this will place upon The federal government, the California Republic is hereby authorized to spend up to one trillion dollars to compensate The federal government, so long as the transition remains peaceful.

All tax rates and fees within the California Republic shall be frozen as of the date this initiative passes. Under no circumstances can the Republic increase fees, increase taxes, or add any new taxes or fees.

In all criminal cases, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, otherwise known as the original Bill of Rights, shall prevail. No exceptions or limitations to the Bill of Rights shall be accepted. Rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights shall not be infringed. Whenever police or prosecutors can be shown to be withholding information, providing false testimony or otherwise engaging in actions which violate the Bill of Rights, the case in question shall be automatically dismissed.

The passage of this voter initiative commits the California Republic to restoring our democratic freedoms and deprived of any weapon except the truth, can only represent themselves as patriotic citizens committed to resisting all laws which

violate the Constitution and bringing to justice, all agents of The federal government, who use their office to commit crimes against our people.

And for the support of this voter Declaration of Independence, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

Steve Kubby is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.