Truckee woman claims banks robbed her in foreclosure process

By Andrew Martin, New York Times

TRUCKEE – When Mimi Ash arrived at her mountain chalet here for a weekend ski trip, she discovered that someone had broken into the home and changed the locks.

When she finally got into the house, it was empty. All of her possessions were gone: furniture, her son's ski medals, winter clothes and family photos. Also missing was a wooden box, its top inscribed with the words "Together Forever," that contained the ashes of her late husband, Robert.

The culprit, Ms. Ash soon learned, was not a burglar but her bank. According to a federal lawsuit filed in October by Ms. Ash, Bank of America had wrongfully foreclosed on her house and thrown out her belongings, without alerting Ms. Ash beforehand.

In an era when millions of homes have received foreclosure notices nationwide, lawsuits detailing bank break-ins like the one at Ms. Ash's house keep surfacing. And in the wake of the scandal involving shoddy, sometimes illegal paperwork that has buffeted the nation's biggest banks in recent months, critics say these situations reinforce their claims that the foreclosure process is fundamentally flawed.

Read the whole story

Ski report: A break between storms



It’s likely to be one of those epic days on the slopes of Lake Tahoe. Lots of snow, lots of sun.

Read the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe, to know what’s going on at your favorite resort.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Molly is a very pretty, lively English Labrador with an abundance of energy. She is 3 years old and very friendly with people and other dogs, and even seems to get along with cats.



She is a big, strong girl who needs lots of exercise and a well fenced yard to keep her happy and at home.

Molly is spayed, microchipped, and vaccinated.

She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs, cats, and kittens who are

waiting for their new homes.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet. The shelter will be closed Dec. 31 and Jan 1.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go to online.

– Karen Kuentz

Freelance writers in demand

If you have a background in journalism, *Lake Tahoe News* would like to hear from you. Send five writing samples, a resume and letter outlining why you want to write for *LTN* to info@LakeTahoeNews.net.

Opinion: What works to stop bullying

By Steve Johnson

We've had a year of polarized debate about bullying. On one side we have those who believe the bullying that resulted in the suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi is a form of anti-gay discrimination and that those who disagree are homophobes. On the other side are those who are convinced that liberals and gay rights groups are advancing some kind of

“homosexual agenda” under the guise of an anti-bullying curriculum.

One thing is clear: We’re not going to stop bullying in our schools until we stop bullying each other over how to address the problem. Let’s make a New Year’s pledge to talk about bullying the way we’d like to see our kids talk to each other. Let’s focus on proven strategies that can accomplish what all people of goodwill want: an end to the harassment of vulnerable children.

Here’s what we know works to reduce bullying in schools:

– Educating, not just punishing, the perpetrators

– Training bystanders to be allies of the victim

– Not allowing the isolation or taunting of any child for any reason.

Steve Johnson, a former teacher and principal, is director of character education at Santa Clara University’s Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. He is the creator of the Character-Based Literacy Curriculum, which is widely used in California counties.

Read the whole story

Cow ‘car wash’ designed to improve food safety

By Robert Rodriguez, Fresno Bee

It might look like a carwash, but that’s where the

similarities end.

Cargill – one of the world's leading beef processors – has installed a $4.2 million cow-cleaning system designed to improve food safety at its sprawling 60-acre plant in southwest Fresno.

Every day, cow carcasses are brought into the factory, dangling by their back legs, as large, spinning bristles scrub the animals' hides. At the same time, high-pressure nozzles blast the carcasses with an anti-microbial solution.

The idea is to remove dirt, debris and feces from the cow before the hide is removed – rather than after. Even some critics of the meat-processing industry say it could help prevent contamination.

"This really is the next generation in this process, and we will keep working to make it better," said John Niemann, general manager of Cargill's Fresno plant. "We want to be a leader in food safety because it is critical to our business."

Read the whole story

Placerville sports announcer nominated for national award

By Mark Billingsley, Sacramento Bee

When Bill Sullivan learned he was nominated for National Media Member of the Year by the North American 360 Sprint Car Poll, his first thought was of his father, Gerry, who passed away in 2006.

Sullivan is the track announcer at Placerville Speedway and works in the press shop for Handy Racing Promotions and the San Francisco-based Golden Gate Racing Team, which is affiliated with Richard Childress Racing.

“My dad was my big influence with the whole sport because he was such a huge fan from when I was very little until his final days four years ago,” said Sullivan, who will learn in January if he won the award at the annual Chili Bowl Race in Tulsa, Okla. “He was super busy managing the grocery store (Lucky on Broadway in Placerville), but on Saturday nights that was always our thing.”

Read the whole story

Christmas trees will be turned into compost in Carson Valley

By Kathryn Reed

Fertile Mulch. That’s what recycled Christmas trees are turned into at Full Circle Compost in Minden.

Craig Witt, who runs the compost operation in the Carson Valley, hasn’t promoted this product much in the past because he hasn’t been able to make enough of it to keep up with demand. He’s hoping that is about to change.



One thing that could make Fertile Mulch even more popular is a study from UNR that is supposed to come out in January that rates various mulches for their fire resistance. According to Witt, his is the top product.

The mulch's ability to retain water is a key factor to why it is fire resistant, Witt said.

It is recycled trees from South Tahoe Refuse, ones Wal-Mart could not sell and other sources that Witt uses to create the various mulches.

"When we get the trees from South Tahoe Refuse we will process them, put them through a tub grinder, then size sort the material to create Fertile Mulch," Witt said. "We expose it to 150-degree intense heat cycle."

His recipe for this material takes a matter of weeks, whereas Mother Nature would take years to breakdown the pines.

STR starts its tree recycling today and continues through Jan. 7. Customers need to remove all decorations, have trees no longer than 6-feet, and set them at the end of the driveway next to the rest of the trash.

"A lot used to be chipped and used locally. Now most go to composting," Jeanne Lear of STR said of the nearly 3,000 trees the company recycles each holiday season.

Along most routes, the trees are picked up in the regular cycle and then separated at the refuse company. However, when drivers see a slew of trees in a neighborhood a special truck may be sent to handle them. Trees are picked up on normal garbage days.

Witt's retail operation is not open this time of year, but the mulch will be ready in the spring.

"There is nothing wrong with raw mulch, but it's like feeding

raw food to an infant. It needs to be more refined," Witt said.

When raw wood is put into the ground it throws off the nitrogen-carbon ratio, which slows down plant growth.

Witt says his composting process creates a mulch that when mixed with soil has the end result of more robust plants.

For more information about South Tahoe Refuse tree recycling, call (530) 541.5105 and for more information about Full Circle Compost go online.

Utah man eyes record-breaking swim across Lake Tahoe

By Melinda Rogers, Salt Lake Tribune

James Jonsson grew up on the shores of Hawaii, where he fell in love with long distance swimming during ocean workouts.

When a job change brought him to Utah 17 years ago, he kept his passion for marathon swimming alive in the state's lakes and creeks.

The 48-year-old South Jordan man's competitive drive led him to tackle a 19-mile swim across Bear Lake last summer, when he set a new record of 8 hours 53 minutes —the fastest time known for crossing the lake's aquamarine waters.

Now, Jonsson has his sights set on another swim: a 21-mile trek across Lake Tahoe next summer. Only 17 people have managed the feat, which is especially challenging because of Lake Tahoe's altitude and cool waters.

This time, Jonsson wants to do the swim for charity.

He’ll be swimming the length of Lake Tahoe to promote organ donation, a cause close to his heart for two reasons.

His father received a life-saving kidney transplant in the mid-1980s. And in 2003, he watched his 8-year-old son’s organs save the lives of several people, after the boy choked to death as a result of a birth defect that created problems with his esophagus.

Read the whole story

Harveys-Harrah’s employees enrich holidays at Boys & Girls Club

H.E.R.O (Harrah’s Employees Reaching Out) recently hosted a holiday family event with more than 75 Boys & Girls Club members and their families at the club’s main site in South Lake Tahoe.

Harrah’s-Harveys donated 35 gingerbread house kits and all the materials to make wreaths. Santa was there to make sure everyone had a chance to deliver their Christmas wishes, while 12 “H.E.R.O.s” assisted with the event.



The club provided a free chili dinner while families had a chance to spend time together. This event is an example of the programs and services the Boys & Girls Club is able to provide for more than 650 youth ages 5-18 and their families with the support of the business community and volunteers.

The club extends their gratitude to Harrah’s/Harveys for their support. What a wonderful way to express the holiday spirit.

To find out more about the Boys & Girls Club and how you can make a difference in a young person’s life, visit www.bgclt.org.