Opinion: Placer County needs Laura’s Law

By Jennifer Montgomery

Every day we encounter individuals – complete strangers, close friends and even family members – who are languishing on our streets and in our neighborhoods. Many suffer from serious mental illness, but due to a host of reasons have been unable to participate in treatment programs. They spiral downward until they are ultimately hospitalized or incarcerated, only to be released back into our communities to begin the cycle of despair and neglect all over again.

It is well past time that we as a society acknowledge their treatment needs and use the tools we have available to help them. Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), also known as Laura’s Law, is one tool that can help. It has been proven successful in Nevada and Yolo counties and 45 other states, and needs to be considered by all California counties.



Jennifer Montgomery

Laura’s Law, approved by the state Legislature in 2002, was named for Laura Wilcox, a Nevada County student worker who was killed by a man who had refused mental health treatment. He entered the county’s Behavioral Health offices and opened fire in January 2001. Laura’s Law reformed the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act which had previously prohibited judges, families and

physicians from compelling the severely mentally ill to accept treatment.

Laura's Law permits counties to create AOT programs allowing for court-ordered (if deemed necessary and if all stringent criteria are met), voluntary, outpatient treatment for a select group of very mentally ill individuals – treatment that can be initiated by a family member, roommate, therapist, police officer, or physician, among others.

Since the law was brought to my attention when I was sworn in as a county supervisor in 2009, I have been a proponent of Laura's Law. I know from personal experience that effective treatment can be life-changing for individuals with serious mental illness. I have a family member who has struggled with mental illness since she became a teenager almost 60 years ago. When she is appropriately treated – on her medications and in counseling – she is smart, delightful, funny and well connected with the world around her.

But often – too often – she "chooses" to go off her medications and her downward spiral begins, over and over and over again. She is the perfect candidate for Laura's Law – not yet to the point of being deemed 5150, requiring involuntary treatment, but to the point of needing help that is beyond her immediate reach.

Chairman Jack Duran and I have been working together to show that Laura's Law is not only implementable in Placer County, but is the right tool to add to our mental health "tool belt" and that now is the right time to bring this forward.

AOT is a proven, evidenced-based practice that produces excellent results. In Nevada County AOT has been shown to reduce incarcerations by 53 percent, homelessness by 54 percent and psychiatric hospitalizations by 43 percent, while saving $1.81 for every dollar invested in the program. New York State's implementation of the similar "Kendra's Law" AOT

program, produced nearly identical results. Furthermore, such programs help engage individuals into a voluntary lifelong recovery process and give them hope for a brighter future.

Opponents of AOT argue that any involuntary treatment will trample on the rights of the mentally ill. However, Laura's Law is voluntary and when we ignore the treatment needs of this sensitive population, we effectively abandon them to the streets, leading to increased incarcerations, hospitalizations, homelessness and conservatorships. Such outcomes have far more draconian impacts on these peoples' lives, with enormous and real impacts on their civil rights and the rights of others.

Orange, Los Angeles, and San Francisco counties have recently joined the ranks of Nevada and Yolo counties by choosing to implement Laura's Law. Later this summer, our Placer County Board of Supervisors will be considering the implementation of such a program in Placer County.

As the *Los Angeles Times* noted last May, "Laura's Law will not stop every tragedy or protect every person in need of care. But it will save some lives and prevent some suffering."

I wholeheartedly agree. Please join me in bringing Laura's Law to Placer County.

Jennifer Montgomery is Placer County's supervisor for District 5.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• South Tahoe High hired Tony Sunzeri, an alumni of the school, as athletic director.
• The Village at Squaw Valley is paying tribute to man – and woman's – best friend with the 5th annual Peaks and Paws Festival on Aug. 23. For more info, go online.
• Heidi Hall, candidate District 1 congressional seat, will talk Aug. 2 at 9:30am at Margarita's restaurant in Grass Valley. Nazneen Rydhan with Emerge California will also speak. Breakfast is $13. RSVP by July 30 to carolehchapman@gmail.com or call 530.205.9666.
• There is still no suspect in the May 23 burglary at Tahoe Keys Marina. A window was broken and more than $500 was stolen from a safe.

Man drowns swimming at Lake Tahoe

A 42-year-old man from Southern California drowned today in Incline Village.

The name of the man from Carson has not been released pending notification of family.

He was about 50 yards from shore when he started struggling to stay afloat, Washoe County sheriff's Sgt. John Hamilton said.

"Someone from the beach swam out and got him off the bottom," Hamilton told *Lake Tahoe News*

He was put on a raft and brought to shore. An off-duty nurse started CPR, but the man died at the beach July 28 just before 5pm.

Hamilton estimates the depth of Lake Tahoe at this area near Diver's Cove is 10- to 15-feet deep.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

LTWC caring for 9 bear cubs

By Riya Bhattacharjee, NBC

It's been three months since the adorably cute baby bear Tahoe arrived at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care center, capturing the imagination of hundreds across the country.

The story of her survival – she was mysteriously left on a doorstep one night and transported to LTWC – is a happy one, thanks to her caretakers Tom and Cheryl Millham, who bottle-fed her and looked after her every need.

Now, the Millhams have their hands full with eight new bear cubs at LTWC, the only place in California licensed to care for wild bear cubs.

No one really knows the reason for so many black bear cubs showing up at once. All the cubs are orphans with one exception, Meyers, who was hit by a car at 5 months old.

Millham hopes that all nine cubs will be ready to go back into the wild in about seven months.

Until then, this is home.

LTWC is getting ready to move to a bigger $10 million, 27-acre space nearby and has already raised $3 million towards it.

The center relies entirely on donations, which funds everything from food – it costs about $800 per week to feed growing cubs – to special cages and medicine.

Read the whole story

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3 wooden boats damaged at Tahoe Keys Marina

A wooden boat owner was arrested Friday after allegedly striking three other classic wooden boats with his vessel.

Steven Rovarino of Reno was arrested on charges of boating under the influence on July 25 at 5:50pm. His boat was also impounded.

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies were calling it a night on their boat patrol when they were flagged down regarding the incident. This led them to discover the same boat had allegedly hit three boats.

No one was injured.

The boats were at Tahoe Keys Marina for the annual wooden boat show.

As of Monday no dollar amount had been assessed to the damage.

"These old wooden boats are built like tanks. There was no breaching of hulls," Sgt. Michael Seligsohn told *Lake Tahoe*

News. “They are also pieces of art. There was a lot of ornamental damage done.”

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Bike thieves targeting Truckee area

There has been an increase in bike thefts in the Truckee area in the last three weeks.

While there is not a direct pattern , most have involved more expensive bikes being stolen. The thieves have cut cables on bikes locked to vehicle racks, taken bikes from porches, and taken a bike from an unlocked garage.

Officers said owners did not record the serial numbers in many of the cases so even if another agency locates the bike, finding the owner would be difficult.

Anyone with information on the thefts, is asked to call 530.550.2320.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Personnel changes at Barton, STPUD

South Lake Tahoe will be without two key players by the end of August.

Monica and Paul Sciuto have taken jobs in Monterey.

Monica Sciuto is director of Public Relations, Marketing & Patient Experience at Barton Hospital. Her last day is Aug. 8. She will be the project manager for Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula in their marketing department.

Paul Sciuto will be leaving his job as assistant general manager at South Tahoe Public Utility District at the end of August. He will be deputy general manager and director of operations and maintenance for the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency.

Leanne Wagoner, outreach coordinator at Barton, will fill in for Sciuto in the interim.

In other changes at Barton, Steve Neff has been hired as chief financial officer. He replaces Dick Derby who is retiring after 14 years. Neff starts in mid-August.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nevada is a lead character for many authors

By John Przybys, Las Vegas Review-Journal

It’s where ranchers fight over water rights, demons prowl the Las Vegas Strip, Basque sheepherders reconnect with family back home and rural residents live out ordinary daily dramas. A place where storytellers with a bit of imagination can craft anything from a Western to a techno-thriller to a spy story against the backdrop of everything from wide-open desert to neon-filled urban clutter.

It’s Nevada, which, thanks to its demographic, geographic and cultural diversity, serves as the setting for stories in just about every genre of literature – even if its roster of homegrown authors with widespread literary acclaim is, frankly, a bit shorter than it ought to be.

Maybe, Sally Denton figures, it has something to do with the Eastern literary establishment’s jaundiced view of the American West.

“I’ve always been kind of struck by this kind of anti-Western bent in general,” said Denton, a fourth-generation Nevadan who grew up in Boulder City and whose works of narrative nonfiction include “The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and Its Hold on America.”

“It seems to me there was always this sense of the American West as kind of a poor relation to the Eastern literary elite,” Denton said. “And Nevada seems to be, even, the bastard child of the Western group. I never could understand why.”

Yet, “I cannot tell you how many times I’ve been contacted by Eastern fiction writers who want to write about Las Vegas,”

Denton added. “But you can’t crack Las Vegas if you haven’t really lived it.”

The truth is, Nevada — the real Nevada — can serve as “a setting for some really evocative literature,” Denton said, “and I think that’s one of the things Mark Twain captured.”

Read the whole story

Injured hiker rescued near Eagle Falls

An injured hiker was rescued early Monday morning after having hurt her leg Sunday near Eagle Falls.

A helicopter landing at the Vikingsholm parking lot about 1:30am July 28 got the attention of campers in the area.

The call came in to El Dorado County sheriff’s search and rescue about 6:45pm Sunday from the father of one of the hikers. But it wasn’t until about 8 that a more definitive location of the couple was secured.

CareFlight was sent up to see if the two could be extricated, but there was no place for the helicopter to land. The search and rescue team started hiking in about 10pm.

“We put a large team together in case we had to carry a patient a long ways,” Sgt. Michael Seligsohn told *Lake Tahoe News*. “One of the keys to this whole thing is the reporting party advised that both were experienced hikers, they advised they had taken care of first aid needs and were in a good place to stay the night if necessary.”

Names and hometowns of the hikers were not available, nor are the extent of injuries known. The person was taken to Barton Memorial Hospital.

Some of the search team came from the Horsetail Falls area because there had been a call there earlier on July 27. The people needing help walked out on their own.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Sand Fire 65% contained



A USFS fire truck leaves the El Dorado County Fairgrounds on July 27 headed back to the fire. Photo/LTN

The Sand Fire burning in El Dorado and Amador counties is 65 percent contained.

Since starting July 24 it has scorched 3,800 acres, and leveled 13 houses and 38 outbuildings.

Evacuations are still in place for hundreds of people. Ponderosa High School in Shingle Spring is the evacuation center.

The fire started when a vehicle drove over dry vegetation.

On the fifth day of the fire, El Dorado County set up a hotline will be available from 7am–7pm, Monday–Friday – 530.642.7263 or email sandfire.edcservices@gmail.com.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report