STPUD employees give back to community

On Dec. 20, 40 local residents had their Christmas brightened as a vanload of presents was delivered by South Tahoe Public Utility District employees to the El Dorado County mental health program. Specifically to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of South Lake Tahoe, an alliance of individuals and families who have banded together to assist mental health patients in obtaining treatment, housing, support, and to fight the stigma associated with mental illness, coordinated the event.

Many of these clients have serious mental illness challenges that make even day-to-day existence a struggle. Each District employee and their families "adopted" a client and filled their personalized Christmas wish lists.

Due to medical confidentiality requirements, District employees are not able to meet face to face with the recipients. Instead, a counselor delivers the gifts to each person, either during a counseling session or by making individual trips to their homes.

According to one program counselor, the home deliveries are the most heartwarming as they are able to see firsthand how these brightly wrapped gifts brought such happiness to an otherwise uneventful Christmas season.

This is the 12th year district employees have participated in the "Adopt and Angel" program and each year the program is more successful than the last. Everything from microwave ovens to slippers was delivered. In addition to NAMI, District employees have been strong supporters of Christmas Cheer for many years.

Opinion: Gaming's view of other frontiers still evolving

By Jon Ralston, Las Vegas Sun

What's missed in the hyperventilating over whether Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is making a grand payback or bowing before Caesar in his Internet poker push – hello, Occam's Razor – is how both the senator and the gamers, coincidentally, have evolved on the issue.

And how this change is so like other changes, especially for Nevada gamers who for years have fluttered about like a gaggle of Chicken Littles until they saw a lot of money to be made. For those of us who have watched this for decades, it's a striking case of déjà vu that shows just how the political elite bend to the whims of the gaming doyens and raises the age-old question: Is what's good for the big casinos always good for Nevada?

A quick review of history:

1970s – New Jersey legalizes gaming. Nevada casinos say it will kill the state. State lives. Gamers invest in New Jersey.

1980s – Domestic, foreign gaming catches on. Nevada casinos say it will kill the state. State lives. Gamers invest in other jurisdictions.

1990s – Indian gaming begins to spread. Nevada casinos say it will kill the state. State lives. Gamers invest in tribal gaming.

2000s — Chatter about new frontier of Internet gaming grows. Nevada casinos say it will kill the state. State lives. Gamers push the Strip Dream Act, authored by Reid.

Read the whole story

$14,000 awarded to Carson City orgs for marketing efforts

The Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau awarded $14,000 in grants from the Nevada Commission on Tourism to three organizations to help with marketing efforts.

The Divine Nine receives $3,00 for advertising.

The CCCVB will use $5,000 for video production and website updates, contributing to the promotion of Carson City as a regional destination featuring year-round events, entertainment, dining and lodging options.

The Virginia & Truckee Railroad campaign will receive $6,000 for advertising and collateral to be utilized in 2011.

Opinion: Cooley should be

elected to state Senate

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Dec. 20, 2010, Sacramento Bee.***

Voters in the Senate district that stretches from Fair Oaks and Roseville to Lake Tahoe and Susanville have unfinished business, selecting a replacement for the late Sen. Dave Cox of Fair Oaks.

The choice on Jan. 4 is between Assemblyman Ted Gaines, the Roseville Republican, and Rancho Cordova Mayor Ken Cooley, the Democrat.

Gaines is the clear front-runner in the heavily Republican district. But Cooley would be a worthy and appropriate replacement for Cox, a politician who had served his district well by understanding the wisdom of compromise.

Gaines is a decent man, but has few accomplishments as an assemblyman. As a backbench senator, he would have little clout.

Because he says he would not vote for a budget that earmarks money for family planning clinics that provide abortion services for poor women, Gaines never would vote for a California state budget. That alone guarantees he will never be a significant player on behalf of the residents of Senate District 1.

Read the whole story

Creditors to foreclose on SLT convention center; Lane out

By Kathryn Reed

Randy Lane and John Serpa are no longer involved in the would-be convention center project in South Lake Tahoe.

The two men who ran Lake Tahoe Development Company and sunk about $90 million of their money in the 11-acre site must walk away with only concrete and rebar to show for their efforts.

The creditors who own the 29 parcels are in control. They have agreed to foreclose, South Tahoe Lake officials said. This all transpired in bankruptcy court Dec. 21.

Creditors looking for someone to buy their rebar and concrete. Photo/Kathryn Reed

What happens next remains to be seen. Creditors and South Lake Tahoe officials have a meeting with Tahoe Regional Planning Agency representatives Jan. 4 to discuss what flexibility the bi-state regulatory agency will allow.

"The design is outdated," South Lake Tahoe City Manager Tony

O’Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We need to see what we need to do to amend the entitlements.”

TRPA officials were not available for comment.

Although O’Rourke does not anticipate any work occurring at the state line area site for at least two years, he says it is imperative to know how the footprint can be changed to accommodate the next developer.

“The biggest issue is we are in a market place that has collapsed and it will take some time to rebound. This is way too valuable (property) for it not to be developed,” O’Rourke said.

The July 2006 agreement with Zephyr Cove-based Lake Tahoe Development Company that the then-City Council of Hal Cole, Kathay Lovell, John Upton, Ted Long and Mike Weber approved called for two hotel-condo structures, retail, insufficient parking, and no easy access to Heavenly Village across the busy highway. (Additional parking was supposed to be at Harveys, but no agreement was ever secured. Caltrans never signed-off on a proposed over or underpass for Highway 50.)

With that operating agreement only good for fire starter or a doorstop, it’s possible the next contract won’t be so one-sided with the developer on the winning end.

Even though creditors – aka land owners – will have a large say in what happens, the city and TRPA will be part of the decision process because they dictate land use policy.

It was the council of Lovell, Long, Weber, Bill Crawford and Jerry Birdwell that gave the OK for LTDC to start construction without a final map in place – thus the reason multiple creditors own 29 parcels. Their vote also came with the assumption funding was in place, while in reality all LTDC had was a letter from a lending agency that turned out to be worth less than the paper it was written on.

Lane did not return phone calls.

Owens Mortgage Investment Fund is the largest creditor – owed about $28 million. The attorney for the creditor was unavailable for comment.

Most likely the creditors will get their respective properties appraised to know the value in today's dollars. They vary in size and location, making them not of equal value.

O'Rourke speculates the group will bring in a recognized brokerage firm with experience domestically and internationally to move the project forward. In addition to anticipating a more traditional high-end hotel being part of the project, he believes a much smaller conference center will be erected.

"It will probably be more like a regional conference center like what Monterey has," O'Rourke said. "Over the course of the near future with the creditors in control we will come up with a game plan that is market drive. We hope to attract a major investor whether it is Vail Resorts or someone else."

Vail through its real estate arm RockResorts was going to be the initial hotel operator. That fell through long before the developer filed for bankruptcy in October 2009. The Colorado-company, which owns Heavenly Mountain Resort on the other side of the street, will not discuss future acquisitions.

Wind forced evacuation of skiers at Mt. Rose

By Reno Gazette-Journal

A Mt. Rose Ski Resort lift was operating again Monday after it was jammed on Sunday with skiers stuck on it for two hours.

There were 23 chairs on the Zephyr lift holding 76 skiers when a freak wind from the south moved the cable on which the lifts operate and moved it out of the running rail, said Mike Pierce, Mt. Rose director of sales and marketing.

Read the whole story

Report: Reno a forgotten vacation destination

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

Lord Chesterfield once said that an injury is much sooner forgotten than an insult.

Which raises the question: Does inclusion in a list of forgotten vacation destinations qualify as the former or the latter?

That’s the predicament Reno finds itself in after being included in *U.S. News & World Report’s* rankings for “6 Forgotten Vacation Spots.”

Reno made the list along with allegedly forgettable commiserators Pismo Beach, Calif., Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Lake Placid, N.Y., the Poconos, Pa., and Acapulco, Mexico.

Uh, what were we talking about again?

The article offered a glum assessment of Reno, citing Las Vegas’ rise as Nevada’s gaming mecca and the impact of competition from Indian gaming.

Read the whole story

Nevada adds seat in House

By Steve Timko, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada has picked up a fourth seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, according to U.S. Census Bureau figures released today.

Despite a population contraction toward the end of the decade, Nevada remained the fastest growing state in the country between 2000 and 2010.

Read the whole story

California fails to gain House seat based on census

By Michael Doyle, Fresno Bee Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON – California's congressional delegation will remain the same size while Texas and Florida will bulk up, under final 2010 census results released Tuesday morning.

With a population of 37.3 million, California will retain its current 53 House seats for the coming decade. Along with every other state, California will also keep two senators.

Reapportionment following the 2010 census still leaves California with the largest delegation in the 435-member House of Representatives. As the nation's population grew 9.7% to 308,745,538, though, the overall balance shifted across the country.

"This is really an important day for the American people," Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said at the National Press Club. "Much is riding on the results."

All told, 18 states will either gain or lose House seats, while 32 states will stay the same

The 2010 census marks the first reapportionment since 1920 that California has not gained at least one House seat. More broadly, it marks a continued population tilt away from Rust Belt states into the Sun Belt.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Bring the fat skis

It's the first day of winter and *Lake Tahoe News'* ski reporter says it's mid-winter conditions on all the slopes.

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