Squaw to honor 2014 Olympians

Squaw Valley will celebrate the return of Lake Tahoe's athletes from the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi with an Olympic Homecoming Celebration on March 21.

It will include live music, parade, fireworks.

The welcome home party begins at 6:30pm at the KT Base Bar in the Village at Squaw Valley.

Friday evening's festivities include the athlete parade, national anthem sung by Sara Mancuso, welcome home video presentation, athlete Q&A, fireworks show, and concert by Drop Theory and West Water Outlaws.

The event is free and open to the public. The event also serves as the highlight of the 2014 Nature Valley U.S. Alpine Championships being held at Squaw Valley March 19-23.

Athletes attending include Julia Mancuso, Mikaela Shiffrin, Andrew Weibrecht, Travis Ganong, Marco Sullivan, Nate Holland, Jared Goldberg, Tim Jitloff, Nolan Kasper, David Chodounsky, Stacey Cook, Julia Ford, Megan McJames, Laurenne Ross, Leanne Smith, Resi Stiegler and Jaqueline Wiles.

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5 common causes of prevalent tax mistakes

By Paul Taylor

Whether you've filed for an extension on your taxes this year, or have waited until the last minute to complete paperwork, or

want a better strategy for the future, chances are you could be doing a better job throughout the year to save on income taxes.

Forty-nine percent of Americans think they pay more than their fair share in taxes, according to 2013 Rasmussen reports.

Come tax time, many of the other half could be doing more to legally and strategically save money.

He cites mistakes that many taxpayers are liable to make now and in future years.

• Not knowing which tax deductions are available. Tax reform measures are enacted frequently by Congress, which makes it hard for U.S. taxpayers to know which deductions are currently available for maximizing savings. One of the most overlooked deductions is state and local sales taxes. Taxpayers may be able to take deductions for student-loan interest, out-of-pocket charitable contributions, moving expenses to take a first job, the child care tax credit, new points on home refinancing, health insurance premiums, home mortgage interest, tax-preparation services and contributions to a traditional IRA.

• Misunderstanding deduction value for medical expenses. The Affordable Care Act has altered the guidelines for tax-deductible medical expenses. Effective Jan. 1, 2013, the new policy increased the threshold for the itemized deduction for unreimbursed medical expenses from 7.5 percent of adjusted gross income to 10 percent of adjusted gross income for regular tax purposes. The increase is waived for individuals age 65 and older for tax years 2013 through 2016.

• Confusing when taxes must be paid on IRA and employer-sponsored retirement funds. Traditional IRAs and most employer-sponsored retirement plans are tax-deferred accounts, which mean they are typically funded with pre-tax or tax-deductible dollars. As a result, taxes are not payable until

funds are withdrawn. Exceptions are the Roth IRA and the Roth 401(k) and Roth 403(b). Roth accounts are funded with after-tax dollars. That's why qualified distributions – after age 59½ and the five-year holding requirement has been met – are free of federal income tax.

• Overlooking tax-advantaged investments. Tax-advantaged investments can include real estate partnerships, oil and gas partnerships and suitability, which refers to how appropriate an investment may or may not be to an investor. Two of the most common types of real estate partnerships, for example, are low-income housing and historic rehabilitation. The federal government grants tax credits to those who construct or rehabilitate low-income housing or who invest in the rehabilitation or preservation of historic structures.

• Uncertainty when accounting for gift taxes. The federal gift tax applies to gifts of property or money while the donor is living. The federal estate tax, on the other hand, applies to property conveyed to others, with the exception of a spouse, after a person's death. There are several exceptions to gift taxes, including gifts of tuition or medical expenses that you pay directly to a medical or educational institution for someone else, gifts to a spouse who is a U.S. citizen, gifts to a qualified charitable organization and gifts to a political organization.

Paul Taylor is the founder and owner of Capital Advisory Group & Tax Planners of Lake Norman and Capital Investment Advisors Inc. Taylor, a fully licensed investment adviser, has more than 20 years of experience in the industry.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• South Tahoe Public Utility District is having a workshop March 26 from 2-5pm about rates. The meeting is at 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

• South Drug Free Coalition's website is up.

• Reno Earth Day is April 27 at Idlewild Park from 10am to 5pm. This festival includes live music, local food, educational activities, crafts and art. The theme is the Natural World, Clean and Green Technology and Many Cultures. The event free.

• There will be a blood drive April 7 from noon-6pm at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel in South Lake Tahoe. For more info, call 775.781.5343.

Ski resort accidents difficult to verify

By Elyce Kirchner, Kevin Nious and Jeremy Carroll, NBC Bay Area

Unlike accidents on our highways, waterways, and theme parks, there is no system for independently tracking accidents at ski resorts, despite the fact that in California, most resorts are on federal land.

Instead, accident tracking is left up to the ski industry to

self-report, with little transparency.

The NBC Bay Area Investigative Unit analyzed injury data from the National Ski Areas Association from 2005 to 2012.

According to the NSAA, during those eight seasons, an average of 47 people were seriously injured (defined as paralysis, broken neck or back, traumatic brain injuries, and other serious injuries) at resorts nationwide. That's 47 serious injuries out of more than 50 million annual visits to ski areas.

It's a stellar safety record that NBC Bay Area was unable to verify. The Investigative Unit asked for details showing exactly how the industry tracks and defines these injuries and was repeatedly told that information is confidential.

Read the whole story

LTCC instructor a student of Ansel Adams

By John Rogers, AP

LOS ANGELES – During the last years of his life, Ansel Adams pored over the tens of thousands of negatives he'd carefully stored since his teens, setting aside 70 he determined would stand as his greatest works of art.

Adams offered to personally print, sign and sell sets of 25 photographs from them – but with several strings attached: He would select the first 10 and let buyers choose the other 15.

But not just anybody with $30,000 to spend in 1980 could

purchase the collection he called “The Museum Set Edition of Fine Prints.” They would only be sold to people Adams judged serious collectors and only after they promised never to resell them. If they left the buyer’s family, they would have to go to a museum.

Among the few dozen who made the cut were the late Leonard and Marjorie Vernon, prominent Southern California collectors whose set was given to the J. Paul Getty Museum in 2011 and is now the centerpiece of “In Focus: Ansel Adams,” which opens Tuesday.

How Adams developed his skills is explained in the exhibition, which includes photos ranging from 1921 to 1960. It was in the 1940s that Adams came up with his Zone System, dividing an image into 10 specific zones, ranging from black to white.

And it was while photographing “Monolith, The Face of Half Dome,” in 1927 with a camera with a glass-slide negative that he said he devised the system for picture-taking called Visualization.

“As I replaced the slide, I began to visualize how the print was to appear,” Adams would say later. “I began to see in my mind’s eye the finished product.”

That, said Kurt Molnar, a photography instructor who in his early 20s worked in Adams’ gallery and lived in a shack next door to him, was the greatest lesson he imparted — to every art photographer who followed him.

“More than anything I learned from Ansel was his ability to take pictures with his eyes and with his mind,” said Molnar, who now teaches photography at Lake Tahoe Community College in California’s Sierra Nevada, where Adams captured so many of his iconic images.

“Let’s say you’re standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon,” Molnar continued. “Most people are going to see the entire

vista. He could envision, he could see in his mind, the finished product before he even took the picture."

Augmented by several other Adams' photos from the museum's collection, the exhibition marks the 30th anniversary of the photographer's death next month. More than that, it provides a fresh look at both Adams' genius with a camera and in the darkroom.

"What sets them off, really," said Karen Hellman, who curated the exhibit, "is that they were created all within a span of years by Ansel Adams himself, at a time when he was printing with a particular intensity in mind."

These were the photos the pioneer of art photography considered his best, Hellman continued, and he would take special pains in reproducing them to make sure people knew that.

"He spoke about that at the time, how later in life he wanted to create images that were more impactful," said Hellman, assistant curator in the museum's Department of Photographs.

Although the collection contains several instantly recognizable images, such as "Moon and Half Dome," photographed in California's Yosemite National Park in 1960, and "The Tetons and the Snake River" captured in Wyoming in 1942, it's safe to say even serious students of his work haven't seen photos quite like these.

The difference is likely best displayed in two large prints of arguably Adams' most famous work, "Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico." The museum set photo printed by Adams in 1980 hangs side-by-side with one he printed in 1948.

In a brief video clip accompanying the exhibition, Adams describes how he captured the image on a late November afternoon in 1941. He was returning to Santa Fe from a day of fruitlessly searching for subjects to photograph, when he

caught a glimpse out of his car window of an “extraordinary” scene of the moon rising over a cemetery.

“I practically ditched the car, and I had some companions with me,” he recalled. “I started yelling, you know, ‘Get me the eight-by-ten, get me the tripod.'”

He managed to get off exactly one shot before he lost the light from the setting sun that had been illuminating the crosses marking the cemetery’s graves – and providing the element that made the photo.

Although the brilliance of Adams’ work is clearly seen in the 1948 print, it’s displayed in much more intense contrast in the 1980 version: The crosses are brighter, the night sky is darker, the buildings in the background and the landscape in the foreground are sharper.

“My parents owned several ‘Moonrises,’ and to put them together and look at the differences from how they changed over time is really fascinating,” said Carol Vernon, who with her husband, Robert Turbin, gave “The Museum Set” to the Getty.

Under her parents’ agreement, the photos could have stayed in the family, but she and her husband thought it better for the public to have a chance to see them in an environment where they could be carefully preserved in the future.

“Composition was paramount for him and he spent a lot of time before he ever pushed the button and snapped the shutter,” said Vernon, who got to know Adams over the years. “But he also was an incredible technician in the darkroom.”

Overtime pay proposal triggers wage debate

By Marilyn Geewax, KQED-TV

On Thursday, President Obama rolled out his plan for strengthening overtime pay protections for millions of workers. In his view, if more workers got fatter paychecks, they could spend more and stimulate the economy.

But if his critics are right, then employers would end up laying off workers to make up for the higher wage costs. And that would hurt the already painfully slow recovery.

Which scenario is right?

Economists are divided. Some say the proposed changes would give the economy just what it needs: more consumer demand. Others say it would lead to exactly what the economy doesn't need: fewer jobs.

Read the whole story

SNC launching Poetry Center

Sierra Nevada College's new Poetry Center promotes an appreciation of contemporary poetry among students and community members while providing support for current and emerging poets.

At the grand opening March 28-29 the college will be hosting poet laureate of California Juan Felipe Herrera and award-winning poet Jane Hirshfield for public readings and

workshops.

The Poetry Center represents a wide and diverse collection of poetry including voices that have not often been heard in the region. The library is open to the general public and offers free library access to all local and Nevada residents.

The March 28 event begins at 5:30ppm in the Prim Library

with a reception, followed by readings at 6:30pm and author signings at 7:30pm.

On March 29 there will be a workshop with Jane Hirshfield from 9:30-11:30am, a High School Student Workshop with Patricia Smith from 1:30-3:30pm, a workshop with Laura Wetherington from 1:30-3:30pm, and

open mic with Smith from 7-9pm.

All events are free and open to the public.

Early spring means allergy season for Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Eyes swollen? Nose running?

It’s allergy season in Tahoe and technically it’s not even spring.

Mother Nature apparently has her own calendar. Trees are flowering in the Lake Tahoe Basin, bulbs are sprouting and some early bloomers are shining through.



Spring is in air in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/LTN

According to the Weather Channel, the pollen forecast for today on the South Shore is “high” and will be “very high” on Wednesday and Thursday. The active trees are juniper, sycamore and willow.

“An earlier spring means there is more pollen earlier in the season and for perhaps a longer duration, too. It does not mean the allergy season will shorten – we are more likely to experience the opposite,” Ron Roth, otolaryngologist with Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Seasons in Tahoe vary and there is no ‘normal’ here for allergy season.”

With the temperatures forecast to be in the 50s all week, the outdoors is calling. But that’s the worst place to be for some allergy suffers. But if dust is your problem, then calling in sick because you need to be outdoors could be the solution.

“To combat allergies, avoid contact with allergens to which you have sensitivities. That may involve limiting exposure to pets, dust, or time outdoors,” Roth said. He said the most common allergies this time of year are pet dander, dust, pollen and insects.

Symptoms of allergies include runny or itchy nose, itchy and watery eyes, and sometimes a scratchy throat.

“The allergy skin test is the quickest, most inexpensive, and most accurate way to find out what you are allergic to,

whether it’s mold, grass pollen, or a type of weed,” says Neil Kao, an internal medicine physician specializing in allergy and immunology at the Allergic Disease and Asthma Center in Greenville, S.C., told WebMD.

Over the counter medications should help most people.

“Avoid chronic use of nose sprays such as nasal sprays that are supposed to last for 12 hour periods. Frequent use over time can lead to inflammation and cause the congestion and nasal obstruction you are trying to resolve,” Roth warned.

Letter: Hidden lies hurting Meyers future

To the community,

“Honest baby, it was just once. It meant nothing, I promise.”

If you’ve never heard this before, thank your lucky stars. But if you have, you recognize a whopper when you hear it.

Via email, I received a copy of the third round of a grant, a grant that our county supervisor signed on Feb. 26, for $1,150,000, the very day she was punching her fists in the air proclaiming, “The Catalyst is Dead.” This grant basically throws Meyers under the bus. It reads something like this: Meyers will be the pilot community for the Sustainable Mobility Plan, the prototype for communities around the lake and around the world! Meyers is the “donor community” and apparently, we are all on board for this.

What?!

Boy, do I have issues with this. First, how could something be “sustainable” if our tax dollars are paying for it? Second, I’m getting a little sick of these meetings with half truths and almost honest answers.

Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars of this grant goes to consultants, the rest to the agencies (TRPA, county, etc.). Consultants were included in the first two rounds of this grant, $850,000 and $950,000, respectfully. Pretty cool gig because consultants can consult indefinitely. Well, until the cause-du-jour runs out of grant money.

This particular cause is bikeable-walkable communities, buildings snuggled together with parking underground, tourist-retail on ground level, low income housing-timeshare-condos on upper floors. There’s your 40- to 50-foot tall buildings, just like the Catalyst. You heard me, the Catalyst is not dead, just renamed.

One of the problems with these sustainable communities is combined zoning. Who would want to live above a breakfast cafe where employees arrive at 4:30am? Who wants to hear doors slamming and car alarms chirping all night? Smelly commercial dumpsters, and of course, signs, street and emergency lights? How about inebriated people wandering around doing naughty things after the bars close at 2am? Commercial, residential, and tourist recreational, thrown together like a tossed salad, really?

This grant, the Incentive Plan (formerly Catalyst) and the TRPA’s Regional Plan update (RPU), all buy into this idea. Maybe everyone went to the same convention. I don’t know, but this is what the TRPA has been spoon feeding the Meyers Community Advisory Council (MCAC) since the beginning. The agencies were specifically dovetailing the Meyers plan to the RPU, calling the RPU our current plan. Well, lying by omission is still a lie. Our current and existing plan is the 1993 Meyers Community Plan.

The original focus of the MCAC was to update that ’93 plan and these good people did not realize they were being manipulated because the ’93 plan was never used for comparison. It still hasn’t. So much is being taken from us, so many huge changes to our community. This is planning for decades ahead, not just a year or two. This isn’t a game, people, this is our future.

The new Meyers plan has problems, it’s not ready, and most of us have never heard of it. How could we be on board? How could our supervisor be proclaiming, “This is your community! You can write you plan!” when the whole deal sounds set in stone? If you are interested in reading this grant, there is a new website which has compiled this and other documents from the agencies. Check it out. And, follow the money, like, how much money did it take to convince the Conservancy to take this bad publicity hit? Selling off sensitive lots for profit, changing sensitive lands to asset lands? I think that the TRPA is in no position to take any more bad press, but for some unknown reason, needs this new Meyers plan to get pushed through, ASAP.

What about this commodities transfer business? Changing residential allocations to commercial ones, changing commercial floor area to tourist accommodation units? Goofy – buy one get five free “incentives for big business”. It’s untouchable for small business. This kind of thing is ripe for corruption and misuse.

We mustn’t overlook the zoning changes. My commercial-light industrial property changed to Town Center. It pretty much wrecked my future, and not just mine. The entire commercial corridor in Meyers was rezoned and none of us was ever told. Are all these aforementioned things connected? All to accommodate one big new project? I am not opposed to growth, in fact, my business thrives on it. But what kind of growth are we really talking about here?

I don’t want to be the prototype for some cockamamie idea that

a bunch of grant-gitters made up to make big money fast, and nobody wants another hole-in-the-ground. So, bring your questions and ideas to the next Meyers meeting at the CCC building, 6pm March 19.

Angela Olson, Meyers resident and business owner

Opinion: TRPA's leadership goes beyond the basin

By Joanne Marchetta

The environment of Lake Tahoe does not often turn on a dime. Environmental progress is measured in decades, not the nanoseconds of the digital age.

When the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and partner agencies started inspecting Lake Tahoe watercraft in 2008, all we knew was that we needed to protect our waters from the growing threats of aquatic invasive species. We took the necessary steps, but did not know then that the watercraft inspection program would one day help protect other water bodies as well. Five years later, Lake Tahoe aquatic invasive species experts are consulted across the Western states and are called to Washington, D.C., to help on the national level.



Joanne

Marchetta

Lake Tahoe’s reputation as an environmental leader took an exciting turn last month. At a summit in Colorado, the water sports industry unveiled an aquatic invasive species boat filtration system developed in partnership with TRPA and other wildlife agencies. Spurred by the rise of watercraft inspection programs in the United States, a private company created a biologic filtration system, an innovation that can be installed in ballast bladders on many wake sport boats.

Leading aquatic invasive species researchers at UNR carried out extensive testing of the filter system in Lake Mead’s heavily infested waters. The system proved effective at keeping aquatic invasive species and their larvae out of ballast tanks, live-wells, and bait-wells. Its use, if it catches on, could save boaters wait-time and help keep the cost of the program down by eliminating the need to decontaminate most ballast systems at Tahoe.

The recent environmental innovation is already spurring change. The company has orders coming in rapidly from major boat manufacturers and dealerships. The result of collaboration will improve the efficiency of watercraft inspection programs here in Tahoe and across the country and could reduce the spread of invasive species to unprotected waters.

This is not the first time Lake Tahoe’s leading-edge policies catalyzed increased environmental protections beyond these shores. In 1999, when TRPA prohibited carbureted two-stroke watercraft engines in the Tahoe region, other water bodies, such as Donner Lake and San Pablo Reservoir, followed suit with similar regulation of the high-polluting engines. This was one instance where the environmental improvement to Tahoe was noticeable immediately. In the first year of the prohibition, a 70 percent drop in gas–related pollutants was measured lakewide. New federal EPA emissions standards for

two-stroke engines came online in 2006 and most two-strokes are now cleaner burning, fuel injected engines.

The positive results of other Tahoe conservation programs that garner national and international attention are realized more slowly and doggedly. UC Davis last week released encouraging data from 2013 that shows the lake's clarity is holding steady. After more than two decades of environmental guidelines and restoration projects, the decline of Lake clarity has halted and science is showing that with innovative strategies we can return Lake Tahoe to its historic depth of nearly 100 feet. Every year, planners from other countries visit Tahoe to take away lessons for harmonizing the natural with the man-made environment.

Tahoe is on a world stage environmentally for how we protect the urban and natural worlds for future generations. Few alpine lakes which claim such awe-inspiring beauty and pristine conditions also share the complexities of being a year-round vacation destination surrounded by diverse communities. Lake Tahoe is one of just three lakes on the West Coast designated an Outstanding National Resource Water and the only one outside the National Parks system with a mix of public and private property ringed by highways and a population in the tens of thousands.

These are among the reasons Tahoe's environmental initiatives are so often used as models and drivers of environmental innovation. Our efforts to establish equilibrium between the human and natural environments provide both inspiration and instruction for communities grappling with similar issues. When we work to protect our shores, sometimes we are serving more than our beloved lake. We are setting an example of environmental stewardship for others far and wide.

Lake Tahoe communities are changing for the better and progress is coming from all sectors. As we strive to save the lake and improve our communities, it is important to recognize

that we also carry the responsibility to share our innovations with others, which in turn pays dividends for Lake Tahoe.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.