Slew of events on National Winter Trails Day

Join the Tahoe Rim Trail Association for its annual National Winter Trails Day. Participate in a day of winter recreation, presentations, and activities on Jan. 8 between 10am and 2pm. The event will be near the west end of Tahoe Meadows on the south side of Mt. Rose Highway. To participate, contact Tom at (775) 298.0238, programs@tahoerimtrail.org.

The TRTA will be offering free guided snowshoe hikes throughout the day, providing users with useful information on winter travel as well as dramatic views of Lake Tahoe. Tahoe Mountain Sports will also be on site to showcase winter recreation gear, from MSR and Kahtoola snowshoes to avalanche beacons and probes.

A presentation by the American Red Cross on winter safety and preparedness will take place at noon, along with an assortment of other talks on how to make this winter season as enjoyable as possible. For younger winter enthusiasts, there will be an ongoing snowman contest throughout the day, along with snow shelter construction and demonstrations.

Explore Tahoe will also be partnering with TRTA in hosting a guided snowshoe hike from 9am to noon to 12 at the Kingsbury North Trailhead near Heavenly Mountain Resort. Post-hike hot beverages and treats will be provided! To participate, call Lauren Tomaselli at Explore Tahoe at (530) 542.4637.

Looking for help with food and gift baskets

To the community,

Help is very much needed for the St. Theresa Church annual Free Christmas Food & Gift Basket give away for those that are in need throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin. St. Theresa has offered free food baskets annually for more than 30 years.

Sue Davis, the director of Religious Education at St. Theresa Church normally organizes this event but is not able to this year and I have stepped into her place to ensure the service continues to be offered to our community members.

I need members of our compassionate community to step-up and help me make certain that those in need receive these simple necessities so that they too can celebrate this joyous occasion.

Volunteers are needed during the following times:

Basket preparations and distribution will be at the Grace Hall (aka the gym at the corner of Lyons Avenue and Highway 50)

Dec. 16 9am-4pm organizing/categorizing food and gifts.

Dec. 17 9am-4pm preparing food baskets, choosing gifts and wrapping, etc.

Dec. 18 9am-4pm 10am-3pm food baskets will be handed out.

Even a short amount of your time can make a huge difference. If you are not able to donate your time, but would like to donate nonperishable food items, gifts for infants, children and adults alike or to make a financial donation, they are greatly appreciated and needed as well. You may do so by bringing your donation to the St. Theresa Parish Rectory or by

calling (530) 544.3533; you can also donate during any of the times that the event is under way.

If you know anyone who is in need of a food and gift basket during this difficult economic time, encourage them to call St. Theresa Parish Rectory at (530) 544.3533. We will be accepting applications until the distribution date.

On behalf of those that are in need this holiday season, I share in their gratitude for your time, generosity and consideration.

Tiffany Kostelnik

S. Lake alters nepotism policy; snowy paths OK this winter

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is inching toward recognizing it needs to do something regarding nepotism. But the bigger policy issue regarding employees will not be brought to the council until February or March.

A revision to the basic nepotism policy was before the council Dec. 14. What was altered is the code of ethics that had been passed in 1992.



“The resolution prohibits City Council members from appointing any of their relatives to a City Commission or to the position of City Manager or City Attorney. The Resolution does not affect the employment, promotion, or retention of employees,” Deputy City Attorney Nira Feeley wrote in her staff report.

The council approved the revision 4-0, with Bruce Grego being absent for the entire meeting except for joining via teleconference to vote on the mayor and mayor pro tem.

Grego weighed-in on the subject via a letter he wrote that City Clerk Suzie Alessi read into the record. In part it said, “We should select individuals to participate in our local government based upon merit. Depriving certain individuals from participating in local government based upon their ‘relative’ status is no different than depriving such individual from participating based upon their race, national origin, religion, sexual preference, sex, age and the other bases of discrimination that we all reject.”

Grego’s wife, Geri, is on the Planning Commission. The adoption of this rule will prohibit her from being on it.

Councilwoman Claire Fortier and Mayor Hal Cole stated how perceptions of a pipeline of power or influence need to be avoided even if relatives believe they can act independently of the other.

Councilman Tom Davis relayed how his son wants to be on the Airport Commission, but will be denied that opportunity. The elder Davis is OK with that to adhere to the policy and the ideals of promoting more transparency within city hall.

Councilwoman Angela Swanson pointed out how there are plenty of other ways for relatives to be active in the community and have leadership roles other than by being on a city commission.

The issue of nepotism was brought up in the 2010 El Dorado County Grand Jury Report. It's a topic the outgoing City Council and former city manager swept under the carpet.

Lake Tahoe News in July published an article about nepotism in the city. The effort to figure out who is related to whom has been difficult because the city will not turn that information over.

After *LTN* initially requested the information, Human Resources Director Janet Emmett sent an email to the related employees telling them about the request. That document is public information, but the city is not disclosing the full list of recipients.

When City Attorney Patrick Enright sent the email, he wrote, "Attached is a list of the bcc on the email that was provided to you. The ones redacted are mostly police officers who (sic) names were redacted under Penal Code section 832.8. There is one couple that has a 'confidential marriage,' which is specifically exempt as a Public Record."

So, it is still unknown how many full-time, part-time or seasonal/temporary employees are related to one another. Just being related does not present a conflict. Current policy prohibits someone from supervising a relative. However, relatives in the workplace can present conflicts for other employees. That is the part that has yet to be addressed by the city and it supposed to be next year.

Although the seven bargaining units in the city don't have to agree with what staff and eventually the council will vote on, they are being given the opportunity to review the policy before it becomes law. That is why it will be months before it sees the light of day.

"As to city employees, the city needs to meet and confer with the employee unions, which we are in the process of doing at this time. Staff is hopeful that in the next two months a

comprehensive policy can be brought to the council," Enright told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In other action Dec. 14:

• The council adopted the ordinance to mandate businesses clear their sidewalks of snow, but the start date was altered to Sept. 1, 2011, so outreach can be done to educate people. As originally written, the enforcement was to begin Jan. 1. The city ordinance puts some teeth into what already is state law.

• A fee increase per the 2007 franchise agreement with South Tahoe Refuse was approved 3-1, with Tom Davis voting no. Because it is a contractual item it really didn't matter how the vote went. STR customers in the city limits will have rates go up 35 cents a month starting Jan. 1.

• Police Lt. Marty Hale was recognized for his years of service. He retires at the end of the month, though will continue on on a limited basis for the first six months of 2011. He was given a standing ovation.

• The three new councilmembers were sworn in, as were the city treasurer and city clerk.

Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra meeting

Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra meets every Thursday at 7:30am at the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center. Breakfast and coffee are served.

The speakers, who start at 8am, in January are:

Jan. 13 ~ Amber Wilson, nutritional consultant.

Jan. 20 ~ Carolyn Meiers, Habitat for Humanity in South Lake Tahoe.

St. Theresa receives grant from Raley's for music

St. Theresa School is the recipient of a $1,500 grant from Raley's.

The South Lake Tahoe school was one of four schools nominated in the Northern California region.

They received the most online votes and will be presented with a check Dec. 14 at 6pm during the Christmas performance of the Nativity Play. This will take place in the gym.

The school will use the grant money to bring musical theater to all grade levels.

North Face Park and Pipe Open Series

The North Face Park and Pipe Open Series, a two-stop tour featuring ski slopestyle and halfpipe competitions, is Jan. 6-9 at Northstar-at-Tahoe in Truckee and Feb. 17-20 at Waterville Valley in New Hampshire.

The North Face Park and Pipe Open Series will dedicate one competition day to halfpipe and two days to slopestyle. Judging will be overall impression based on creativity, degree of difficulty, combinations, variations, style, and amplitude. The competition at Northstar Resort is the last event that will count toward getting an invite to the 2011 Winter X Games, and will count on the Association of Freeskiing Professionals (AFP) points list to qualify for the Halfpipe and Slopestyle FIS World Championships in February.

The North Face Park and Pipe Open Series will work in conjunction with the AFP on competition judging, with AFP General Manager and X Games competitor Steele Spence serving as head judge for the series.

Cole excited to be South Lake Tahoe's new mayor

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has a new mayor of sorts – Hal Cole. He had the position during his first tenure on the council, so he knows what he is getting into. He was mayor in 1998, 2001 and 2006.

Claire Fortier, the top vote getter in the November election, was unanimously appointed by her colleagues to be mayor pro tem.



Hal Cole is ready to lead South Lake Tahoe into a new era. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Councilman Bruce Grego was on teleconference for only this part of the meeting.

Fortier, Tom Davis and Angela Swanson were sworn in Nov. 14. Prior this happening, outgoing members Bill Crawford, Jerry Birdwell and Kathay Lovell each said a few words as they were about to resume their lives as non-elected persons. None of them chose to run for re-election.

Also sworn in on Tuesday were City Treasurer Dave Olivo and City Clerk Suzie Alessi.

The morning was filled with moments of levity – Crawford saying the reason he did not want a plaque is because he found his last one in the garage behind some canned goods.

The morning was filled with tears – Lovell tried to maintain her composure, but was overcome with emotion in her goodbyes. The packed room gave her a standing ovation.

The morning was filled with the continued acrimony between Crawford and Lovell – she not turning to shake his hand as he walked back to his seat after everyone else had.

The morning was filled with promises of things to change.

Cole, as mayor, expressed how this policy making body is a “we” and not an “I” – to which his colleagues later expressed their same desire to work as a team.

Cole acknowledged the hard financial times the state and country are in, and that South Lake Tahoe is right there with those bodies.

“We are at the point where we may have to look at how we deliver services,” Cole said in reference to having balanced recent budgets with reserves. But he also pointed out how the town is resilient as is the staff. “We have a rare opportunity to reinvent our organization.”

Part of the reinvention will be with establishing work sessions outside the council meetings for one or two issues to be hashed out prior to a vote needing to be taken. All of these will be open to the public. The schedule is being worked out.

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California seniors eligible for food aid not applying for it

By Joan Aragone, AARP Bulletin

Bob Hyman, a retired salesman with health problems, stocks up at the weekly food pantry at his subsidized senior housing facility. From food provided by the San Francisco Food Bank, he selects carrots, cabbage, potatoes, celery, onions, apples, pears, canned beans, bread and rice.

“It’s a good program, and it helps,” he said. “It’s free. I’m thankful.” Chicken, which was formerly offered, hasn’t been available for months. He buys eggs occasionally at a nearby grocery store, “but it’s expensive.”

Hyman, 79, lives on a monthly income after rent of less than $700 from Social Security and a pension. He takes public transportation, eats $2 lunches at another senior housing facility and cooks at home. He dismissed any need for government food assistance. “I’m thrifty and smart about food,” he said.

Hyman is one of the estimated 90 percent of Californians over 60 who are eligible for the state’s CalFresh food assistance program but don’t participate.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Stormy weather all day

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter weather advisory for the Lake Tahoe basin from 7am today through 1am Wednesday.



Expect the roads to be nasty, especially with rain on the roads before the temperatures drop – which is the perfect way to make ice. Road conditions may be accessed from the Home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

NDOT crews had not been on top of Spooner Summit at 8am, where

a couple of inches of snow had accumulated.

Wind is likely to wreak havoc with lift operations at the higher elevations.

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

Man sentenced to death for killing CHP officer in El Dorado County

By Chelsea Phua, Sacramento Bee

An El Dorado County Superior Court judge on Monday sentenced David Charles Zanon to death for running down and killing California Highway Patrol Officer Scott Russell more than three years ago.

A jury in September recommended the death sentence, after convicting Zanon of first-degree murder in early August.

Zanon, who had a warrant for his arrest, was found outside a burglarized business July 31, 2007, in Rancho Cordova. He sped off, leading officers on a chase on Highway 50 into El Dorado County, where he ran down Russell near the Ponderosa Road exit. Russell had just placed a spike strip on the freeway to stop Zanon.

Read the whole story