High unemployment threatens region

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

When David Dunham moved to Northern Nevada and started looking for work about seven years ago, it didn't feel as if companies were interviewing him. Instead, it felt like he was interviewing them. "Things were really good back then," Dunham said. "I basically had my pick of jobs to choose from."

With the job market as his proverbial oyster, Dunham decided to take a project manager position at Q&D Construction. It was a great job, Dunham said. Then, real estate's high-flying joyride crashed.

Five years after he started working for Q&D, the area's economic meltdown reduced Dunham to just another statistic. Dunham joined the growing ranks of Northern Nevada's unemployed in September 2009, as the private sector shed 1,500 jobs during that month alone in Reno-Sparks.

With construction continuing to hemorrhage jobs, and Dunham's prospects for employment growing dimmer, the former Fernley resident made a difficult decision. On December 2009, Dunham left for a job 1,700 miles away – in Austin, Texas.

"I really would have stayed if I could find a job there," a wistful-sounding Dunham said by phone. "But it was basically impossible. There really was no hope for me."

Read the whole story

Sample the Sierra

The 2nd annual Sample the Sierra on Ski Run Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe.

Call (775) 588.1728 for info.

Bear Valley expands terrain for skiers

By Union Democrat

Skiers and snowboarders will have more room to roam when they visit Bear Valley Ski Area this year.

Bear Valley has announced that it is opening the 2010-11 ski and snowboard season with 400 acres of new terrain. The new acreage is on the sunny southern slope of the main ski area, accessible via the Kuma and Koala chairs. It features intermediate and advanced terrain, said Rosie Sundell, senior director of marketing at Bear Valley.

Sundell said the new section makes Bear Valley the seventh-largest ski resort in the state, with more than 1,680 acres of ski terrain, surpassing Sugar Bowl near Lake Tahoe.

Skiers and riders who take advantage of the new area at Bear Valley will have an opportunity to ride and slide through challenging grades and chutes, Sundell said. Once at the bottom, a shuttle will drive them back to the chairlift at base lodge for another run.

Bear Valley is the only California winter sports resort to expand its ski terrain this season.

Read the whole story

Thanksjibbin’ rail jam at Squaw

Squaw Valley is giving skiers and snowboarders something to be thankful for Thanksgiving weekend. Nov. 27 is the Thanksjibbin’ rail jam.

The base mountain location means lift tickets are not necessary to watch or enter this rail competition.

Judges will be dishing out cash prizes as well as Thanksgiving treats including butterball turkeys, smoked hams and Cornish game hens for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Pumpkin pies will be handed out as seen fit for style, creative tricks and best outfit.

Squaw Valley Terrain Park Director JP Martin recommends skiers and riders dig out their retro outfits and polish off their old school tricks. Outfits and style will be rewarded.

Thanksjibbin’ is an open entry, jam style competition with four classes: men’s and women’s ski and snowboard. Registration is 3-4pm and the competition starts at 5pm. The competition entry fee is $10 and helmets are mandatory.

Athletes under 18 years must have a parent or guardian sign a liability release form. For more details see squaw.com.

Pray for Snow party brings out Sierra supporters

It was wall-to-wall people at Mo’s Place on Thursday night for Sierra-at-Tahoe’s annual Pray for Snow party.

The crowd dominated by twentysomethings is eager for the season to begin.

Plenty of people had Sierra garb on.



Hundreds fill Mo's Place Nov. 11 for Sierra's Pray for Snow party. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Freebies like passes, gear and beanies were being given away throughout the night for the various contests like the horse races.



Sierra-at-Tahoe General Manager John Rice

General Manager John Rice said the resort already looks like it's mid-winter with the snow that has fallen. One more good storm is needed before riders can start schussing on the slopes near Echo Summit.

If people were praying hard enough Nov. 11, the resort will be open Thanksgiving weekend.

Orientation for some of the new employees is today, so workers are ready for the lifts to start spinning.

– Kathryn Reed

Red Hawk Casino revenue up slightly

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

The company that manages Red Hawk Casino reported this week a "slight increase" in business at the Shingle Springs casino.

Lakes Entertainment Inc. of Minneapolis, reporting its third-quarter results, said profits and revenue increased from a

year ago. The company's revenue jumped to $8.2 million from $6.6 million. That was due mainly to an increase in management fees from its Michigan casino, but also due to a "slight increase" in the fees earned at Red Hawk.

Read the whole story

Whistler hopes IPO will financially save Olympic resort

By Doug Alexander, Bloomberg News

Whistler Blackcomb Holdings, owner of the Canadian ski resort that hosted the 2010 Winter Olympics, raised $297 million in an initial public offering after cutting the share price twice, said two people familiar with the sale.

The company sold 25 million shares, or a 66 percent stake, for $11.88, with a dividend yield of about 8.1 percent, according to the people, who asked not to be identified because the plans aren't public. The company had planned to sell shares for as much as $14.85 each.



Whistler-Blackcomb

averts bankruptcy with IPO. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The proceeds will be used to repay debt owed to Intrawest, the selling shareholder and a unit of New York-based buyout firm Fortress Investment Group. Whistler Blackcomb will list on the Toronto Stock Exchange under the symbol WB and start trading Nov. 9. A message left with Intrawest spokeswoman Tabetha Boot wasn't immediately returned.

The sale values the ski resort at $448.5 million, based on 37.8 million shares outstanding. The banks arranging the sale, led by CIBC world Markets and RBC Dominion Securities, have an option to sell an additional 15 percent of the offering after the deal closes, raising proceeds to $341.6 million and the stake to 76 percent.

Read the whole story

Dental care on wheels keeps El Dorado youth healthy

By Jessie Marchesseau

The new pediatric dental office in El Dorado County is no ordinary dental office. The 42-foot-long van will have no permanent address. Instead, it will make its way to nine schools around the county each year.

This week it was parked outside the former Al Tahoe Elementary

School in South Lake Tahoe.

Ana Salas, 24, learned of the program from her son’s Early Head Start teacher. She brought her 2-year-old son, Luis, to the van for his first dental exam.



Dr. Celeste Eckerman examines Heidy Carrillo's teeth. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

“I think it’s good,” Salas said of the program. “It’s his first time and I wanted him to see what it was like.”

Though Luis only required a quick exam and fluoride application, not all the children who visit the van are so fortunate. Dr. Celeste Eckerman estimates about 80 percent of the children they have seen had cavities. She attributes this to South Lake Tahoe having no fluoride in the water and a lack of education among parents.

Kristie Miser, a registered dental assistant on the van who worked in a pediatric dental office for the past seven years, explained many parents are under the impression baby teeth are not important because they eventually fall out. However, healthy baby teeth are essential for smiling, eating, speech development and maintaining space for proper alignment of adult teeth.

While oral health for children is the main focus of the dental van, it also provides dental care for expectant mothers with Medi-Cal.

As Eckerman examined Heidy Carrillo, 16, who is nearly five months pregnant, she explained that cavities result in bacteria in the bloodstream. A mother-to-be with cavities is spreading bacteria to her baby.

Eckerman referred Carrillo to one of two local dentists who accept Medi-Cal. Before leaving the van, Carrillo said that she is going to have her cavities fixed.

“Having no cavities means a healthy baby,” she said.

The El Dorado Children’s Dental Van was unveiled in South Lake Tahoe on Oct. 25 after years of work and planning. The van will travel around El Dorado County, providing dental services to children 5 and younger with Medi-Cal insurance.

“We’re ready to help these kids that need it,” Miser said. “We’re excited.”

The van is a collaborative effort between First 5 El Dorado, Shingle Springs Tribal Health Program, El Dorado County Office of Education and the El Dorado County Health Services Department.

“We’re just really excited about this,” Steven Thaxton, executive director of First 5 El Dorado said. “Oral health under the age of 5 is an important need and this is a really positive program to meet that need.”

The van was custom built and features state-of-the-art dental equipment, including three dental exam areas, a panoramic X-ray unit and cordless digital X-ray system. It is a full-service dental office providing cleanings, fillings and other preventative services.

The three-person dental van team is comprised of a dentist,

Eckerman, and two registered dental assistants, Miser and Char Thompson. As a dentist with a family practice in South Lake Tahoe, Eckerman said she saw a huge need for dental care for the kids in the area and is looking forward to her new role in the community.

“I became a dentist so I could help people who couldn’t afford dental care, so this is my perfect opportunity,” she said.

First 5 El Dorado expects the van to serve about 2,000 children annually. The team said the response so far has been great, adding the El Dorado County Office of Education has done a good job of getting the word out to parents.

The El Dorado Children’s Dental Van is scheduled to return to South Lake Tahoe in April when it will be at Bijou Community School.

For more information, go online or call 800.388.8690. Appointments are necessary. Paperwork is sent home with eligible children when the van is in area.

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K’s Kitchen: Not following directions ruins soup

By Kathryn Reed

You know it’s not going to be a great meal when on the stove it doesn’t taste good. It’s not going to get any better on the table.



Oh, the hazards of not reading directions.

I called my sister, Pam, into the kitchen because I knew something was wrong with the soup. We added salt, garlic and basil. Not much better. We let it simmer. Still, not what I would call something all that good.

Oh well, it was time to eat and this is what was being served.

In talking over what went into the vegetable chowder either Mom or Pam asked about the fat that was in the soup. After all, it's fat (and usually a lot of it) that makes a cream soup so tasty. *Uh-oh*, I thought. I used nonfat milk. That was the problem.

The recipe calls for a quart of milk, saying lowfat is OK. This meant lowfat would be the minimum level. There's a tremendous amount of difference between lowfat and nonfat milk. In the case of this soup, it went from being barely edible to (probably) really yummy.

We got through the meal that night. But a pint of half-and-half was added to the pot the next day and left to simmer a bit. Oh my, what a difference that fat makes.

Follow the directions, add a bit more butter (I needed to to cook the veggies) and up the fat content in the milk and this should be great to add to your soup recipe collection.

The recipe is from "The New Moosewood Cookbook" by Mollie Katzen. All the comments in the recipe are from the author.

Vegetable Chowder, 8 servings

Instead of ¼ cup butter and ½ pint heavy cream, as in the

original version, this new light one has only 1 Tbs. butter, no cream, and the option of lowfat milk. It still tastes luxurious.

Try not to shy away from the full amount of garlic. It gives the soup a rich flavor and is surprisingly smooth and subtle.

1 T butter

2 C chopped onion

6 cloves garlic, minced

2 tsp thyme

2 tsp basil

1 medium potato, diced

2 medium stalks celery, diced

2 medium carrots, diced

2 C chopped broccoli

2 C chopped cauliflower

½ lb mushrooms, chopped

2 C corn (frozen-defrosted is fine)

Lots of fresh black pepper

1½ C water

1 quart milk (lowfat OK), heated

Optional: minced fresh herbs (chives, basil, marjoram)

Melt the butter in a kettle or Dutch oven. Add onion, half the garlic, salt, thyme, and basil. Sauté over medium heat 5 minutes. Add potato, celery, carrots, broccoli, and cauliflower. Sauté another 5 to 8 minutes. Add mushrooms and

corn, plus lots of black pepper. Sauté another 8 to 10 minutes.

Add water, cover and simmer about 15 minutes, or until everything is tender. (Makes sure the potatoes are done.)

Stir in hot milk and remaining garlic. Remove from heat until about 10 minutes before serving time, then heat gently. Serve topped with freshly minced herbs.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• TRPA and Placer County public hearing/community open house on the Homewood Resort Master Plan on Nov. 23 has been canceled.

• Voters in Tahoe Truckee Unified School District boundaries will vote in March whether to continue the Measure A parcel tax. Measure A adds an average of $3.7 million per year to the budget for programs and resources, including music, PE, libraries, AP classes, counseling, technology and more.

• Fresh Ketch Pray for Snow Party is Nov. 17 from 7:30-11:30pm in South Lake Tahoe.

• Truckee poet Karen Terrey is participating in 30 Poems in 30 Days, raising money for Center for New Americans in Western Massachusetts to help families in need.

• Missoula Children’s Theater production of “Treasure Island” is Nov. 20 at 2 and 6pm at South Tahoe Middle School multipurpose room. Cost is $10 for adults, $5 for

children/seniors. For more information, call (530) 542.3632.

• The 15th annual Valhalla Holiday Faire is Nov. 20-21 from 10am-5pm. The Valhalla Grand Hall is off Highway 89 on the South Shore.