Stress may be a gender issue

By Elizabeth Norton Lasley, Dana Foundation

Some stress-related disorders, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, are twice as common in women as in men. A new study suggests that the difference may not be merely a matter of personality.

In certain cells in the female brain, the receptors for a key stress hormone, corticotropin releasing factor (CRF), respond differently to increases in the hormone's levels—making this part of the brain more sensitive to stress and less able to adapt. The finding provides a biochemical basis for the prevalence of stress-related illness in women.

Rita Valentino, Debra Bangasser, and colleagues at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, knew from previous research in female rats that neurons in a region called the locus ceruleus respond to lower levels of CRF than are needed for activation in male brains. The locus ceruleus is a storehouse of norepinephrine, one of the chief chemical messengers in the fight-or-flight response.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Taking Tahoe, TRPA in new direction

By Joanne Marchetta

We are in the midst of extraordinary times here at Lake Tahoe and I believe the basin is at a crossroads. We can either move

toward a sustainable, prosperous future for our treasured environment and communities, or we can cling to old paradigms and continue the sliding decline.

As TRPA's executive director, I'd like to share my thoughts on some of Lake Tahoe's significant challenges, how we can meet them and how I am transforming the TRPA into a new organization poised to tackle these pressing issues head-on. If I've learned one thing during my tenure at TRPA, it's that strong leadership and even stronger partnerships are the fundamental ingredients to taking Lake Tahoe in a new direction. The playing field here has many opportunities for you to join in and strengthen our partnership to achieve a common purpose.



Joanne Marchetta

Simply put, Tahoe is in decline and in crisis. Our lake is not just an aesthetic and spiritual jewel. The reality is that Lake Tahoe supports nearly a $5 billion economy for the two states that share its border. That economy is grounded squarely in tourism – and that economy, like others today, is in relative crisis. Make no mistake, we are in a crisis. This is not crisis borne merely of the national and international banking meltdown, which merely exacerbated Tahoe's problem. Tahoe's crisis is that its historic economic foundation – gaming – is falling out from under us regardless of the larger national and international economic problems.

Living within one of the most spectacular landscapes in the

world, it is hard to believe that our economy and communities are in peril. But indeed, they are. When the basinwide unemployment rate hovers between 12 and 17 percent, when schools have closed and we've lost more than 10,000 residents in the basin over a decade, and when a single mother living in Tahoe can't afford to buy Tylenol for her son's fever – our community's foundation is in trouble.

On top of growing economic and social strains, we face the newly-acknowledged environmental threats of invasive species and catastrophic wildfire, and the continuing threat of the adverse effects of stormwater runoff, any or all of which pose lasting impacts to our fragile alpine lake ecosystem, the very ecosystem without which there would be no economic support for Tahoe.

The good news is that Tahoe's problems can be solved, and we have a growing collective vision of actions needed to set the most meaningful solutions in motion. But this is Tahoe. These actions will take every ounce of our collective leadership to push through to decision and TRPA has already set its own course of solutions in motion. We have already committed to being part of the positive momentum that will address our environmental, economic, and communitywide challenges.

There are two parts to this positive course of action. First, the progress TRPA is making toward updating the Regional Plan for the Tahoe Region; and second, a new TRPA Strategic Plan that is remaking the internal workings and culture of TRPA to be part of the needed solution.

Restoring Lake Tahoe

First, guiding the direction and progress of TRPA's Regional Plan Update is our drive to fulfill the original intent of the bi-state Compact that was created 40 years ago to protect this spectacular environment. The Compact remains the agency's touchstone, but what we do today must be done with a different

eye than what we did in the past because we know more now.

Three decades ago, there was a legitimate concern that Lake Tahoe could be over-developed. It was our role to put the brakes on rampant growth, and we succeeded. We saved Lake Tahoe from turning into a city the size of San Francisco, as some had envisioned. We adopted environmentally protective rules and regulations and developed an international reputation for innovation in harmonizing the natural environment with human-made development to support strong local economies.

Today we find ourselves nearly at build-out in the Tahoe basin. But let's put the term "build-out" in perspective. Most environmental harm today is still coming from development put on the ground before TRPA had standards in place. The vast majority of continuing harm to the lake is due to already existing but dated, aging, deteriorating facilities built 30, 40, and 50 years ago including the roadway system. Recent science is showing that if we are ever to meet our lake clarity goals, we need to attack urban stormwater runoff problems – to eliminate fine sediment flowing into the lake by at least 32 percent over the next 20 years. The data indicate this runoff is coming from already developed areas, including our town centers. With this scientific information, we know how to get the greatest environmental bang for the buck – by replacing and upgrading already existing facilities that were put in place long ago.

The synergy is evident. By remaking our existing Tahoe town centers to achieve key environmental goals, there is the concurrent opportunity to also bring back or strengthen Tahoe's economy by bringing it up to date to meet today's tourism needs and demand.

Even if we are near Tahoe's full development potential, our buildings and infrastructure on the ground today no longer support today's economy much less the environment. Today we

are well below the population, traffic flows, and visitorship that we experienced in the early 1990s. So, although we say we are near build-out, are we where we need to be to support either the environment or the economy? We have had only a handful of major projects – all redevelopment projects to replace dated facilities – during the last 10 years basinwide.

In fact, Tahoe missed the robust economic remake and update that many communities took advantage of during the 15 years of irrational exuberance before the national financial meltdown. What happened here in Tahoe during that period was that we eeked out projects over long delays and burdensome process obstacles, and the delay exacerbated our slip into economic decline. Our built environment is an anachronism and no longer serves the current predominant tourist demand for services, activities, or amenities.

Another important point about build-out is that the largest part of the lake's environmental problem exists on a small percentage of the land area. Again, we know where the bulk of the environmental problem originates – already developed areas and roadways. Did you know that less than 15 percent of the land in the basin is in private ownership? And did you know that the majority of the pollutant load that causes declines in lake water quality is coming from an even smaller percentage of our developed areas and town centers?

We must allow the built environment of Tahoe to change so that we can incorporate state-of-the-art environmental improvements on the ground at the same time as we remake the economy. And since we know from the recent water quality science that we have to actually reduce the sediment flowing into Lake Tahoe, it means we have to facilitate change on the ground.

To tie these points about build-out together – environmental redevelopment may be part of the solution. What we're proposing as part of our Regional Plan update is to fix through replacement – not growth – the existing built

environment that is causing the greatest environmental harm to the lake.

But we all know change comes hard at Lake Tahoe and some would have you believe that TRPA is promoting growth or increased urbanization of the Tahoe basin. I can't disagree with this characterization strongly enough. What we're doing is exactly what the science tells us needs to be done – fixing the existing built environment that is causing harm to the lake, not promoting growth, not building sky scrapers, and not pushing development for the sake of development only. That would be a step backward. We are saying environmental redevelopment is a necessary environmental tool among others. We absolutely believe Lake Tahoe's pristine environment can be protected while at the same time improving the quality of life and economy for the people who live, work, and visit here. That's the sustainable future I'm working to deliver.

Environmental redevelopment can be coupled with the restoration projects of the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) as main strategies of the regional plan update. But action in the form of private redevelopment is not all that is needed or all that is planned by TRPA. Indeed, we propose to address Tahoe's environmental needs through changed land use policies that offer incentives to remove buildings from sensitive stream environment zones that can then be restored, to cluster buildings in town centers so as to create walkable spaces, to reduce land coverage in those town centers, and to develop transportation systems that reduce pollution from our roadway systems.

Lake Tahoe entered a restoration age when we realized that a regulatory approach alone to managing the basin would not be enough to reverse the environmental damage of the past. TRPA, working with other basin partners launched the Lake Tahoe EIP in the mid-90s, a program of investment in environmental restoration projects. Everyone from the county and city public works departments to private homeowners have been important

partners in the EIP over the last 10 to 15 years through stormwater control project and BMP retrofitting. The projects you are helping to implement continue to be crucial to our environment and our local economy. These projects are improving the environment and creating jobs in the process.

The EIP combined with environmental redevelopment are two key tools proposed in TRPA's Regional Plan update. So what's the next step? After years of public input from all sectors, we are moving forward to bring a package to TRPA's Governing Board as part of a renewed plan for the region.

A pitched battle

What you may not know but need to is that a pitched philosophical battle is looming large in the basin and the battlefield may be TRPA. Behind this relatively simple conceptual plan for Tahoe – a robust partnership of private and public sector investment that strengthens not only the environment but also the economy and social foundation of Tahoe – is an epic philosophical battle for how to get there. We're fearful with the recent round of lawsuits that the organized environmental community has reinvigorated the litigation versus collaboration strategy as the preferred forum to set policy and negotiate environmental constraints. During the next year, TRPA's Governing Board will debate the strategies and the best means to revitalize Tahoe – not only our environment but also by implication Tahoe's economy. The debate has begun. I would urge you to stay informed as the process continues to evolve.

Fixing TRPA

To deliver any of this promise of renewed environmental and economic gain for Tahoe means that TRPA has to allow good projects to happen. Given today's relative state of crisis in Tahoe, you should be aware if you're not already that TRPA is in the midst of long-needed culture change. We are moving to a

culture that includes a different ethic of efficiency, accountability, and focus in order to accelerate delivery of environmental gain on the ground.

You all know the history of TRPA and the perception that we're a roadblock to everything. I would ask you to look again. TRPA is changing for the better. Where in the past, saying "no" in the form of stopping or long delaying action used to be the best thing to do for the lake, today's science tells us we must proactively fix what's on the ground to make substantial environmental gain. That means fostering problem solving and partnership building to drive good environmental results. For example, if it takes 10 years to get to project approval for town center redevelopment or if it takes five years to permit a stream restoration project, those are years of lost opportunity and lost environmental gains.

So, I have set in motion a new Strategic Plan for TRPA. I am remaking our internal structure, our culture, and our business practices. Tahoe cannot afford to do nothing. Doing nothing assures only further decline, environmentally and economically.

The new TRPA is grounded on four pillars: first environmental gain to achieve threshold attainment. The new TRPA culture I am building moves from a predominant culture of "no" to one of "yes, and here's how to do it responsibly." This "can-do" attitude invites collaboration with people or organizations that have constructive and viable suggestions for how to make changes that eliminate the harmful effects of bad past development and delivers positive results for the environment.

But take note, this new culture is a shift toward responsible action that allows change and puts long needed environmental gain on the ground. It is about allowing for a sustainable Tahoe – not the Tahoe of today with bankruptcies, boarded up buildings, shrinking populations, and massive job losses. Our new strategic approach is grounded in what I believe is this

truth: if Tahoe loses its social and economic foundation, no one – not the federal government, not the two states, not local jurisdictions, and not the private sector – will have the financial wherewithal, the political will, or the social willingness to invest in the environmental restoration we need.

There are three other strategic pillars for success. We are growing our community engagement and improving public service. As you all know, the permitting process can be complicated at Lake Tahoe, and we have begun the work needed to streamline our permitting timelines and processes. We have rules for a very good reason, but we can and are streamlining our processes. Underpinning all we do at the agency lies our renewed commitment to community engagement. We're now requiring community service of every staff member at TRPA plus we're launching a new customer satisfaction program designed to improve our public service. And lastly we are improving our operational efficiency. By putting in place a new organizational structure that's much more directly based on accountability and performance, we can make more progress on environmental threshold attainment and improve our community relations in the process.

All of these measures are geared to delivering more environmental gain in the form of water quality improvements and other resource protections around the basin. If you worry these are just words and question the commitment, understand that the TRPA Governing Board endorsed this new strategic direction in July. Our new strategic plan is on our website – please take a look for yourself.

Both TRPA and I need support from you as a member of this community and someone who has so much at stake in this. The crossroads where we find ourselves is real. The socioeconomic statistics don't lie. And no single agency or entity can save Tahoe from economic and environmental demise if we can't help ourselves. TRPA is taking a hard look at itself and changing

to meet the times. So, I would ask, when you hear something that doesn't seem right, or you have a suggestion on how we can better work with the community rather than against it, contact me. I am committed to the change needed to allow both the environment and the economy to thrive. I invite you to work with me through collaboration and partnership to collectively tip Tahoe's balance in the right direction. I am putting myself on the line by leading a culture change after 30 years of entrenchment in status quo. TRPA is heading in a new direction because it's what I believe Tahoe needs to survive.

And remember, "Life is a series of great opportunities, well disguised as impossible situations." Please join me in working toward constructive solutions to this next impossible situation.

Joanne Marchetta is the executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Visit trpa.org for more information.

Scathing audit of South Shore transit system released

By Kathryn Reed

If the 2008-09 audit of South Tahoe Area Transit Authority's books had been completed before this fall, would it have meant avoiding bankruptcy?

Dan Garrison, treasurer of the board of the bankrupt agency since January 2010, doesn't think so. He says several factors contributed to the financial ruin of STATA.

Joe Harn, auditor-controller for El Dorado County, believes "this would have been really useful information to have in 2009."



A BlueGo bus parked illegally in front of a private residence in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"This is the worst (audit) I've ever seen for an organization this size. The weaknesses in internal control are the worst I've ever seen," Harn said. He's been in the business since 1979.

Even the auditors aren't happy with the cooperation it got from the STATA board. "We were unable to get written representations from management of STATA as required by auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of Americas (sic) and the standards applicable and to financial audits contained in Governmental Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States."

The audit was due last spring. C.G. Uhlenberg LLP out of Redwood City dated the report Oct. 1, 2010. The firm said it could not express an opinion on the financials because of the

lack of information provided by STATA.

The firm goes on to say, “The audit we were engaged to perform was for the purpose of forming an opinion on the basic financial statements of STATA taken as a whole.”

Garrison, on behalf of the STATA board, accepted the report. It had been on a number of STATA agendas throughout the summer, but the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency wanted to give input and sought revises.

TRPA is involved because it’s the agency that hired John Andoh in May 2008 as transit administrator for BlueGo, the name of the Shore Shore buses. STATA oversees BlueGo and the seasonal trolleys.

At first Andoh reported to Nick Haven, TRPA transportation team leader. Haven was not available for comment. Andoh reported to the STATA board starting in July 2009. That board and Andoh subsequently parted ways.

“TRPA is reviewing the STATA audit and remains concerned about the difficulties facing the transit system,” TRPA spokeswoman Julie Regan said.

This audit is for the fiscal year when TRPA was in charge of Andoh. He was hired to run the buses. No one, apparently, was running the books.

“The fact is, Mr. Andoh was over his head and simply not qualified to properly control and maintain the responsibilities expected of him nor, in the end, was he able to perform to the level of experience he claimed he had during the hiring process,” Garrison said. “During the first quarter of 2010, STATA brought in an outside transit consulting firm to assist us in determining our actual operational and financial status. It had become somewhat obvious that the financial condition of STATA was not what we had been led to believe under Andoh’s watch. At the same time, with the ’09

audit running way behind, we secured a second accounting person to assist the STATA accountant in playing catch-up."

The audit points out how grant reporting was abysmal.

As noted in the audit, STATA did not have an account just for its operations until June 2009.

The audit says, "… we identified certain deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that we consider to be material weaknesses." It goes on to say, "The results of our test disclosed instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported …."

The audit includes information about Fairfield based MV Transportation, the firm now suing STATA, that had been operating BlueGo. It talks about repaying MV $825,000 at 8 percent interest through May 2014.

That isn't going to happen now that STATA is in bankruptcy and MV has multiple lawsuits on the books. Knowing STATA has few assets except for the $677,000 in a bank account that MV got a judge to freeze and a few outstanding grants that are likely to trickle in, MV is contemplating suing the individual board members of STATA.

Those members represent public and private entities – South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, Douglas County, Harveys, Harrah's, Horizon, MontBleu, Lakeside Inn, Heavenly, Ridge Resorts, Tahoe Transportation District and TRPA.

Garrison said everyone has resigned from the STATA board. But they could still be sued.

The Tahoe Transportation District has been running the coordinated transit system for several weeks and is expected to officially take it over starting Nov. 1. STATA will likely dissolve through bankruptcy court.

"If there is to be a transit system going forward, it will be

under the professional oversight of TTD," Garrison said.

El Dorado County has reached a settlement agreement with MV that is expected to be accepted by the bankruptcy court judge Dec. 1.

"The amount of the settlement is $160,000 for all litigation," Mike Applegarth, with the county's Chief Administrative Office, said.

At the last TTD meeting county transportation officials intimated they would be back on board if TTD were in charge. Applegarth told *Lake Tahoe News* that isn't true.

"The county is not contemplating a partnership or a participation agreement with TTD or any other party," Applegarth said. "If TTD does provide transit service in the basin on a prospective basis, in order to utilize the county's two Tahoe transit vehicles and transit funds, there would need to be further action by the Board of Supervisors and the TTD board of directors, and that could not take place until pending motions in the bankruptcy court on TTD's contract with STATA regarding transit service are heard."

The county has a seat on the TTD board per Article IX of the TRPA Compact.

Carl Hasty, executive director of TTD, told *Lake Tahoe News* before the audit was released that he does not need to read it – his group is going forward with the intent to provide coordinated transit to the South Shore despite the poor prior fiscal management and dire financial conditions the system is in.

Library book club announces reading list

The South Lake Tahoe branch library has book club the third Wednesday of the month at 3pm in the library conference room off Rufus Allen Boulevard.

The group reads and discuss a wide variety of critically acclaimed books.

Nov. 17: “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” by Rebecca Skloot. Group leader is Ellen Davis.

Dec. 15: “The Whistling Season” by Ivan Doig. Group leader is Marie Filip.

Jan. 19: “Alice I Have Been” by Melanie Benjamin. Group leader is Kate Maney.

Sheriff, jail commander against release of Dugard documents

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

The El Dorado County sheriff and jail commander are the latest officials to oppose unsealing documents in the Jaycee Lee Dugard kidnapping case, saying releasing any information about security at the Placerville jail involving Phillip and Nancy Garrido could pose a “serious breach of security.”

The concerns, outlined in court filings dated Thursday, were filed in opposition to an effort by the *Bee* and other media groups to unseal documents in the case, including grand jury transcripts of Dugard's testimony last month.

El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson earlier this week filed papers opposing the transcripts' release, and on Thursday Sheriff Manfred Kollar and jail commander Pam Lane filed documents saying the release of other sealed documents could undermine jail security.

Read the whole story

Curry believes her experience is the needed difference

Dear friends of South Lake Tahoe,

South Lake Tahoe is so full of beauty and provides so many great outdoor activities year around. These are the reasons why my family and I live in this great city. Even though we are here in a land of beauty, we are not in the land of bounty.

Our local unemployment is 16.1 percent, which is unconscionable. We need to keep our businesses alive and successful for the owners to make a living so they can, in turn, keep their employees working.

Your vote for me will bring my 25 years of experience of managing businesses to overseeing the business of the city. My experience has taught me how to live within a budget and how to work cooperatively with others. Also, it is important to

have an open door policy so you can personally discuss with me the things that matter to you.

Volunteer service has always been a big part of my life beginning with the PTA to my current service as a South Lake Tahoe Planning Commissioner for the past 3½ years. As a member of this commission, I have significant advantage in knowing the complexities of land use and sustainability to build a better future and stronger economy. Serving my community is what I am committed to do and will do full time.

I want you to know that I am passionate about this city and want to provide the opportunity for all of our children and grandchildren to live and work here successfully. My goals are to keep our families safe, get our economy moving by reducing regulations that hurt our businesses and steal our jobs, and improving our roads, sidewalks, and bike paths by making them safe and accessible.

I am seasoned and ready for the next step to start moving South Lake Tahoe forward. I love this community and would be honored to have your vote. Together, we can move the city of South Lake Tahoe forward.

Thank you,

Joy Curry, South Lake Tahoe

Real estate agents earn Tahoe-specific certificate

Knowing the importance of educating buyers and sellers, the South Tahoe Association of Realtors has created an education

program where members learn about the complex codes and regulations pertaining to a real estate transaction in the Lake Tahoe Basin and are then able to pass along this valuable information and resources to clients.

Every year, representatives from the various agencies meet with agents to discuss these policies and regulations.

To earn the Tahoe Area Governmental Agencies Certification agents must take a test specific to each agency. To earn the certification, the Realtor must pass with a minimum score of 80 percent.

The agencies involved with the 2010 program were TRPA, South Tahoe Refuse, South Tahoe Public Utility District, South Lake Tahoe Building Department, California Tahoe Conservancy and U.S. Forest Service.

Click on list to see which Realtors on the South Shore passed the test and the years it is valid

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Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Tahoe City Olympian Shannon Bahrke married Matthew Happe in October in Hawaii.

• Northstar-at-Tahoe again made the Top 50 list of best tennis resorts in the country. The results are published in the November issue of *Tennis* magazine. The Truckee resort is also ranked No. 4 in the budget conscious list.

• A blurb about South Tahoe’s 968 Park Hotel is in the latest issue of *Ski* magazine.

• Californian’s needing help with medical bills may want to check out this website.

• The Kelly Blue Book for healthcare helps people figure out what a procedure should cost before the bill arrives and helps patients negotiate fees upfront.

• Uncorked Squaw Valley recently opened a second wine bar in Tahoe City.

Opinion: Davis, Curry understand what locals need

To the community,

Of the 10 people running for the South Lake Tahoe City Council, all have expressed concern for the unemployment situation. But governing takes more insight than just copying another candidate’s views. Tom Davis and Joy Curry honestly have an understanding that small business is key to the financial stability of our city, and that eventually we’ll need regional jet service to bring in more visitors to result in creating additional jobs. They also understand that employees need places to live where rent doesn’t take up all their pay.

As a major supporter and project facilitator for three successful housing projects in our city, I have worked closely with and enjoyed being able to trust the commitment of Tom Davis to local workers and businesses, and have developed an

appreciation for Joy Curry.

We need more projects that put local architects, engineers, carpenters, painters, paving workers, laborers, roofers and many ancillary workers and service providers to work. I believe both Tom Davis and Joy Curry will work to support and encourage development of more projects using local labor because they have expressed a real understanding of the circular need for reasonable rents so people who work here can also live here and spend their paycheck here which puts even more people to work.

Your vote is your voice. Speak up for support of locals. Vote for Tom Davis and Joy Curry.

David Kelly, chairman Tahoe Area Coordinating Council for the Disabled

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Late harvest brings good flavor, El Dorado winemakers say

Harvest is wrapping up in most of El Dorado County's vineyards, while crush pads and cellars continue to buzz with activity as winery owners recall one of the latest – and shortest – harvests in 25 years.

Winemakers report that while crop yields are smaller than usual, the quality is excellent.

"We're excited to see great intensity of color, flavor and aroma in wine being pressed throughout the county," Beth Jones, owner of Lava Cap Winery and president of the 30-member

El Dorado Winery Association, said in a statement. “This year’s vintage is showing well-developed flavors at lower sugar and higher acid levels than we’ve seen in recent years.”



A cellar assistant sorts grapes at Sierra Vista. Photo/Sierra Vista Winery

While some El Dorado wineries have completed harvest, several are still picking grapes due to varied elevations and exposures in their Sierra Foothill vineyards.

Lava Cap Winery was harvesting some varietals four weeks later than normal.

Strange weather started in spring and has continued until now. A cool growing season meant harvest began two to three weeks later than normal.

Heat spikes in late September and October caused many varieties to come in at once, shortening the harvest season for many.

“We used a lot of different farming techniques with this vintage, anticipating a late harvest. This growing season has yielded grapes with near-perfect flavor profiles, so we are very excited. Given the late harvest and lower nighttime temperatures, we’re controlling quality by equipping most of

our tanks with heaters to better manage the fermentation and soak processes," Stefan Tscheppe, head winemaker at Perry Creek Winery, said.