Repeat offender leads cops on chase around Tahoe

Updated: Oct. 16, 2010, 8:17pm.

By Kathryn Reed

It wasn't the typical leisurely drive around Lake Tahoe Friday afternoon. Instead, Mario Amial, 21, of South Lake Tahoe had a bevy of law enforcement following his white Chevy Suburban.

The high-speed chase started at 1:32pm in South Lake Tahoe near the Springwood area and ended in Kings Beach with Amial's arrest by California Highway Patrol officers about 45 minutes later.



Mario Amial

South Lake Tahoe police Lt. Marty Hale said Amial was wanted on two felony warrants.

Amial had been arrested in South Lake Tahoe in August 2009 with two others on charges of assault with a deadly weapon, vandalism and participating in a criminal street gang.

When he was 19 he was arrested on trespassing charges when he was found in his 16-year-old girlfriend's bed in Carson Valley.

CHP put down spike strips that flattened one tire, but Amial kept driving on the rim. The second spike strip flattened all

the tires.

The passengers arrested were Joshua Hawthorn, 27, and Kelsey Sierakowski, 19, both of South Lake Tahoe. South Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Laney said officers have been familiar with Hawthorn since 2006 and Kelsey back to 2004.

The suspects reportedly threw methamphetamine out the car window. The three were booked into Placer County jail.

CHP on Friday night would not give further details of the incident.

Sierra Nevada College offering flu shots

Free flu shots are coming to Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.

On Oct. 22 from 11am–2pm in Patterson Hall, Hometown Health will offer free walk-in flu vaccinations to individuals with the following insurance plans:

· Hometown Health – HMO or PPO

· Senior Care Plus

· State of Nevada – HMO

· Medicare – Primary, with no other HMO. (Must have Part B.)

The seasonal flu shot will be available to students and others without the required insurance for a charge of $28 made payable by cash or check.

In order to receive this service free of charge, a valid insurance card must be shown at the time of vaccination. The 2010 influenza vaccine includes H1N1 protection.

For more flu prevention information, go to www.flu.gov.

South Shore choirs gearing up for holiday concerts

Sounds of winter holiday music are coming from the practice room at the Lake Tahoe Community College as the combined Tahoe Choir and LTCC chorus prepare for their Christmas Concerts. This group of more than 50 singers will be performing seasonal music Dec. 3 and Dec. 5 under the direction of Linda Mitchell with Sallie Parker at the piano.

The notable Reno quartet, The String Beings, will accompany the choir as they present Antonio Vivaldi's "Gloria". In addition to this classical piece, the choir will sing "All Through the Night", "Silver Bells", "Sleigh Ride" and other well-known favorites.

The winter concerts have been an anticipated local event for many years. Tickets will be available from choir members and at the door. On Friday night the group will perform at the LTCC Duke Theater at 7:30pm. The Sunday matinee performance will be at 3pm at St. Theresa Catholic Church.

Ticket prices are $10 for general admission, $8 for students and seniors. Children under age 5 are admitted without charge.

Choir members are inviting businesses to place ads in the concert program. This year, in addition to the usual donation

categories of $25, $50, and $100, individuals or businesses are being sought to underwrite the cost of bringing the String Beings to South Lake Tahoe for these two concerts. Underwriting donations begin at $200. Contact Linda Mitchell at (530) 541.2635 regarding sponsoring the String Beings. The Tahoe Choir is a 501c(3).

Snow, rain forecast for Tahoe this weekend

A storm is headed for Lake Tahoe that could add another layer of snow to the higher elevations.

The system is expected to move through Central California and into the Southern Sierra Sunday night and Monday.

Similar to the storm that blew through earlier this month, snow levels will remain above 8,000 to 8,500 feet. There is a good possibility that Sierra passes above 8,500 feet will receive snowfall that could cause travel difficulties Sunday night and Monday, according to the National Weather Service. Passes of concern include the Mount Rose Highway, Ebbetts Pass, Monitor Pass, Sonora Pass and Tioga Pass.

Motorists should keep in mind that higher Sierra passes will be susceptible to chain controls and in some cases closure Sunday night and Monday and alternate routes should be anticipated.

Abundant moisture with the system will set the stage for a soaking rain event for portions of Eastern California and Western Nevada, especially south of Interstate 80, officials said. Localized areas could see ponding of water and small

hail that could cause minor travel difficulties.

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

Alpine – It's all about the mountain

Publisher's note: ***Lake Tahoe News is providing a glimpse into what skiers and boarders can expect at Lake Tahoe area resorts for the 2010-11 season.***

Alpine Meadows: The mountain simply delivers.

• Projected opening date: TBA

• Daily adult lift ticket: TBA



• What's new?: JMA Ventures, the ski resort's parent company, has added the West Shore Café of Homewood to its list of properties; mountain facilities upgrades undisclosed as of press time.

• What's special about Alpine?: Alpine Meadows' No. 1 focus is on the mountain, offering the best on-snow experience possible. Guests attracted to Alpine enjoy the resort for its casual, genuine atmosphere – not for the shopping and not for the spa. They visit for the pure mountain experience, which happens to include a 6-minute ride from the base lodge to the top of the mountain. Take into account seven powder bowls, many tree descents and immaculately groomed trails. Then, there's the friendly vibe.

• Last year’s snow total: 443 inches

• Lift hours of operation: 9am to 4pp

• Skiable terrain: 2,400 acres

• Number of lifts: 14

• Vertical feet: 1802

• Directions: Take Highway 89 north past the River Ranch to the resort entrance.

• Website

– Compiled by Susan Wood

Forms reveal campaign contributions, expenditures

At different times candidates for political office must report the amount of money they have collected and spent assuming it totals at least $1,000.



The complete forms can be found below by clicking on the candidate’s last name. The campaign forms are for South Lake Tahoe City Council and El Dorado County sheriff. Douglas County officials have not yet provided the commission candidate forms.

For California candidates, the next date to report campaign

contributions and/or expenses is Oct. 21.

Joy Curry

John D’Agostini

Tom Davis

Clair Fortier

Elizabeth Hallen

Steve Kubby

Angela Swanson

Craig Therkildsen

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

USFS prescribed burns continuing into next week

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews have completed operations in the Kingsbury Grade area. Smoke may still be visible and crews will monitor the location through the weekend.

Also, prescribed fire operations will continue in the North Upper Truckee area through the weekend if favorable weather conditions persist. In addition, fuels management crews will begin prescribed fire operations on the west shore in the McKinney-Rubicon area on Oct. 17.

These operations are expected to continue through the middle of next week, weather permitting, with the goal of completing 50 to 100 acres.

Residents and travelers can expect to see smoke from prescribed fire project areas.

State and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

This and other prescribed fire projects are designed to reduce wildfire risks to communities and critical resources. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

Child care services reeling from state budget cuts

By Tina Barna

On Oct. 8, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in his completion of the 2010-11 budget eliminated child care services for low income working families in Stage 3. This single act destroys California's 15-year investment in moving families from welfare to work and places thousands of California families on the unemployment and welfare rolls and leaves 122 El Dorado County children without access to safe quality child care.

The immediate impacts of these cuts will include:

• Placing 64 current families and – 26 more families throughout the rest of the fiscal year – who are currently working, paying taxes and contributing to the region's

struggling economy to make difficult decisions between caring for their children or maintaining their employment;

• 42 percent of providers, including licensed family child care homes and child care centers throughout the state, losing payment for services, which places their businesses, already hard hit by El Dorado's struggling economy, at risk of closure;

• $1.5 million of economic input will be lost to El Dorado County.

The massive elimination of child care services will result not only in lost employment for low income working parents and their child care teachers and providers, but also in endangered child safety and lost learning opportunities for the 169 young children who will be terminated from their child care assistance programs beginning Nov. 1.

Child care providers are already struggling with high vacancy rates due to the high unemployment rate in El Dorado County. The loss of an additional 169 children from these programs will place many licensed child care programs in difficult financial positions and potential closure.

Further, these cuts will have a ripple effect of employers losing employees who are no longer able to come to work, closure of already struggling child care businesses which will impact all working families who depend upon child care services to go to work.

Tina Barna is director of Choices For Children.

3 skiers with ties to Tahoe selected for hall of fame

By USSA

World Champion ski racer Daron Rahlves of Truckee, one of the world's most noted big mountain skiers, the late Shane McConkey (formerly of Squaw Valley), and iconic skiing legend Glen Plake of the South Shore are among a roster of six skiers and builders named as inductees to the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame's Class of 2010.

They will be joined by Paralympic medalist and World Champion Muffy Davis, (Salt Lake City), U.S. champion from the 1960s and '70s and 1972 Olympian Bobby Cochran (Surry, N.H.), and noted sport builder and Sun Valley owner Earl Holding (Salt Lake City).



Daron Rahlves

The class will be inducted April 2 at Sun Valley as part of a week long celebration of skiing history including Sun Valley's 75th season as a major ski resort.

Rahlves retired from the U.S. Alpine Ski Team in 2006 as the single most decorated skier in the downhill with nine World Cup victories. Among his victories was his 2003 win at the historic and prestigious Hahnenkamm in Kitzbuhel Austria. Two years earlier he had stunned the highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic crowd at St Anton, Austria, by beating local

heroes Stephan Eberharter and Hermann Maier for the World Championship gold medal in the super G.

He capped his World Championship resume with a bronze medal in the giant slalom in 2005. His career record includes four U.S. titles and 16 World Cup podiums.

He also holds the 1993 Expert World Championship title in jet skiing and has won many extreme skiing events. After leaving the alpine team Rahlves became one of the world's best ski cross athletes, leading the USA in the newest Olympic sport at the Vancouver Olympics, his fourth as a U.S. Olympian.

The late McConkey has been called the most influential skier of his generation for popularizing free skiing and encouraging the development of equipment so more skiers could enjoy back country and deep powder conditions. In 1993 he won the World Pro Mogul Tour and added the South American Freeskiing championship in 1994. The next year he claimed the U.S. Freeskiing championship and twice won, in 1996 and 1998, the International Freeskier Association World Tour Championship.

He was a leader in bringing fat skis to the slopes. In 2002, he helped develop the first reverse camber and reverse side cut ski, the Volant Spatula, and four years later introduced the K2 Pontoon. During his career he was featured in 26 films about skiing and became a world leader in ski base jumping. He died in a ski base jumping accident on March 26, 2009.

With his signature multi-colored mohawk hairstyle and his unrelenting enthusiasm for skiing, Glen Plake is certainly the best-known and recognizable skier in the world. The three time World Hot Dog skiing champion has become the symbol of the fun, joy and spirit of skiing. His outstanding ability on skis and personality have made him a skiing film star and many of the films that he has appeared in are now classics in the industry including "The Blizzard of Aahhh's," "Fistful of Moguls," "License to Thrill," "The Edge of Never" and this

year’s “Legend of Aahhh’s.”

His television and magazine appearances as well as commentary work is seemingly endless. He continues to promote skiing at all levels from his high altitude expeditions around the world to his “Down Home Tour” where Glen and his wife, Kimberly, ski at local areas around the United States.

The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame is located in Ishpeming, Mich., the birthplace of organized skiing in America. Its mission is to provide respected, permanent national recognition for excellence in achievement in skiing and snowboarding.

SLT council candidates ask each other questions

By Kathryn Reed

Losing a bit of the rhetoric and staid questions posed to the South Lake Tahoe City Council candidates this election season, at Thursday’s forum they were allowed to ask an opponent a question.

Doug Cichowicz asked Steve Kubby what he thinks the percentage of the people using marijuana collectives is abusing the system.



SLT council candidates address an audience Oct. 14 of more than four dozen. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Kubby didn’t answer the question forthright, but instead said he doesn’t want Proposition 215, which he helped write, be abused or be a shield for criminals.

Kubby also said in reference to young people coming and going from the establishments, “I also like to say one reason everyone looks healthy is because it’s working.”

Alice Jones asked Tom Davis why in fiscal years 2003-04 and 2004-05 the city didn’t spend money on roads, yet the Public Works Department’s payroll was fully funded without cutbacks.

Davis said he couldn’t recall decisions from six years ago when he was on the council, but added snow removal is part of the roads and that was funded.

Adrian Gooch asked Davis how many hours a council member needs to spend doing the job.

He said between 30 and 50 hours a week.

Claire Fortier asked Liz Hallen how she expects to bring a younger element to town.

Hallen said it’s already happening. She spoke of small businesses like her Hot Gossip Coffee and others providing what locals need and want; and that she would be the voice for the young, small business person.

Kubby asked Jones what she thought of Davis’ answer to her question.

Jones said she doesn’t personally fault Davis for the roads, but pointed to the need to have someone like herself who is a certified public accountant to be on the council to better understand budgets and the city’s 79 separate funds.

Joy Curry asked Jones how she expects to put in the necessary time for the council when she is a mother with a full time job outside the home.

Jones said she has plans in place to make it work, including speaking to her employer, but said getting elected needs to happen before she reorganizes her life.

Angela Swanson wanted to know from Hallen how people could trust her to enforce the rules of the city when her campaign signs are placed illegally.

Hallen said she has not placed signs illegally and that it could be others who support her, including her husband, who may have gotten overzealous.

Davis asked Kubby if he supports Proposition 19, the Nov. 2 initiative to legalize marijuana in California, and how it will affect dispensaries in South Lake Tahoe.

Kubby supports the proposition, saying language in it protects the collectives and that the new law should not affect them.

Hallen asked Davis if the rule preventing the city from assessing Heavenly Mountain Resort a surcharge on gondola ticket sales could be reversed and how to prevent something like that from happening in the future.

Davis said he advocated for a $1 surcharge for the gondola for the city, but his colleagues on the council nixed that idea.

More than 50 people turned out for the Oct. 14 forum.

In 18 days voters will go to the polls to pick three candidates for the council. None of the incumbents is running. Nine of the 10 candidates spent about two hours at Inn by the Lake answering questions. Géorg May did not attend.

The four prepared questions the candidates were sent ahead of time were geared toward the interests of the sponsors – South Tahoe Association of Realtors and South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association. *Lake Tahoe News* was the other sponsor.

Question: The subject of vacation rentals within the city of South Lake Tahoe has been a prominent topic for the City Council in the past few years. What is your perception of the issues surrounding vacation rentals and what are your thoughts on them?

Hallen: Favors moratorium on number of vacation rentals. Wants to track them, enforce rules and recover taxes owed.

Davis: Believes in free enterprise, having started Tahoe Keys Vacation Rentals years ago. Thinks everyone should follow the rules, including those renting off the Internet.

Swanson: Need to have vacation rentals and hotels. Noise and garbage are issues. Sees an issue with people not using rental agencies as difficult to collect taxes from.

Curry: Sees rentals as valuable part of transient occupancy tax equation. Wants to control noise and trash.

Kubby: Doesn’t favor moratorium. Would like to see less government. Believes rules on the books are sufficient.

Fortier: In a perfect world, she would like all housing to be residents and all lodging for tourists. She questions if TOT

is being collected, citing three homes in her neighborhood that are not paying. Wants bear boxes mandatory on vacation rentals. Wants to look into these rentals being part of the Tourism Improvement District.

Gooch: This was the most difficult question for her – to balance the $1.2 million in TOT vacation rentals bring in annually v. losing the sense of community in a neighborhood. She would consider a moratorium.

Jones: She points to working for the Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association, knowing occupancy is down for rentals. She said the way to increase property values is to increase occupancy, but to increase occupancy visitors need to have a good experience in South Lake Tahoe. Riding on pothole filled streets and contending with other aging infrastructure is not a good experience. She said the city has never reached out to the TKPOA to help with TOT enforcement. She thinks the city needs to work more collaboratively with partner agencies – like getting South Tahoe Refuse to be able to collect trash on Sundays when all the visitors from the rentals are leaving town and their trash behind.

Cichowicz: Trash is his biggest concern. Also sees need to have STR open seven days.

Question: There has been recent discussion of using city of South Lake Tahoe tourist accommodation unit (TAU) allocations for use outside of the city limits. What are your thoughts on city limit TAUs being sold outside of the city limits?

Kubby: He calls TAUs fraud and a fictitious metric. He wants the city to override the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Fortier: Agrees TAUs are fraudulent. Wants city to pay attention as TRPA goes forward with Regional Plan and make sure TAU discussion benefits the city.

Gooch: While employed by the city she compiled the report the

city uses for TAU policy. She called it a “somewhat stupid” issue. She wants to be able to trade TAUs for commercial floor area. Does not support banning TAUs from going outside the city.

Jones: Believes she needs more education on TAUs, but is concerned with the idea of the city selling an asset because of “potential pitfall of favoritism”.

Cichowicz: Needs more info about TAUs, and until then would hold off on selling them.

Curry: Wants TRPA to redefine TAU from it being a bedroom to it being a unit. If they are sold outside the city, she wants something tangible in return like work force housing or roads.

Swanson: Believes current definition of TAU is “arcane and insane”. Wants to be able to trade TAUs for CFA. Wants to look at big picture before selling TAUs to know where the city is headed.

Davis: Would like TAUs for CFA so the latter could be used as incentives to get businesses to make improvements like what happened at the old Crescent V Center.

Hallen: Not well versed in TAUs. Would support selling them if it financially benefits the city.

Question: The city of South Lake Tahoe is past years has supported the tourism community through funding of marketing and special events. How would you envision the city supporting tourism, marketing and special events in the future?

Gooch: Supports city’s decision years ago to stop writing blank check to tourism related entities in order to balance its own books. Believes city should support tourism when it can afford to do so and for things that are explained in detail.

Jones: Believes if city focuses on core services –

transportation, roads, lighting – this will provide climate where tourists will want to come back instead of how it is now.

Cichowicz: Wants an event in town every weekend. Would support them financially if possible.

Hallen: Wants to be four-season town and lose the shoulder seasons; be more family friendly so the bowling alley isn't the only place she recommends people go.

Davis: Wants city to provide in-kind support through things like police services. Would support special events if financially possible. Wants to make sure town is clean and bike paths are repaired.

Swanson: Pointed to history and the distrust it fostered with TOT collection-allocation. Wants city to be viable partner. She was "embarrassed" the city was not part of the inaugural Sample the Sierra in August.

Curry: Wants an amusement fee on the Tahoe Queen and would-be convention center of a dollar or two paid by the tourists that could be used to supplement the Lake Tahoe Visitor Authority's $4 million budget.

Kubby: Agrees with Davis that bringing more ski events to Heavenly is a good idea. Wants events at Heavenly Village, but points to the vacancies there and parking garage that is expensive and loses money each year. Believes a good job is being done to get people to town, but wants to work on the experience they have once here.

Fortier: Also pointed to the past with council raising TOT but then taking it away from marketing. Wants to be partner in tourism, most likely with in-kind help. Wants infrastructure improvements to bring South Tahoe into world-class destination status.

Question: Citizens are concerned about enforcement and sense of standards for cleanliness and common sense trash containment around town. What do you propose as solutions to rid our city of blight – both commercial and residential?

Swanson: Need to work on large trash bins at businesses being out front. Wants to work on culture at city because she is running into residents who are afraid to talk to staff about making improvements to their home or business.

Davis: Wants STR to maintain dumpsters. Also would like youth to paint them at businesses like what has been on utility owned structures.

Hallen: She wants property owners to have reasonable lease agreements to small businesses and survive, which in turn will help bring the 17 percent unemployment rate down.

Cichowicz: Does not favor more regulations, but would rather see better communication with absentee homeowners to ensure their property is taken care of.

Jones: Believes the city needs to lead by example by taking care of its property and then individuals and businesses will follow suit. Pointed out it's hard to want to improve a parking lot leading to dilapidated city infrastructure. Wants to work on franchise agreement with South Tahoe Refuse. Wants recycling bins everywhere.

Gooch: Pointed to grant city recently receive to obtain 15 dumpsters. Hesitant to support mandatory commercial trash service.

Fortier: Would like grant through STR to buy bear boxes for vacation rentals that those owners would pay back through time via their bills. Agrees with Jones that Sunday trash pick up for vacation rentals is logical. Suggests twice a year city has day to clean up trash that community could participate in like Coastal Cleanup Day.

Kubby: Wants world-class services so this isn’t an issue.

Curry: Wants vacation rentals and new construction to have bear boxes. Believes redevelopment and Tahoe Valley Community Plan will take care of blight.

The election is Nov. 2. Mail ballots have already arrived for those voters.