70-year prison sentence in homeless camp murder

By Andy Furillo, Sacramento Bee

A 42-year-old transient who shot and killed a man in a Placerville homeless camp has been sentenced to 70 years to life in prison, the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office said in a press release.

Kenneth Sharonoff had been convicted of second-degree murder in the Jan. 23 killing of Clark "Otto" McCabe, 69, on Missouri Flat Road. An El Dorado County Superior Court jury convicted Sharonoff of the murder, as well as being an ex-con with firearms, and also of elder abuse.

The press release on Thursday's sentencing by Judge Suzanne Kingsbury said that a friend of the victim described McCabe as "a kind and generous person" who "was respected and well-liked, and now very much missed."

Read the whole story

USFS opens office in Incline

The U.S. Forest Service opened an office in Incline Village this month.

The North Shore office located in the Washoe County Incline Service Center at 845 Alder Ave. is adjacent to the library. It will be open Thursday through Saturday from 10am-3pm.

The new location sells Desolation Wilderness permits, as well as fuelwood permits and Christmas tree permits during the appropriate seasons, offer maps and books for purchase, writes campfire permits, posts information on Forest Service job openings, and provide general information for visitors and residents.

The phone number is (775) 831.0914.

Douglas County students to get real-life aviation instruction

Nearly 150 Douglas County third-graders will participate in a journey of exploration from the Minden-Tahoe Airport to space and beyond.

The program is sponsored by the Minden-Tahoe Airport as part of a partnership with the Douglas County School District. The airport and school district plan to make the program an annual event that is coordinated with the science curriculum of the students.

“This program is aimed at inspiring and educating young people in our community about the world of aviation and aerospace

science," Steve Mokrohisky, assistant County manager for Douglas County, said in a press release. "We are truly excited about our partnership with the school sistrict and the opportunity to highlight the educational value of aviation."

This year the district is starting with students from Pinon and Minden elementary schools,

"Everything being offered at the Aviation Education Day is in line with our third-grade science curriculum and it provides such a great way to add hands-on relevance and rigor for our students," Kerry Pope, director of curriculum and instruction for DCSD, said in a press release.

The program begins at 9am Sept. 29 at the Minden-Tahoe Airport. Groups of approximately 30 students each will rotate through the Challenge Learning Center of Northern Nevada dome where they will learn about aviation, earth science, space science, space travel and exploration, and geography.

El Dorado County sanctuary treating more neglected horses

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

To horse rescuer Beth DeCaprio, a pair of recent cases represent the worst of an already bad situation.

A 3-year-old gelding – unable to stand on his own four hooves – was discovered in July in an empty field at Latrobe and Stonehouse roads near Rancho Murieta. Left without food or water for weeks, the horse was hundreds of pounds underweight,

had been burned with cigarettes and most likely poisoned.

In August, a starving thoroughbred mare and her filly foal were let loose to fend for themselves. Animal control officers found them standing on the side of Clay Station Road, emaciated and near death.

Sacramento County animal control officers took all three horses to the Grace Foundation, a nonprofit rescue facility in El Dorado Hills. The Humane Society of the United States has offered a $2,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of parties responsible for these horses' neglect and abuse.

Read the whole story

Zero boating fatalities in Nevada for 2010 season

By Reno Gazette-Journal

For the first time in 18 years, the Nevada Department of Wildlife reports no fatal boat accidents on Nevada's waters.

"The boating season draws to its traditional September close in the next couple weeks and this is great news – no fatalities in Nevada's boating community," David Pfiffner, Nevada's boating law administrator, said in a statement.

Officials are not sure there is one cause for the lack of fatalities, but believe boater reducation efforts by NDOW, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxillary and others deserve some of the credit.

Boating safety enforcement on Lake Tahoe and increased patrols looking for boaters under the influence of alohcol at Lake Mead and Lake Mohave also deserve credit, NDOW said.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Keep state a leader in clean energy, no on Prop. 23

By Richard Branson

Four years ago in Long Beach, I, along with 15 business leaders, met with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to discuss how to deploy clean energy around the world. Our message was clear: Adopt policies that put a price on carbon emissions, and investment in clean energy will follow.

Two months after the meeting, on Sept. 27, 2006, Schwarzenegger signed the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB32) into law, unleashing a wave of private-sector investment in clean energy. Last year, California's clean-tech sector received $2.1 billion in investment, accounting for 60 percent of all clean-tech investment in North America. The clean-tech sector is now one of the fastest growing sectors in the state, creating jobs at a rate 10 times faster than the statewide average and employing more than 500,000 Californians.

As a result, California is home to seven of the top 10 clean-tech businesses in the country, earning it a reputation globally as a pre-eminent leader on climate change and a

favorite to provide the technologies for the clean-energy revolution taking shape around the world.

Read the whole story

Richard Branson is founder of the Virgin Group, co-founder of the Carbon War Room and a member of the Climate Group's International Leadership Council.

Rural towns struggle as health clinics lock doors

By Jocelyn Wiener, Center for Health Reporting

DOYLE – Just before the turnoff into this tiny community, near the shuttered Burger Barn, a sign announcing Doyle's existence also hints at its fade toward oblivion. Underneath the name of the local clinic, Doyle Family Practice, someone has added the words: "Temporarily closed."

Last summer, state budget cuts forced the Doyle clinic – along with five other rural health or dental clinics in far Northern California – to close. Since then, the isolated stretch of highway connecting this high desert community in Lassen County to Susanville, 42 miles northwest, and Reno, 46 miles southeast, has become a major obstacle for people in need of health care.

Many of Doyle's residents are elderly or poor, often unable to find a ride to either city and too broke to afford gas to drive themselves.

"We all depend on that clinic and it's a very big hardship not to have it," said Alice Sarmento, 61, a retired tow truck

driver who suffers from a heart condition, asthma and chronic pain.

Sarmento said she cancels appointments on days she doesn't have gas money to get to Reno. If there's an emergency, she'll either need to find a ride or wait 45 minutes for an ambulance.

Read the whole story

Tahoe-ites rid lake beaches, riverways of tons of trash

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – "I'm going out of state and getting trashed" is not what my Mom wanted to hear I was doing on my birthday. It was met with silence on the other end of the phone.

The truth is I've spent the last two nights in Nevada – out of state – even if the Lakeside Inn is only six miles from my California home. And I got trashed yesterday, on my birthday, in the sense that I participated in the annual coastal cleanup day.



Cigarette butts littered

Rabe Meadow and Nevada Beach. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Mom still wasn't amused with my initial description. But she did applaud my community service.

With staying at Stateline, I arranged through Ellen Nunes of Clean Tahoe to have Nevada Beach be a satellite affiliate this year. It was great to be able to walk there from Lakeside.

With 12 of the 15 official sites reporting, Blackwood Meadow reported the most amount of trash – 1,465 pounds – collected during the three-hour campaign to rid California locations near water of trash. Lou Graves parked a truck in front of Clean Tahoe's office in South Lake Tahoe the afternoon of Sept. 25. It was full, and included a couch.

He said this was just one of five couches retrieved from the meadow in the center of South Lake Tahoe. Graves said the truck had 19 bags of trash.

My Jeep was filled with one bag of trash and what looked like the spring of a rear Jeep seat we found near Burke Creek.

In the roughly 2.5 hours Sue and I spent walking through Rabe Meadow and along Nevada Beach we collected 228 cigarette butts, 175 food wrappers, 22 caps/lids, five pieces of glass, 12 straws, rubber from a bike tire, 91 pieces of food and other trash.



Kathryn Reed hauls out what looks like a spring for a car seat that she found in Burke Creek. Photo/Susan Wood

While Sue was using profanity toward smokers, I had choice words for the people who left behind peanut-pistachio-sun flower shells.

Yes, putting out a cigarette in the sand is great. But what the heck are you thinking when leaving it there?

I love pistachios – but why leave the shells on the beach? How long do you think it's going to take to biodegrade? And no bird wants the empty shell. Stop being lazy. Your litter is worse than the paper left behind because it blends in more with the sand.

According to Clean Tahoe's Nunes, with 80 percent of the sites reporting, 193 people participated through her organization, 2,557 pounds of trash were collected, 266.5 pounds of recyclables were bagged, and 26 miles were covered.

These are just results on the South Shore. Coastal Cleanup is a statewide effort.



Sue Wood finds Nevada Beach isn't as pristine as it looks. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"The youngest volunteer was 18 months old, although many little ones were in backpacks. The youngest in dad's backpack was 2 months. Our oldest volunteer was 84. Four of our volunteers drove all the way from San Francisco to participate," Nunes told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I'm simply amazed at how our group pulled it together without the usual grant funding to advertise the event. Getting the word out was a grass-roots effort with each member of our organizing committee reaching out to their co-worker and friend networks. Facebook played a big role in getting the word out as well."

Guns allowed in Nevada state parks

By Steve Green, Las Vegas Sun

People who can lawfully possess firearms can now take their loaded guns into Nevada's state parks under a legal agreement approved Tuesday.

Attorneys for the Nevada Attorney General's office, representing the state park system, agreed in a lawsuit stipulation that the parks will stop enforcing a law that critics said generally barred park visitors from possessing loaded firearms – even for self defense.

The agreement is valid for one year and will give the parks system a chance to amend its regulations so they comply with the U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment right to possess firearms, said James Manley, an attorney for the Mountain States Legal Foundation who was involved in the litigation.

The agreement came after the Colorado-based legal foundation filed suit in federal court in Nevada in July challenging a law that allowed visitors to bring guns into state parks, but only if they were unloaded and locked in vehicles.

Read the whole story

Veteran journalists discuss future of news

By Amanda Finnegan, Las Vegas Sun

Watchdog journalism needs to be preserved but finding a way to financially sustain it will remain a challenge in the coming years, industry experts said.

During a panel discussion Wednesday entitled "The Death of Old News" hosted by the Black Mountain Institute at UNLV, three longtime journalists discussed how the Internet is impacting the news industry and the industry's financial struggles.

The panel included Las Vegas Sun President and Editor Brian

Greenspun, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author Alex Jones, and longtime journalist, author and executive editor and anchor of “PBS NewsHour” Jim Lerher.

“Quality journalism costs money,” Lerher said. “What’s happening now is that the resources to do quality journalism are diminishing. However, the professionals have realized that in order for us to survive, prosper and grow, we need to form cooperative ventures.”

Read the whole story