Opinion: Schools should teach the way children learn

By Peter Halacsy

If you don’t mind a new San Franciscan’s point of view, what I see behind the faltering outcomes of American education is a failure to communicate.

American schools are using two-dimensional communication in a 3-D world. All one needs to do is view the YouTube video of a toddler quickly mastering an iPad to understand the problem, and the solution.

American education is linear, but the rest of a student’s world isn’t. Watch young people hunting knowledge at a computer, and you won’t see them moving along a straight line (as textbooks or slide presentations do). You’ll see them zooming in and out, leaping from hyperlink to hyperlink, remixing knowledge on the fly. This type of learning is brain candy to young people, and they don’t get enough in school. As one T-shirt recently seen in a New York City school says, “It’s Not ADD – I’m Just Not Listening.”

I learned the limits of linear education as a child growing up in Hungary as the Cold War waned. I came to America expecting to find a very different approach to education. Sadly, I did not.

Read the whole story

Peter Halacsy, the former lead developer at Hungary’s largest Internet company and a co-founder of Kitchen Budapest, was an assistant professor of new media at Budapest University of Technology before co-founding Prezi Inc. in 2009 and moving to San Francisco.

Squaw becoming Bavaria of California

Squaw Valley is hosting an Oktoberfest celebration complete with a Bratwurst Toss, authentic German beer and plenty of entertainment. The 9th Annual Squaw Valley Oktoberfest will transform The Village at Squaw Valley into a miniature Bavaria on Oct. 2 from 2-6pm.

Modeled after the original Oktoberfest, a 16-day annual festival in Munich, Squaw Valley's event is a day for the whole family. Guests gather for traditional German entertainment including performances by Joe Smiell and his 20-piece Bavarian band on the main stage. The Almenrauch Schuhplattler and Alpentanzer Schuhplattler Austrian Dance Troops also will entertain Oktoberfest visitors.

Event attendees may participate in games and compete for prizes. Festival-goers compete in Stein Holding, plus Keg and Barrel-Rolling Races.

Guests are encouraged to get into the spirit of the event by wearing traditional Lederhosen and Austrian clothing.

Beer lovers can toast each other in the Biergarten, where they'll find a wide selection of authentic German brews including Gordon Biersch, Spaten Premium lager, Spaten Oktoberfest, Trumer Pilsner, and Franziskaner Hefeweizen. The first glass of beer is $10, which includes a half-liter festival glass and one beer. Additional beer tickets will be available for $5.

Guests also can savor traditional German bratwurst with sauerkraut and a variety of other items served at the eight

Village restaurants, including a root beer float station.

The Village at Squaw Valley's Oktoberfest celebration and entertainment are free, but proceeds from beer sales benefit the Tahoe Truckee Lacrosse Foundation.

For more information, visit here or call (530) 584.6266.

Book exchange in Meyers

Bona Fide Books is having a Book Exchange on Sept. 25 form 10am-2pm.



Drop off the books you've already enjoyed and leave with the ones you'll love next.

Literary fiction, nonfiction, and curiosities welcome.

Coffee cake and serenades are part of the fun.

Bona Fide is at 1069 Magua St., No. 4, Meyers – behind the Getaway Café.

Tahoe Improv Players' raucous

act returns for benefit

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – A night of laughter – that's how the Tahoe Improv Players should promote their shows.

The August performance was supposed to be the last of the season; one of the reasons why I made sure it was my first time to ever see the comedic cast. A last-minute benefit show has been added for Sept. 27. The proceeds go toward maintenance of the Boat House Theatre where the show is staged.



Tahoe Improv Players: Pam Taylor, Frank Riley, Dave Hamilton, Jayme Foremaster, Gerry Orton, April Foiles

The three of us couldn't stop laughing. To be so quick-witted in such an unscripted environment is impressive. The direction they took story lines, the richness of the delivery, the way they worked together – it was so much better than many traditional stage presentations.

If you've seen the television show "Whose line is it anyway?",

then you have an idea of what this improvisational form of comedy is all about.

Many in the audience had seen this group perform before. What keeps it fresh is getting input from the audience.

With it being interactive and fast-paced, there is no time for boredom. The only issue with time is wishing it didn’t end.

“From the inside perspective, the most difficult part is not thinking. Everything occurs within the now. You are trying to really not edit and not get into trying to think what the audience will like, but more what comes to mind without editing,” Gerry Orton said.

Orton is the director of the handful of players. He got involved with the comedic art form after taking a class from Dave Hamilton at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Hamilton is one of the nearly 75 people who have been part of the Tahoe Improv Players, and was on stage this summer.

Orton and Frank Riley created ComedySportz in 1993 – which did spoofs on sports. This group was part of a loose national franchise.



Gerry Orton is much more than the director of the improv players. Photos/Kathryn

From there, Orton and Riley started Tahoe Improv Players. With Orton residing mostly in Monterey now, the number of shows at the lake is limited. Most summers it is two shows at the Valhalla Festival of Arts and Music. This year it was three regular performances, with the benefit next week being the fourth.

A couple years ago the gang started to bring children onto the stage. This brings a whole new element to the drama because they are even more unpredictable than the adults they have gotten used to working with.

Even though the art form is improv, the five players plus Orton and pianist Dave Fabrizio do rehearse a bit. They work on scene building, character development, staying in the now, spontaneity exercises and listening skills.

“There are exercises and games that sharpen our wit a bit,” Orton explained. “I wish some of our workouts could be some of our shows.”

New to the cast this year is Pam Taylor, though she has done improv before and has been in several local theatrical productions.

Jayme Foremaster is the youngest player Orton has worked she. She started at age 14. Now she is studying at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles.

This year’s cast also includes April Foiles.

Benefit performance details:

Date: Sept. 27

Time: 7pm

Cost: $10 or $5, depends on your age

Location: Boat House Theatre, Valhalla Estate on the South Shore, click here for directions.

Advanced tickets: Via the website.

Whole Foods celebrates 30 years as grocery trendsetter

By USA Today

Time flies when you're running one of the world's most profitable grocery chains. Whole Foods, the organic and natural foods supermarket trendsetter, turns 30 today.

The relatively tiny chain, which has 300 units in 38 states, has had a cultural impact more akin to that of Starbucks, which has more than 11,000 U.S. locations.

Yet, last year, in one of its most challenging years ever, Whole Foods still posted sales of $8 billion.

USA Today marketing reporter Bruce Horovitz talks with co-founder, cosmic thinker and conservative hippie John Mackey, 57. The interview is edited for length and clarity.

Read the whole story

Chamber music on South Shore

An Evening of Intimate Chamber Music with special guest Maureen Leonard, piano Trio Brio, a group of local professional musicians, will perform at Lake Tahoe Community College's Duke Theater Sept. 25.

Musicians are David Brock, piano, Pat Crane, viola, and Darrell Moore, clarinet compose the chamber group.

The concert begins at 8pm and will include classical, romantic, and modern era music. A portion of the proceeds from the concert will be donated to LTCC's music department piano fund.

The evening's program will open with W.A. Mozart's, Trio in Eb major, K. 498 also known as "The Bowling Alley Trio" for its nine-note opening theme. Next on the program is a unique solo piece by Max Reger: the Suite No. 1 for Viola, Op. 131d, No. 1. This work is romantic and baroque in compositional structure, played by Pat Crane, viola. Trio Brio then will present two of Max Bruch's "Eight Pieces" Collection.

In celebration of the 200th birthday of Frederic Chopin, special guest Maureen Leonard will present three works from the piano livre of this composer. The concert concludes with the engaging and virtuosic – Trio pour Clarinette, Alto et Piano by Jean Françaix. This five movement work is sometimes serene, sometimes animated, sometimes jazzy, sometimes frenetic, and sometimes just humorous.

Tickets are $15 general admission, $10 students with ID card, $20 reserved stage seating by piano. All tickets are available one hour in advance of the performance at the theater box office.

The LTCC Theater is located in the Fine Arts wing of the LTCC campus at 1 College Drive, South lake Tahoe.

For further information or to purchase reserved seating advance tickets, call (775) 781.4702.

Mild wildfire season throughout Nevada

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada will close 2010 with less land burned by wildfire than any other year but one in the past decade, barring any late-season surprises.



Only 15 fires larger than 100 acres were recorded over the year across the Silver State as of Friday. They charred 21,688 acres, according to the Western Great Basin Coordination Center.

Only in 2003, when 17,546 acres burned, did the state lose less land.

“What happened, especially for Nevada, was we saw lots of southwesterly flow which can produce wind but not a lot of lightning,” said Rick Ochoa, predictive services meteorologist for the fire center. “In the West, we never had the really hot spells followed by the dry lightning.”

Read the whole story

Worst whopping cough outbreak since 1955

By Rong-Gong Lin II, Los Angeles Times

Babies have been hardest hit by whooping cough in California, according to new statistics released by the state Department of Public Health.

All nine deaths so far this year have been among infants under 3 months old. Among patients who are critically ill with the disease, babies have also been disproportionately hospitalized.

According to the data released late Wednesday, of 196 patients known to have been hospitalized with whooping cough in California, 74% were infants under 6 months old and most – 57% – were under 3 months old.

Whooping cough is often spread to babies by parents, siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents and other adults. Because infants do not begin vaccinations until they are 2 months old, health officials for months have been pleading for anyone who expects to be in contact with babies – especially pregnant women – to get vaccinated.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• In the first year of South Tahoe Refuse's blue bag recycling program more than 10,000 bags have been given out on the South Shore.

• This month $8,019,333 in matching funds for the South Tahoe High School ORG (Overcrowded Relief Grant) project and another $105,216 for the California High Performance Schools incentive have been deposited in the coffers.

• Nicole Zaborsky is filling the vacancy on the South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Commission. Bill Ottman resigned because of health issues.

• Got the itch to ride? Check out from the 2010 Warren Miller flick.

• Nira Feeley starts her job Oct. 4 as deputy city attorney for South Lake Tahoe.

• The UNLV Center for Gaming Research did a study on how casinos are using Twitter.

Arborist training in Nevada

The Nevada Shade Tree Council, the Nevada Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service are sponsoring an arborist training series to improve tree care skills and prepare those interested in taking the International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist Examination.

The series is in three eight-hour sessions from Oct. 5-7 at the Nevada Library and Archives, 401 North Carson St. The $85

registration fee and application are due Sept. 24.

A registration form may be downloaded or by request to Tony Dietz at (801) 214.5804.

An ISA Certified Arborist Examination will Oct. 8 at the same location. Contact ISA at www.isa-arbor.com for information on the exam.