Reno balloon races struggle to stay afloat

By Frank X. Mullen Jr., Reno Gazette-Journal

The Great Reno Balloon Race has been hemorrhaging funding over the past few years, but organizers said the 28-year-old event isn't in danger of a crash landing.

"I think, considering what's been happening, we're doing pretty well," said Marlene Olsen, executive director for the race. "At least we're bleeding less than last year."

The free event began in 1982 with 20 balloons and about 5,000 attendees. By the 1990s, it boasted more than 100 balloons and 100,000 spectators, and its tax returns showed a $250,000 carryover from one year to the next. In those days, companies were lining up to sponsor balloons, Olsen said.

Then came the economic downturn.

Major sponsors dropped out or reduced support. Costs and services became more expensive. Crowds got larger, but volunteerism dropped. Merchandise sales decreased.

Read the whole story

Hot August Nights secrecy baffles N. Nevada officials

By Frank X. Mullen Jr. Reno Gazette-Journal

Dealing with the Hot August Nights organization has been an

exercise in frustration after event officials announced in June that the classic car and music festival will be opening in Long Beach, Calif., next year for a six-year run, officials of Reno and Sparks said.

“It’s been a debacle from the start,” said Sparks Mayor Geno Martini. “They haven’t shared any information with us. I understand that the executive director, Bruce Walter, gives direction in these things, but in the end the board has to vote on this stuff.

“This is a strange set of circumstances I don’t understand. The (HAN) board is acting completely differently than any board of directors I’ve ever been involved with. They need to regain credibility and give us the whole scoop about what’s going on in Long Beach.”

Martini, Reno Mayor Bob Cashell and local casino executives are scheduled to meet with Hot August Nights officials Sept. 20 to discuss the event’s future in Northern Nevada. The 24-year-old festival brings $350 million into the area each August, organizers said.

Read the whole story

St. Theresa Golf Tournament on Sept. 23

St. Theresa School is having its 17th annual Golf Tournament on Sept. 23 at 1:30pm at the Lake Tahoe Golf Course.

Cost is $125 a player which includes range balls, cart, 18 holes and dinner.

Dinner only is $35. There will also be a raffle. Tickets are available for purchase at St. Theresa school or on the day of the tournament. All proceeds benefit the school, a nonprofit organization. You may register at St. Theresa school, 1181 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe or visit the website.

Film raises disturbing questions about Sept. 11, 2001

Publisher's note: ***The American Legion in South Lake Tahoe will have a ceremony for Patriots Day at 11am.***

By Kathryn Reed

Filmmaker Dylan Avery calls his film "Loose Change" one based on facts, not one based on conspiracy theories.



It was first released in 2005 and has had subsequent updates. The latest version came out in 2009. That is the one I recently viewed.

It's all about Sept. 11, 2001. The documentary goes back in history to Hitler's rise in Nazi Germany, includes events leading up to the day the Twin Towers were leveled, and delves into the aftermath in the years that followed.

I wasn't in the country Sept 11. I wasn't inundated with news stories. I didn't fear for my life in ways others did in

thinking the United States would be struck again by terrorists.

As a journalist and ardent supporter of the First Amendment, I was alarmed to read about the government cracking down on journalists who sought the truth and questioned the government. What was there to hide? Why were the powers that be scared?

Our government never deserves our unquestioned allegiance. Look at what we did to our citizens of Japanese descent after Pearl Harbor was bombed. Look at how we shuttled Native Americans off to reservations – a nightmarish issue that continues to have repercussions today. Look up Tuskegee syphilis experiment if you want to know what the government has done. Look in the produce aisle to see altered food products without substantive testing on them to know what they will do our bodies in years to come.

Could the government have brought down the Twin Towers in New York? Yes. Did it? I don't know.

The film raises chilling questions.

What were those puffs of smoke that appear to be detonation charges from various floors of both towers? Why did it seem to implode like a planned destruction more than it resembled an explosion?

I didn't realize the steel from the buildings was immediately hauled overseas. Why wasn't it kept on U.S. soil for structural engineers to analyze the integrity of the steel, to learn from this collapse to know how to fortify future buildings?

When I flew back to the States from South America in December 2001 it was to New York (via Miami) to spend New Year's Eve with Mom and my sister, Pam.

We were fortunate to visit Ground Zero the day it opened to the public. Rubble remained. But it was more like a crater.

Until this film, I had never seen footage of the plane hitting the first tower.

I had not realized until this film that no debris from the planes that hit the Pentagon and crashed in Pittsburgh was found. Like the filmmaker, I wonder how this is possible.

I wonder to this day how we took the great leap to assume Saddam Hussein and those still missing weapons of mass destruction had something to do with 9/11. I wonder why my nephew has served two tours in Iraq. I worry about his safety even more now that in July he graduated from Special Forces training and is a Green Beret. Yes, it's his choice. He freely joined the Army.

As his aunt, I still worry – about him, and all the other men and women our government sends to fight its battles. I have yet to have someone explain to me how this is our war. *Our* being the people of the United States' as opposed to the *our* the government wants us to believe in.

Seeing "Loose Change" further confuses me and infuriates me.

On this somber ninth anniversary of 9/11 all I can do is feel empty.

Soroptimist annual wine tasting

Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe's 2010 An Evening of Food & Wine Tasting is Nov. 12 from 6-9:30pm at

Harrah’s convention center in Stateline.

Eighteen restaurants and 32 vintners are part of the event.

Tickets are $65 each and can be purchased from a SISLT member or online.

In addition to the main event there will be a silent auction and a raffle.

For the past 40 years, all money raised by Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe has been directed back into the community through educational scholarships, youth activity sponsorships, the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center and numerous other projects that enhance services and the quality of life in the community.

If you have any questions or would like to donate an item to this year’s event, contact Valerie Conners at (530) 544.8545.

Ice skating exhibition in South Tahoe

Catch Your Breath ice skating exhibition at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena on Sept. 25 from 7-9pm.

It is free.

For more information, go here www.tahoefigureskatingclub.com.

Lake Tahoe Fire Fest

Lake Tahoe Basin Fire Fest at Lake Tahoe Airpot on Oct. 2 is from 10am-3pm.

The annual event is sponsored by Kiwanis Club of Lake Tahoe.

Fire Fest is an annual event that highlights Fire Prevention Week while celebrating fire and life safety for children and families. Helicopters will star at Fire Fest as they land at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Sit in a fire truck, experience a wildfire, escape from the Smoke House, wear fire fighting equipment, squirt fire hoses, play in a bounce house, meet Smokey Bear, Sparky and Rescue Dogs, watch fire departments compete, learn about fire resistant construction, and enjoy a Kiwanis barbecue.

For more information contact Jeanne Lear (530) 542.8366.

Gorman pays South Tahoe overdue TOT

Updated: Sept. 13, 2010, 3:45pm.

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce Executive Director B Gorman wrote a check to South Lake Tahoe for nearly $1,000 on Sept. 9 for the transient occupancy tax she had not paid since last December.

Gorman did not return a phone call seeking comment.



B Gorman

The city Finance Department allows people to self-report what is due.

Gorman's payment comes one day after *Lake Tahoe News* reported she was operating a vacation rental out of her home without permits or paying taxes.

The city assessed $100 in fines on the $633 in back TOT she paid. The room tax is 10 percent, so the Gormans collected more than $6,000 in rent.

The city did not issue her a permit because Gorman told officials she was getting out of the room rental business.

Patrick Atherton, president of the chamber board, said on Sept. 9 that it is an internal matter for the board to decide if any action should be taken regarding Gorman's behavior.

While that is true, it is not a decision that can be done solely behind closed doors because the chamber is funded with public money. Annually it receives cash from Douglas County. It has received geotourism grant dollars from El Dorado County. The most recent South Lake Tahoe money was for the wayfinding program. Federal money is coming in the chamber's coffers for the Prosperity Plan.

South Lake Tahoe Women's Center Gala

South Lake Tahoe Women's Center 11th Annual Sunset Gala by the Lake fundraiser is Sept. 25 from 5-8pm in Zephyr Cove.

There will be fine wines, hors d'oeuvres, desserts, classical guitar, and a silent auction.

Each year South Lake Tahoe Women's Center serves more than 2,000 victims of abuse in our community. In 2009, the Women's Center faced more than $200,000 in reductions in state funding for programs, and with no state budget signed for the current fiscal year, it is unclear if the agency experience the same reduction.

Purchase tickets online for $50 each or stop by 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

Poverty to Prosperity Forum

Tomorrow's prosperity is only possible by understanding and responding to those factors that contribute to poverty today. An increasing number of decision-makers and community leaders recognize that the pathway to prosperity is dependent on all sectors of the community working together.

South Lake Tahoe Poverty to Prosperity Forum 2010 is a day to provide that opportunity through awareness, education, linkage, and action.

Join business leaders, education boards and administrations, government officials, nonprofit directors and community

decision-makers as we continue the strategic discussion that will define the critical linkages needed to move our South Lake Tahoe community from poverty to prosperity.

The gathering is Oct. 8 from 9am-4pm at Embassy Suites, 4130 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Lunch will provided.

RSVP by Oct. 1 to Lori Blackburn at (530) 295.2403 or lblackburn@edcoe.org or go online www.eldoradocapc.org

Sponsors are Child Abuse Prevention Council of El Dorado County, El Dorado Community Foundation, El Dorado Office of Education, First 5 El Dorado, Lake Tahoe Gaming Alliance, South Lake Tahoe Area Fund at the El Dorado Community Foundation, and Tahoe Youth & Family Services.