Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Two more shows have been added to the lineup for the Lake Tahoe Summer Concert Series at Harveys. Singer-songwriter Sarah McLachlan will perform June 24 and classic rockers Boston and the Doobie Brothers share the bill Aug. 3.

• Robert Levy, 49, of Markleeville has been reappointed to the 18th District Agricultural Association, Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fair Board of Directors.

• More than 350 pet lovers and dozens of their canine counterparts got all dolled up for last month's Black Tie and Tails. The event is the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe's largest fundraiser – raising more than $100,000 to help care for, foster, and place the community's homeless pets.

• The Soft White Sixties with Vokab Kompany will play at Grandview Lodge at Sierra-at-Tahoe on March 22 from 2-5:30pm for free.

Bay Area teen via video asks Anderson to prom

"My name is Nir Voloshin and I'm from the San Francisco Bay Area, and my dream prom date would be with none other than Olympian snowboarder Jamie Anderson. I know it's a long shot, but I'm foolish enough to at least try."

Here is his video:

Musical employment chairs at Barton Health

By Kathryn Reed

On the one hand Barton Health is struggling because the number of patients is declining. On the other hand based on the agency's 2012 tax return the top 12 people in the organization collectively had annual salaries of more than $3.2 million, with CEO John Williams taking in nearly $600,000.

Those figures don't include benefits or bonuses. And while bonuses were suspended for some in 2012, they were back in vogue in 2013.



Barton Memorial Hospital's numbers continue to decline. Photo/LTN

However, not now and not when Barton laid people off a few years ago did upper management take a pay cut. For someone like Leanne Kankel, vice president of human resources who is No. 6 on the 2012 pay scale at $250,063 a year, she also gets free health insurance because her husband is a retired South Lake Tahoe firefighter.

While substantive salaries and perks are being handed out, so are pink slips. Several positions between Tahoe Medical Group and the Community Health Center have been eliminated. But before people were let go they first had to apply for their jobs. Those not selected were shown the door.

To compound the pain of being out of work some of their jobs have been handed to people from outside the area. They were not given reasons for why they are no longer employed and Barton isn't telling *Lake Tahoe News*.

Three of the people let go at the health center were registered nurses. Two RNs kept their jobs. The difference between those who got to stay is they have a bachelor's degree, are younger and are lower down on the pay scale. Those let go were not offered the opportunity to return to school to get their degree.

People have already been hired to replace them; some are RNs, some are medical assistants.

"We have hired registered nurses who fit a patient-centered care management model," Monica Sciuto, Barton spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Why the RNs who were let go couldn't fit that model isn't known.

"This was not in an effort to save costs, but rather to put the correct level of expertise into positions to fit the needs of our patients," Sciuto said of the layoffs.

But that in part contradicts a letter Williams sent to staff on Jan. 6. He went through a litany of concerns regarding decreased patient admissions (it's at 78 percent of the volume compared to 1998) as well as a drop in births – 57.7 percent from 1998 to 2012.



CEO John Williams approves layoffs, but has never taken a pay cut. He makes more than a half million dollars. Photo/Provided

“In addition, due to the Affordable Care Act we anticipate payment for services will decrease across the board from our government and private payers,” Williams wrote. “To address these shifts, Barton department heads and the executive team will be taking a closer look at how we run our organization.”

Novia Strategies has been hired at an undisclosed cost to “objectively evaluate how we do business and where we can be more efficient,” the PR department said.

Changes for employees

Hours for the janitorial crew have also been cut. Barton would not talk about these changes.

Nurses who were used to working 10- or 12-hour shifts now have to work five eight-hour shifts, at least at the community center.

Barton would not release the number of people who have been laid off, the number of new hires or the job titles of the people. Many of the workers had been with Barton a decade or longer.

Others have told *Lake Tahoe News* that in addition to the three

RNs being let go, seven medical assistants, and one receptionist were released. Some of those positions, though, have been filled.



Front office employees at the health clinic now must be medical assistants. Photo/LTN file

Now all office staff must at least be a medical assistant. This means front desk people will be able to give shots, wound care and assist doctors.

With Barton owning most of the doctors' groups in the area, it means those professionals work for the health care system. They don't have a say in who works in their office, who is hired, who is fired.

"They changed the receptionist to a different receptionist and laid off the one I had. I wasn't consulted," Ronald Roth, a physician with Tahoe Medical Group, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It was a little disruptive to have spontaneous changes without consultation."

Other doctors are reluctant to talk on the record because of the possibility of retribution. Tahoe Carson Valley Medical Group, which includes 28 doctors, just renewed its contract with Barton. Tahoe Orthopedics and Sports Medicine is in contract negotiations.

Doctors are being evaluated and paid based on productivity.

How productivity is evaluated is not being made public.

Going forward

Some of the people who are now in the unemployment line who spoke with *Lake Tahoe News* said what they fear most is the level of care patients will receive.

Barton says there is no reason to be worried.

“(It’s) so they can provide more clinical knowledge and facilitate the ongoing care of patients. Barton’s front desk staff completed Barton University’s accredited National Center for Competency Testing program to qualify to become medical assistants,” the PR folks said.

Barton has changed how it recruits for employees. The “career website” is being revamped. In Williams’ letter he asked for “individual written testimonials on why you enjoy working for Barton and what in particular you find rewarding about your job.”

Some who were let go say Barton is all about the positive, wanting to put a Disney-esque spin on things instead of listening to concerns.

“Though change can be challenging, we see this as an opportunity to create a new environment that holds a brighter, financially sustainable future at Barton. Barton is committed to coming to thoughtful, well informed solutions,” Williams wrote to employees.

Letter: Successful open house at humane society

To the community,

The Lake Tahoe Humane Society and SPCA thanks South Lake Tahoe for the great turn out at their open house and ribbon cutting on Feb. 25 in honor of World Spay Day. Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce was present to officiate the ribbon cutting and Mayor Hal Cole cut the ribbon. It was a great turn out and a good start in the Lake Tahoe Humane Society's mission to let the community learn about all their fantastic services, such as spay and neuter vouchers, emergency pet medical care assistance and an emergency pet food bank.

Liz Maul, the Lake Tahoe Humane Society and SPCA education director, showed guests the incredible education programs provided, such as My Reading Buddy (every Wednesday at the South Lake Tahoe Brach of the El Dorado County Library at 4pm) and the new VSI program, which encourages kids to take an interest in science. Additionally, funds for future programs were raised thanks to raffle items donated by local businesses including Tahoe Best Friends, Best In Show Pet Groomers, Heavenly Valley and Tahoe Blue Vodka. This was a great start to what will be an exciting year for the Lake Tahoe Humane Society and SPCA.

Niki Congero, humane society

Redwood poaching closes Calif. park

By Lydia O’Connor, Huffington Post

It ain’t easy being beautiful – just ask a California redwood tree.

Prized for their beauty, age and size, California’s precious redwood trees have increasingly become the victims of poachers eyeing them for easy profit, forcing park officials to close the gates.

In a press release announcing the nighttime closure of Newton B. Drury Parkway, a scenic route through a redwood forest in Northern California, the National Park Service explained that an alarming increase in wood poaching raids has demanded extra protection for the state’s treasured trees, forcing the service to limit visitor access.

Read the whole story

LTCC pioneers remember the start 40 years ago

By Kathryn Reed

Physically, Jim Duke believes everything Lake Tahoe Community College has become is wonderful. What the state has done to the system, that’s another story.

“The philosophy of the community college has changed

significantly," Duke told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It was called the people's college."

When he started LTCC in 1975 tuition was free at all California community colleges. Before Proposition 13 was passed, which altered property taxes, there was flexibility with what special districts could do. Back then non-credit community education courses could be offered.



Jim Duke talks March 5 about when Lake Tahoe Community College first started. Photo/LTN

He doesn't like what the state has done to the system financially.

Still, he is proud of his affiliation with the South Lake Tahoe campus.

Duke was one of a roomful of people with long ties to the college who showed up to the old hotel where classes were first conducted. It's now the Econo Lodge on Highway 50.

The significance of March 5 is that 40 years ago on that date the voters in the area agreed to form a college district and elected the first four board members that day. Still serving are Roberta Mason and Fritz Wenck.

Jonnie Crawford and Sally Neitling, two of the 11 students in the inaugural graduating class of 1975, attended the Wednesday

celebration. Wendy David, another graduate, was also in the audience.

Duke told *LTN* about some of the applicants for the 14 teaching positions. Peg Kortes, one of the first instructors, was at the gathering. She taught business classes.

There were 1,400 applications. One was hand written in pencil on lined paper by a mom talking about how her son had just graduated and was in need of a job. Another was professionally written. In the first paragraph she told her gender, that she had a Phd and was black and dared the college not to hire her. They didn't.

But Duke said the college did strive for diversity. Hiring in the mid-1970s was much different than it is today. Race, gender and other attributes could openly play a role. And they did. Duke said the goal was to have a balance of men and women from different regions of the country who came from a variety of colleges.

"We offered the bookstore job to a black man. He looked at the community and said, 'No'," Duke said. They same scenario transpired when trying to hire a Latino for another job.

Duke, wearing a windbreaker with the original college logo on it, says he wished there had been more diversity of staff at the get-go. (The college may be creating a new logo for the next 40 years.)

Today LTCC has 40 full-time faculty members and more than 650 adjunct available. About one-third of the instructors have doctorates.

On June 7, the college will have a more formal celebration of its 40th anniversary with a sit-down dinner from 6-8pm, plus the unveiling of the David Allan Barkley Memorial created by former Art Department Chair David Foster. For more info, contact Julie Booth at Booth@ltcc.edu or (530) 541.4660, ext.

245.

Former LTCC President Jim Duke

Jim Duke, Lake Tahoe Community College’s first president, talks about the early years.

Nevada casinos partnering with hotel chains

By Hannah Dreier, AP

LAS VEGAS – Time was, gamblers didn’t even want credit card companies maintaining a record of their time in Las Vegas.

Now, visitors want loyalty points from mainstream hotel chains for the days they spend holed up in Strip casinos.

Casino corporations MGM Resorts International and Caesars Entertainment Corp. have announced loyalty program partnerships with major hotel chains (Hyatt and Starwood, respectively). The independent Strip casino the Cosmopolitan is also partnering with a hotel chain, striking a deal with Marriott.

The deals enable customers to earn and redeem loyalty points with both the hotel and casino chains, and also hold out the

promise of enabling visitors to experience Las Vegas like a high roller, if they have enough points.

The Caesars partnership also applies to Harrah's Reno, Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys Lake Tahoe. It was unclear Tuesday afternoon if the MGM partnership applied to Circus Circus Reno.

The partnerships give the hotel chains a presence in one of the country's biggest tourist destinations, and helps the casinos in their effort to market themselves as more than places to gamble.

MGM owns 12 properties on the Las Vegas Strip, including the MGM Grand and Bellagio. Caesars owns nine on the Las Vegas Strip, including Planet Hollywood and the Flamingo.

MGM announced the partnership over the summer, followed by Caesars in December, and the Cosmopolitan in January.

Caesars celebrated the announcement with a junket for national hotel reporters, including a stay at Caesars Palace, VIP seats at Britney Spears' Las Vegas show, and free spa service. Rewards programs participants can experience similarly luxurious moments, though it might take a while.

Jeff Zidell, senior vice president of Hyatt Gold Passport said the partnership with MGM has allowed the hotel chain to expand the benefits of joining its loyalty program, and is proving a hit with customers.

"Over time, members had shared their desires for a wider selection of locations for earning and burning Hyatt Gold Passport points –with a particular interest in The Las Vegas Strip. MGM Resorts has nearly half of the hotel rooms on The Las Vegas Strip, and these 12 participating MGM Resorts destinations are iconic,' he said in a statement to the Associated Press.

Casinos were hit hard by the recession, and have been slower to come back than other businesses. Some in Las Vegas are hailing the new partnerships as a sign that the Strip no longer looks as dubious to major hotel chains.

Two major Strip players remain un-partnered: Wynn Las Vegas, which owns the high-end Wynn and Encore casinos, and Sands Las Vegas, which owns the Italian-themed Venetian and Palazzo casinos.

Leads go cold in fatal Stateline accident

The Nevada Highway Patrol has “exhausted all leads” in the Aug. 10, 2013, fatal accident in Stateline.

Officers are hoping someone will come forward with information about the incident.

An unknown driver hit and killed 31-year-old Cody J. Dobson of Carson City as he was crossing Highway 50 east of MontBleu. The accident happened at 3:13am. He died nearly two weeks later at Renown Medical Center in Reno.

Witnesses stated the vehicle that hit Dobson was possibly either a dark blue or dark green full size Dodge crew cab pickup. The lower portion of the pickup was also accented with silver or grey paint.

Anyone with information may contact Secret Witness in Douglas County at 775.782.7463 or Trooper Doug Hildebrand at 775.689/4623 or dhildebrand@dps.state.nv.us.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tahoe-ite free falls in South Africa

Mike Wilson shared this video of a Tahoe athlete’s trip to South Africa.

“This fall we built a 600-foot rope jump, with a 450-plus foot free-fall and had an amazing time. Growing up in Tahoe gave me the experience and knowledge to set up some of the biggest jumps and stunts in the world, and I’m stoked to have called Olympic Valley home,” Wilson wrote.

Here is video of the experience: