Thousands of companies get warning on taxes

By Claudia Buck, Sacramento Bee

More than 40,000 California businesses that have not filed their 2008 state income tax returns are getting warning letters from the Franchise Tax Board.

The notices give businesses 30 days to file a return or show why there is no tax filing requirement. Businesses that disregard the notices could face penalties, interest and fees.

In this region, the notices went out to 1,452 businesses in Sacramento County; 173 in El Dorado; 312 in Placer; 130 in Yolo and 59 in Yuba.

Read the whole story

Growth puts pressure on California's state parks

By Marjie Lundstrom and Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

At the Riverwood Inn in rural Humboldt County, where a Harley-Davidson flag flaps on a light pole beneath the Stars and Stripes, the proprietor is steaming mad.

Some 15 miles south of Loreen Eliason's roadhouse, the California Department of Transportation is planning to widen a twisty stretch of Highway 101 through Richardson Grove State Park, home to one of the world's last old-growth redwood

forests. Although Caltrans has assured the public the ancient giants won’t be harmed, some residents and activists are alarmed by the very prospect of disturbing the trees’ shallow root systems.

“I was born up here. I’m connected to those trees,” said Eliason, who has joined a lawsuit to halt the road plan.

“Those uppity-ups in Sacramento. … They absolutely can’t say for certain they won’t hurt the trees,” she said. “I was more than glad to jump into the lawsuit.”

As civilization closes in on many of California’s 278 state parks, legal and emotional battles are erupting up and down the Golden State. With 1.3 million acres in public hands — much of it the most prized real estate in California — the state’s parks increasingly find themselves poked at and even assaulted by outside pressures.

Read the whole story

Learn about the night sky in Genoa

There will be a free stargazing program at Mormon Station State Historic Park in Genoa on Sept. 4.

Members of the Astronomical Society of Nevada will set up high-powered telescopes for viewing the evening sky. The program will begin with a presentation and question/answer session at 7:30pm. Telescope viewing is expected to begin about 8pm and last until 10pm.

Under the full moon sky, visitors can expect to see many Milky

Way clusters, nebulae, the Andromeda Galaxy, and later in the evening, Jupiter. Members of the Astronomical Society are knowledgeable about the nighttime sky and can teach visitors how to find the North Star, the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, Cassiopeia, Arcturus, Cygnus the Swan and more.

The public is invited to bring a picnic or barbecue dinner to enjoy before the program. Park staff suggest visitors bring a blanket, lawn chair, snacks, a light jacket and mosquito repellent. Leave pets at home.

Mormon Station State Historic Park is at 2307 Main St., in Genoa, located four miles west of Highway 395 in Carson Valley. The park is located in the center of town.

For more information, call (775) 782.2590.

Neighborhood where Dugard was held returns to normal

By Paul Burgarino, Contra Costa Times

ANTIOCH — Calm has returned to Walnut Avenue.

Drive through the rural neighborhood during the day and you may spot a flock of chickens strutting across the road or a child riding a bicycle in the dirt. At night, activity is even more sparse.

Nearly a year ago, that was anything but the case.



The Antioch compound where Jaycee Lee Dugard was kept for 18 years. Photo/KTVU-TV

On Aug. 26, 2009, this unincorporated Contra Costa County tract just outside Antioch became the epicenter of media coverage around the world when longtime residents Phillip and Nancy Garrido were arrested on suspicion of kidnapping Jaycee Dugard and holding her for 18 years in the backyard of their Walnut Avenue house.

The spotlight eventually dimmed, but the sordid tale of the Garridos' arrest and accusations of the sexual captivity of Dugard still resonate among residents, who say their lives were disrupted and the neighborhood unfairly stigmatized as a haven for sex offenders.

The neighborhood of large lots and isolated properties is "back to normal," said Helen Boyer, who lives next to the fenced-off Garrido house – which had a hidden backyard lair that authorities said shielded Dugard and the two daughters she bore Garrido. The house today stands vacant, its fate undecided.

Read the whole story

Annual Coastal Cleanup Day needs Tahoe volunteers

Last year, more than 3,000 volunteers around the Sierra came together to remove more than 100 tons of trash. More than 100 communities, across 22 counties and stretching across 500 river miles pull appliances, cigarette butts, beverage cans, baby diapers, tires, furniture, and more from the rivers and streams that supply California with 65 percent of its water.



El Dorado Beach in South Tahoe gets cleaned in 2009. Photo/Provided

This year's cleanup day is Sept. 25 from 9am-noon. If you aren't part of an assigned group, drop by El Dorado Beach to be assigned a location.

This event is in partnership with California Coastal Cleanup Day, an acclaimed statewide event that brings together tens of thousands of volunteers to clean up debris from our state's beaches, lakes and waterways.

This year, six Tahoe area organizations have joined together

to put on this event in South Lake Tahoe. Choose one of our 13 clean up sites to take part in this epic event. Click here to sign up.

Bring your own bag for the debris, plus gloves and water. Buckets could be used instead of individual bags.

All volunteers are invited to a cleanup celebration afterward. Enjoy food and drinks, local music and raffle prizes.

Call Ellen Nunes at Clean Tahoe for more information – (530) 544.4210.

Cooking class with Minden chef

Buona Sera Ristorante & Bar in Minden is having a cooking class with the chef on Aug. 30 from 5-7pm. This is a practical course for a group, followed by a tasting dinner with the chef.

Individual fee is $25, plus materials and ingredients fee not to exceed $22.

Bring your apron and knives.

Call (530) 632.9516 to signup.

Players in the Dugard case

By Reno Gazette-Journal

Jaycee Lee Dugard, born May 3, 1980, was 11 years old and attending Meyers Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe when she was abducted at 8 a.m. June 10, 1991. Dugard allegedly had two daughters by Phillip Garrido, who authorities said kidnapped her. The girls are now 15 and 12. Dugard and her daughters live in Southern California with her mother, Terry Probyn, and stepsister. She released a video in March saying she appreciated the support she has received and that she's doing well. She reportedly is working on her GED, has a driver's license and plans to go to college.

Phillip Garrido was born April 5, 1951, in Pittsburg and graduated from Lincoln Union High School in 1969. He was a musician. He used drugs, LSD in particular, in excess. He moved to Reno in 1971 and was married in 1973 to a dealer at a local casino. His first wife divorced him in 1980 after his conviction for kidnapping and rape. He ran a business-card printing company in Antioch, Calif. He also ran an organization called "God's Desire" and a website called "Voices Revealed." He said he could "speak in the tongue of angels" and control voices "that are unearthly in nature."



Phillip and Nancy Garrido

Read the whole story

1 year after 18-year ordeal Dugard tries to regain her life

By Kathryn Reed

One year ago today Jaycee Lee Dugard was released from the horror she had known for the previous 18 years. Those formative years from age 11 to 29 were spent cloistered in a ramshackle backyard compound in the Bay Area. After being kidnapped from her school bus stop in Meyers, she was repeatedly raped, bore two children to the man accused of raping her and was unable to tell her children what their father had done to her.

Dugard is free now. At least to some extent.

Normal as most people define it is not likely to be something Dugard, her daughters or even her mother, Terry Probyn, will ever know. For now, the four are living in an undisclosed location in California.

“We have an agent in the area where they are living now,” FBI agent Chris Campion told *Lake Tahoe News* this week. He worked the case when Dugard was snatched from the street in 1991. He was there a year ago as news was coming from the Bay Area that she had been found.



Jaycee Lee Dugard and her mom, Terry Probyn. Photo/ABC-20/20

The agent in the vicinity of the Dugards speaks to them weekly, if not more. How long the FBI will be involved is anyone’s guess.

“We take the needs of the victims and witnesses very seriously, especially in these kinds of cases where there is uncharted territory,” Campion said. “We don’t know what their needs are going to be over the years. There are a just a ton of things you don’t think about.”

One thing the FBI helped sort out was obtaining birth certificates for the girls. The older one turns 16 this month, while the younger will be 13 in November.

The two didn’t attend school, though reports are they are bright despite no formal education. Dugard was days from finishing fifth grade when she was kidnapped.

This is reportedly the longest time a child has been held captive and found alive. There is no precedent for knowing the psychological ramifications Dugard might endure the rest of her life, let alone her children coming to grips with who their father is and his sordid past.

As for the exact help they are getting, Campion said that is up to the Dugard clan to tell the world.

Probyn had planned to speak to Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday, but canceled days before when it came out that a tabloid had bought pictures of Dugard and her daughters. That unwanted publicity has her rethinking being in public.

Instead, Campion and Lt. Les Lovell of the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department spoke to the private, no-guests invited lunch.

Both spoke with *Lake Tahoe News* earlier in the week. District Attorney Vern Pierson, who is in the middle of a penalty phase of a murder trial, said through his secretary he is not making any comments about the Dugard case at this time.

Law enforcement changes

Campion doesn't think anything could have been done differently on June 10, 1991. He doesn't believe setting up roadblocks sooner would have made a difference, nor the fact that it was the next day before 20 FBI agents swarmed the town. The FBI had a permanent presence on the South Shore at that time and still does.

"In this case, I don't think it would have prevented them from getting out of the basin," Campion said. "It is a good idea to have a roadblock system in place. That is probably one thing we do better now."

At the time of Dugard's kidnapping the FBI was already doing away with the old school policy of waiting 24 to 48 hours for a ransom call. Sexual predators were on their radar screen.

In the time since Dugard was taken, the response to child abductions has been even faster by all branches of law enforcement.

Being proactive is another change. This means getting people off the streets who have a thirst to commit sexual crimes.

This is done with nabbing people with child pornography, those distributing it, and people traveling to meet unsuspecting young people they may have met on the Internet.

The local sheriff's department implemented a number of changes, some of which are detailed in this story.

The California parole system has taken a beating for not having found Dugard sooner. The incompetence resulted in a $20 million payout by the state to the Dugards. Had that aspect gone to trial, speculation is the award would have been much higher.

Whether the family will be able to live a life of normalcy before or after the criminal trial remains to be seen. Again, it's that word, normal.

Not knowing where they are living or the type of help they are getting, it's unknown if the $20 million will be enough for them to live on for their lifetimes. It's unknown if the teens would want to go to college or be able to even cope in that atmosphere.

A community reacts

Between Soroptimist and the sheriff's department, the program a Fighting Chance was developed. This teaches youngsters to fend off would-be attackers or kidnappers. It even goes into what to do if you are taken.

Even though Dugard, her mom, step-dad and half-sister had only lived on the South Shore a short time before the kidnapping, it rocked the community. The "it can't happen here" syndrome was shattered.

South Lake Tahoe embraced the Probyns as they struggled to carry on with their lives. Years later they would move and divorce.

On Sept. 6, 2009, more than 2,500 walked down Highway 50 in

South Lake Tahoe to rejoice in Dugard’s release. The parade was cathartic for so many who were here in 1991.

The accused

Phillip and Nancy Garrido are sitting in jail cells in Placerville, both accused of kidnapping Dugard; Phillip Garrido faces rape charges. It came out last week that attorneys in the case are questioning his competency.

The next court hearing is scheduled for Oct. 1.

Weather: From high fire danger to hard freeze in just days

High fire danger is the weather forecast for Thursday and Friday in the Tahoe-Reno area as a high-pressure system sits over the region.

Wind gusts of 35-45mph are expected. With the dry air combined with wind, it is a threat to move the slightest fire faster and farther.

But don’t get too comfortable with the hot weather. Saturday through Monday it is expected to be unseasonably cool, according to the National Weather Service in Reno. Today’s highs could drop 30 degrees in the next few days.

A hard freeze is possible in the Sierra. That means cover veggies, herbs and other heat-loving plants or bring them indoors.

— Compiled by Kathryn Reed

Federal grant may increase Internet speed in El Dorado County

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Hopes of establishing fiber optic Internet service in rural areas of El Dorado County got a boost Friday with the announcement of a $46.6 million grant to a Central Valley project.

The grant, part of federal stimulus funds, went to the Central Valley Independent Network of Fresno to establish what is known as a “middle mile network” that will establish an ultra-reliable, super-high-speed fiber trunk line up California’s Central Valley and along much of Highway 49.

The project will allow improved Internet connections in underserved rural areas.

Read the whole story