Pantry’s bare shelves force Tahoe residents to go hungry

By Kathryn Reed

When people start lining up outside St. Theresa Catholic Church this afternoon for their bag of food to sustain them, they will receive nothing. Instead, a note on the door will say the shelves are bare and there is nothing to hand out.

This is the first week the South Lake Tahoe pantry has nothing to give to those who need one of life’s basic necessities – food.

Usually the church supplies a bag or two of staples to about 80 people each Tuesday and Friday from 1:30-3pm. Those bags feed several more depending on how many are in a family.



Shelves at St. Theresa's pantry are literally empty. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“I’ve never seen it like this. You’d be surprised how many sleep in cars,” said Beverly Sass as she sat in her office at the church rectory. “We are feeding more families these days than singles.”

The demand for food in these economic times is greater than what people can give. It used to be people would go to Costco, buy in bulk and bring something by St. Theresa as a donation. But those days are gone. Those givers no longer have extra food.

Sass said the Tuesday farmers' market vendors have been generous with fresh produce. This is a treat for recipients are so used to only receiving dry goods.

It's usually pasta, beans, cereal, macaroni and cheese, and peanut butter that fill bags. These items fill up an empty belly, are things children will eat and have some nutritional value.

To donate to the pantry, call Beverly Sass at (530) 544.3533 or drop items off at the rectory on the corner on Lyons Avenue just off Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Solange Schwalbe, who lives in the Angora burn area, worked on sound production for the movie "Eat Pray Love" that just came out and stars Julia Roberts.

• Dr. Jonathan Tay, medical director of Reno CyberKnife, recently was named a "Health-Care Hero" for Northern Nevada.

• Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe with Tahoe Adventure Company is offering lodge-to-lodge kayaking adventures for two, three and four days in September and through the first week of October.

Call (530) 913.9212 for more information.

• Stacey Johnson is now the national convention sales manager at Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors.

• Incline Village General Improvement District General Manager Bill Horn has turned down a $25,000 bonus to set an example for employees. His base salary is about $164,000 a year.

• Amgen Tour officials are expected to be in Lake Tahoe this week to decide if the region should be part of the 2011 cycling event.

• San Rafael resident Greg Larson swam across Lake Tahoe on Aug. 13.

Opinion: Renewable energy mandate needs second look

By Carl Danner

Important details are delaying legislative confirmation of California's commitment to a requirement of 33 percent renewable electricity by 2020. But there are more fundamental questions about what this mandate might achieve, and at what cost.

Start with the basics. The idea of renewables seems to be electricity made without fossil fuel, and therefore sustained through natural processes such as sunshine and wind. But the legal definition excludes our greatest renewable resources, California's huge Sierra hydroelectric dams and the imports we get from similar facilities in the Pacific Northwest. Why not them?

The answer seems to involve a political perception that the genuine numbers make a less compelling case for the policy. In fact, not-eligible hydroelectricity covers between 10 percent to 20 percent of California's needs, and existing nuclear power plants (if a lack of emissions is the test) add another 10 percent. It would weaken the argument to acknowledge that an additional quarter of our electricity already comes from zero-carbon sources.

Read the whole story

Carl Danner is a director with LECG, a consulting firm in San Francisco, and former chief of staff to the president of the California Public Utilities Commission.

Ritz-Carlton at Northstar surviving in uncertain economy

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

As a recent visitor to Lake Tahoe approached the lower base end of the gondola ride at Squaw Valley Resort, he wondered aloud about the nearby Ritz-Carlton hotel.

"Didn't they go into bankruptcy?" asked Daniel Huffman, of Cool.

The answer is no, the luxury hotel, which opened last year at Northstar-at–Tahoe, did not file for bankruptcy protection. And even more important for it, reservations – even over the summer – have outpaced expectations.



Ritz-Carlton at Northstar never filed for bankruptcy. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“The Ritz-Carlton had a phenomenal season,” pronounced Steven Holt, the hotel’s director of media relations.

Summer is supposed to be low season for the mountainside resorts in Lake Tahoe, as tourists abandon the steep slopes and flock toward the famed clear blue waters of the lake.

Read the whole story

Wellness weekend at Hyatt Lake Tahoe

Lake Tahoe Wellness Weekend is Sept. 24-26 at Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe.

The weekend includes four fitness classes with top fitness experts inspiring Vinyasa Yoga classes with San Francisco instructor Ginger Layden-Braun held outdoors on Hyatt’s Cottage Green, and Balletone and Aikina Aerobics with former

Russian competitive gymnast Alyona Aikina. Also included in the weekend: wellness breakfasts and snacks, a wellness seminar by top instructors and experts, spa treatment at Stillwater Spa, wine tasting, outdoor activities that allow you to make the most of the spectacular location, and a wellness-themed gift bag. It costs $449/per person single-occupancy, $649 double-occupancy; day-only rate (excluding breakfast and accommodations) is $100/per person per day.

Click here for more information.

Prosperity plan's focus: health care, environment, tourism

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE –Tourism, health-wellness, and the environment. These three areas are supposed to be the economic saviors of Lake Tahoe.

In a room full of about 70 of Tahoe's movers and shakers on Monday the two-hour talk was all about the Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan. A bit of irony is the meeting was at the Lone Eagle Grille in Incline. Incline Village is sometimes called Income Village based on the wealth of the homeowners.



John Breternitz, Washoe County commissioner, opens the economic forum on Aug. 16. Photo/Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago, who has been instrumental with a handful of others to initiate this plan, promised this isn't just another document to collect dust, but is one with legs.

But the problems of today are what they were 20 years ago, only exacerbated because of the recession, and the declining relevance of gaming in the basin and throughout Nevada.

This group believes the prosperity plan will change what the Lake Tahoe Basin will look like 20 years from now. If all things go according to this plan, employment won't be in double digits, lake clarity will continue to improve, the area will be transformed into environmental innovation centers, a sports commission will attract major events, medical centers of excellence will sprout, high speed Internet access everywhere will allow for telemedicine and e-commerce.

But much of what is being said is what the people who live "poverty with a view" know – it has always been about the environment. Many in that room are the ones who pooh-poohed that for years. Their personal wallets were thick, or

government-agency bank accounts flush with cash. Not so anymore. Poverty with a view is hitting closer to home.

People for years have said Tahoe needs a second economy to sustain itself during the ebbs and flows of tourism. But no one did anything. Look at Boulder, Colo., a mountain town that thrives not on tourism, but biotechnology firms. And, yet, it is an outdoor mecca much like Tahoe.

Tahoe could already have a world-class orthopedic center instead of being in the infancy of creating one. Dr. Richard Steadman left South Tahoe's Barton Memorial Hospital for Vail in 1990 because there he had the support to create what he wanted.

Steadman's website says, "Dr. Steadman has developed numerous techniques for knee surgery and rehabilitation that have been adopted worldwide for the treatment of various knee disorders."

What if those had been created in Tahoe? Would the area be more prosperous? Would people come here for destination health care? That's a goal of this prosperity plan – to have people come here for health care needs. Barton can't survive on the medical needs of locals. When it's a bad ski season or mountain injuries are down, hospital revenues are blood red.

It was repeatedly pointed out at the Aug. 16 meeting that government is not going to be the savior. It will take the private sector to make this plan a reality. But it will also take buy-in from locals – the ones, perhaps, who have not been listened to in the past and have become jaded.

According to the executive summary the plan is, "To rebrand the region as a green, geotourism, health and wellness visitor destination, providing a unique, authentic Lake Tahoe experience including sports, recreation, culinary, historical, art, cultural experiences, environmental education and volunteer opportunities."

As South Tahoe City Councilman Hal Cole put, it seemed like a political shindig more than a nuts and bolts meeting.

When *Lake Tahoe News* asked B Gorman, one of the leaders of the prosperity plan and executive director of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, if transit would be part of this, she said, "No."

LTN responded that a reliable bus going around the lake would be good for those who need it and those who want it – locals and tourists; in addition to reducing vehicle miles traveled, which is always touted as an environmental benefit.

Lake Tahoe Community College and Sierra Nevada College were touted as places of higher learning that will help foster the goals. But in a climate where education spending is continually being cut, it's hard to know if these institutions or universities in either state could be relied upon as incubators of Tahoe prosperity.

Today, according to stats provided by prosperity officials, Tahoe creates $4.7 billion in revenues a year. Tourism is the dominant contributor.

Rick Tremblay with the federal Economic Development Administration said for the short-term Tahoe needs to reinvent its tourism model, while for the long-term is needs to "aggressively invest in technology."

His examples of small towns that have done big things were interesting, but oddly irrelevant to Lake Tahoe. The region doesn't have the land for much of what he talked about. Nor is manufacturing likely to happen based on all the regulations.

During the panel discussion where six people were invited to give input to the plan, Jared Blumenfeld, Region IX administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said, "It's not a new idea to be green. You need to get it right and be bold. You need to have goals."

Goals, if there are any, were not discussed Monday.

Blumenfeld further pointed out, “I think your brand is ahead of where you are.” Meaning, people expect Tahoe to be green and healthy. He said people are disappointed to find out how that really isn’t the case, and how dilapidated so much of the infrastructure is. Blumenfeld also pointed out how it’s hard to eat healthfully in Tahoe.

John Breternitz, Washoe County commissioner, said questions asked by forum attendees and the answers would be put on the website, but the FAQ page says it’s under construction.

Wildflowers and waterfall hike at Mt. Rose

Join the Tahoe Rim Trail Association on Aug. 21 for the Galena Falls Wildflower Hike.

This leisurely hike starts with a climb up and over a ridge and through the forest to a cascading waterfall. It is followed by a moderate climb to a high mountain meadow.

It may be hot. so bring lots of water (two liters), lunch, camera, and wind/rain gear depending on the weather. This hike is open to participants, 10 years old and up; no pets; maximum number of participants is 15.

Hike Time: Four-five hours

Meeting time: 10am at the Mt. Rose Summit Welcome Plaza parking lot; north side of Highway 431 at the summit.

Distance: Six mile loop hike

Difficulty: Moderate; elevation ranges from 8,900 to 9,400 feet.

Register: Contact TRTA for pre-registration as space is limited;(775) 298.0012 or email jaimes@tahoerimtrail.org.

Owners of Homewood, Alpine buy West Shore Cafe

By J.K. Dineen, San Francisco Business Times

San Francisco-based JMA Ventures has acquired Lake Tahoe's West Shore Café, a lakefront property located next to Homewood Mountain Resort.

JMA's acquisition of West Shore Café represents a new beginning for the restaurant, which closed its doors during the summer of 2009.

Read the whole story

Book release party for LTCC instructor

Join hosts Bona Fide Books and Suzanne Roberts in celebrating the release of Janet Smith's book "All of the Sudden Nothing Happened" on Aug. 20 at 7pm



Smitht is the past recipient of a Nevada Arts Board Fellowship in poetry, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is on faculty in the English Department at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Libations, appetizers, and cupcakes will be provided, and the work of Truckee artist Carole Sesko will be shown.

Bona Fide Books is located at 1069 Magua, No. 4 in Meyers behind the Getaway Cafe on Highway 50.

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