LTCC’s summer Spanish institute garners state recognition

Nancy Zarenda from the California Department of Education this week presented Lake Tahoe Community College’s Intensive Spanish Summer Institute with letters of recognition from Lt. Gov. Abel Maldonado.



ISSI instructor Linda Bernhartd engages students. Photo/Pat Leonard-Heffner

The institute at LTCC, which is in its 17th year, is hosting more than 450 students for a week of intensive study of the Spanish language and culture. Students come from around the country to participate and earn college credit.

ISSI ends Aug. 13. For more information about it, click here.

Gaines going after Cox's Senate seat

By Kathryn Reed

It's possible Lake Tahoe will have a new assemblyman and state senator in a matter of months.

Ted Gaines, who currently represents the area in the Assembly, is running for the seat of the late state Sen. Dave Cox. Cox died in July at age 72.

Gaines, R-Roseville, is wrapping up his second term in the Assembly and will be on the Nov. 2 ballot seeking a third term.



Ted Gaines

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has called for a special election for Jan. 4 to fill the remainder of Cox's term. The primary to determine who appears on the Jan. 4 ballot is Nov. 2. The top vote-getters from each major party will battle it out in January.

Assemblyman Roger Niello, R-Fair Oaks, is also expected to run for Cox's seat.

Three terms is the maximum anyone can serve per term limit

regulations. State senators may serve two four-year terms.

Since California voters approved term limits 20 years ago it has been common for musical chairs to be played with electeds going from one chamber of the Legislature to the other for a possible 14-year stint in state politics.

Lions Club chili fundraiser

The Coyote Grill welcomes the Lions Club of South Lake Tahoe for an All You Can Eat Chili fundraiser tonight starting at 5.

Coyote Grill is in the Round Hill Center near Safeway.

Results-driven city manager takes helm of South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Results. That is how Tony O'Rourke wants his tenure as city manager of South Lake Tahoe to be judged.

Part of Day 3 on the job was spent speaking to Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe during the group's weekly lunch at Harveys. Looking out and down from the 12th floor setting it was inevitable someone would pepper him with a question about the stagnated convention center project.



South Lake Tahoe City Manager addresses the Aug. 11 noon Soroptimist meeting. Photo/Kathryn Reed

He didn't have much of an answer, other than to say the concept is great, and two hotels and a convention center would be an asset to the community.

What the public tends to forget is the city – neither elected official, nor paid staff – can get the project moving. It's stalled in bankruptcy court.

But if it does come to fruition on O'Rourke's watch, maybe future Soroptimist meetings could be conducted where the service club is headquartered – South Lake Tahoe.

Soroptimist Deb Howard asked O'Rourke to give specifics about the challenges and opportunities he sees.

Immediately he said the airport – where his office is.

"I'm not familiar with any other destination with an airport in the middle of it," O'Rourke, 55, said. "It would be a great opportunity to get commercial service."

He said this is one of the first things he wants to talk to the City Council about – pursuing the return of commercial

flights into Lake Tahoe Airport. He mentioned Mammoth as an example of a ski town doing booming air business.

In Beaver Creek, where he was executive director of Beaver Creek Resort Company, he said 70 percent of visitors flew in. International travelers tended to stay 10 to 14 days and spend more money compared to weekend warriors. He added that tapping into the Mexican and British markets would be huge for the South Shore – "they love alpine skiing" – he said.

O'Rourke is well aware of what is going on in the city, or not, as the case may be. He did his homework before interviewing. On Monday he met with all the department heads as a group. One-on-ones are going on the rest of this week.

"I like the idea there are challenges. I'm not a caretaker," O'Rourke said.

He wants to engage the community in the direction the city should go, then create a strategic plan with a handful of achievable goals.

The avid outdoorsman said having 60 percent of the council changing after the Nov. 2 election is not a concern because boards and councils change all the time. He said if goals are outlined, this reduces personal agendas council members may want to promote.

"You need to create a shared vision. What do you want to become?" O'Rourke said. "There is no substitute for results. Are you really achieving anything?"

His contract is for three years, but the disgruntled public is apt to want results well before the council considers an extension.

But O'Rourke also pointed out it's easy to criticize and that if the public wants change, it should be in the game and not on the sidelines or playing Monday morning quarterback.

“No one person can make a difference, it has to be collective,” O’Rourke said.

Kings Beach water storage tank about to be built

Bids for a 1.3 million gallon water storage tank came in well below what North Tahoe Public Utility District board of directors was ready to pay.

At the Aug. 10 meeting directors awarded the $1.76 million project to Paso Robles Tank Inc. This is more than $250,000 less than engineers estimated.

This project includes the construction of a 1.3 million gallon water storage tank, booster pump station, water lines and all appurtenances at the end of Canterbury Drive in Kings Beach. This tank will bring the district into compliance with current standards for water storage based on use and potential fire flow needs. The tank was an integral part of the need for the 2007 rate increase.

Related to this project, the board heard an update from Craig Hill of Northcross Hill and Ach and Andy Hall of Jones Hall on the status of the district’s financing for the water tank and the other 15,000-plus linear feet of water line that are being installed within the district this year. The district intends to fund $4.5 million in project costs. The annual debt service is estimated to be $550,000 to $575,000.

Northcross Hill and Ach are soliciting interest from financial institutions in providing the financing for these projects. The financing will come from a financial institution such as a

bank or from the general public through an investment banking firm through municipal bonds.

In addition to district funds, grants from the U.S. Forest Service through the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act are also being used for projects that qualify.

Perseid meteor streaking across night sky

By Lenita Powers, Reno Gazette-Journal

They’re fast, they’re bright and they’ll put on a free show in the nighttime sky in the next couple of days for Nevadans willing to give up an hour or two of sleep.

The Perseid meteor shower that shoots across the summer sky each year will be at its most prolific Thursday night and Friday morning, said amateur astronomer Tony Berendsen, owner of Tahoe Star Tours.

“The best time will be Thursday from 1 to 2 o’clock in the morning, but you don’t have to wait until 1 a.m.,” he said. “At 11 p.m., you can look high to the northeast, and you should see some meteors. You also can see them in the early morning any time before 4 a.m.”

The number of meteors have been increasing for the last couple of weeks and will peak Thursday and Friday, usually with more than 60 meteors per hour and sometimes up to 100, he said.

Read the whole story

‘Hot Dogs to Haute Cusine’ at Sand Harbor

Lake Tahoe Chautauqua continues its quest to blend the insights of historical research with the fun of theatrical entertainment as it presents “Hot Dogs to Haute Cuisine” at Sand Harbor State Park on Aug. 19 beginning at 6pm.

For those unfamiliar with this entertaining and educational presentation, Chautauqua format is simple: for this summer’s show, a performer, in the guise Babe Ruth will share “firsthand stories about important episodes in the character’s life”, said Ginny Liebner Yates of the Chautauqua festival.

Following this appearance, “a tall, gangly woman with a preposterous voice and joy of life who revolutionized the art of cooking will tell her tale as Julia Child.” After the monologue, the audience and performers engage in a lively give-and-take.

Finally, the scholar emerges from character to respond to questions that could not be answered in character.

Babe Ruth is perhaps the greatest sports hero in American history. But, the “Sultan of Swat” or “The Bambino,” as he came to be known, was more than a ballplayer, he was a public figure whose popularity transcended that of any game.

Julie Child will take the stage to depict a picture of what her life entailed back in the 1960s. The audience will learn about how Child brought her love of French cooking to the American public.

Prices are: $25 upper gallery, $35 for lower gallery and

reserved are $50 and $55. Tickets are available by calling call 800.747.4697 or by visiting www.LakeTahoeShakespeare.com.

4-car accident sends 3 to hospital, closes Hwy. 50

Updated Aug. 14, 2010, 9:20am: ***The person flown to Renown Medical Center has been discharged from the hospital.***

By Kathryn Reed

Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe was closed for a couple hours Wednesday afternoon after a suspected drunken driver caused a four-car accident that sent three people to the hospital.

Eric Acri, 50, of South Lake Tahoe was booked into Lake Tahoe Jail on suspicion of felony drunken driving after the 1:39pm accident near Lake Tahoe Pizza Company.



CalStar takes an accident victim from South Lake Tahoe to Reno on Aug. 11.

This was the second of what would become three DUI crashes in

the city limits in 31 hours.

Debris was scattered across the highway between D and F streets, as metal was crunched, airbags deployed and the jaws of life used to extricate the most seriously injured person. CalStar crews landed in the middle of the highway to have a faster transport time to Renown Medical Center in Reno.

Names of the three injured people were not released, but witnesses said they believe they are South Lake Tahoe residents.

Acri was driving toward Lake Tahoe Airport when his vehicle sideswiped a Toyota, taking off the side mirror, according to South Lake Tahoe police Officer Jake Herminghaus. He then rear-ends a vehicle, which causes that truck to swerve and spin into oncoming traffic, T-boning a GMC Sierra, Herminghaus said.

It was the driver of the small truck that hit the GMC who was airlifted to Reno. First crews had to cut off the driver side door to reach him.

Bonita Christensen, who is staying at the Silver Shadows Motel, said she helped two women get out of the GMC.

“They said they saw the car come over the line and tried to dodge it,” Christensen said. “It was so loud and horrific. Dust was flying.”

The impact was so great the left rear tire was several feet from where the GMC stopped.

Traffic was diverted on Bonanza Avenue for a couple hours while investigators did their work and then the cleanup began.

After that accident, South Tahoe officers responded to a DUI crash at Alma Street and Sierra Boulevard at 5:11pm. Nicholas Dellavin, 27, of South Lake Tahoe was arrested on driving under the influence charges. There were no injuries in the

two-car accident.

On Aug. 10 officers arrested Nicola Foster, 34, of South Lake Tahoe on DUI charges after she allegedly did serious damage to three parked cars and a mailbox on Ruby Way between Wildwood Avenue and Ski Run Boulevard.

A citizen cut-off the vehicle and then officers arrived.

“The crashes, they are once in a while. We get two or three DUI arrests every day, but not crashes,” Sgt. Jeff Reagan said.

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Conservation Landscape Tour in Angora burn area

The Tahoe Resource Conservation District is hosting the 3rd Annual Conservation Landscape Tour on Aug. 15th from 1-5pm.



Explore seven gardens in the Angora Burn area that highlight Lake Tahoe Basin conservation techniques. The tour highlights native and adapted plant selection, water conservation techniques, defensible space methods, Best Management Practice demonstrations and wildlife enhancement features.

Last year’s event brought together more than 150 Tahoe residents to enjoy a delightful summer afternoon learning about water efficient irrigation techniques and examples of defensible space through proper plant selection, arrangement and management. As you explore the gardens, feel free to ask

garden stewards and homeowners questions related to the conservation landscapes.

Pick up your tour map between 1-3pm from 1383 Mount Olympia Circle. The other six locations are nearby. Please leave your pets at home. For more information, contact Courtney at (530) 543-1501, ext. 118 or visit www.tahoercd.org.

Nevadans have greatest decline in personal income

By Sean Collins Walsh, Reno Gazette-Journal

Foreclosures, unemployment and as of Monday, personal income growth.

Another economic indicator shows Nevada was hit harder by the nationwide recession than any other state: Silver State residents saw the greatest rate of decline in their personal incomes, 0.9 percent, from the first quarter of 2008 through the first of 2010, according to the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The average Washoe County resident made about $3,000 less in total income during 2009 than he or she did in 2008.

Monday’s numbers may prove the most recent recession to be Nevada’s worst ever, said Mark Pingle, an economist at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Read the whole story