Prop. 8 decision to be released Wednesday

By Sacramento Bee

U.S. District Court Judge Vaughn Walker will issue a decision Wednesday on the constitutional challenge to California's Proposition 8, the ban on same-sex marriage, according to a court announcement today.

Walker's written order will be released electronically Wednesday – no hour was given – and will later be available for public review in federal courthouses in San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose.

Walker presided over a historic trial January and June in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in San Francisco. Two gay couples challenged Proposition 8, which voters approved in November 2008, saying it violated their federal constitutional right to equal protection.

Walker's decision, whatever it may be, is expected to be appealed.

Fire scorches wooded area by Cascade Falls

Fire officials don't know what started a nearly three-quarter acre fire near Cascade Falls on Monday night.

A helicopter helped crews from the U.S. Forest Service, Lake Valley and CalFire fight the blaze.

It was reported about 5:30pm on Aug. 2, contained by 7:15pm and controlled by 9:40pm.

The fire was where the falls exit the ridge in an area with moderately heavy fuels.

With no lightning yesterday, it’s likely the fire was started by humans.

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

Training for dogs adopted at shelter

Tahoe Best Friends is offering a free one-hour training session for recently adopted puppies or dogs with proof of adoption from the shelter. Adoption must be within 60 days of the class.

Learn how to integrate your dog into your home, receive training tips and get answers to your questions.

The classes are Aug. 19 from 6-7pm and Sept. 16 from 6-7pm.

Classes are at Tahoe Best Friends at 2197 Ruth Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

For additional information, call (530) 542.2336.

El Dorado County youth dies on football field

By Bill Lindelof and Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

An undiagnosed heart defect caused the death of an 11-year-old boy who collapsed during football practice, a pastor of the youngster's family said today.

Andrew Jacob Lamphere of Garden Valley was practicing with a "Junior Midget" football team at Golden Sierra High School in Garden Valley, north of Coloma, when he collapsed on Monday.

The Rev. Chris Whited, youth pastor to the boy, said at a press conference that the family has been informed by the sheriff's department that the youngster died from the defect.

Read the whole story

Fall mountain bike conference in Stateline

IMBA and the U.S. Forest Service will host the Tahoe Trails Conference at MontBleu casino in Stateline in October.

The Oct. 1-3 event, which is open to all members of the mountain bike community, is an opportunity for collaboration between riders, land managers and the bike industry. The goal is to ensure the future of sustainable and enjoyable trails in the Lake Tahoe Basin, and beyond.

Registration for the Tahoe Trails Conference will open on

IMBA’s home page in upcoming weeks.

Specific conference goals include:

* Create a sense of environmental stewardship and ownership for the trails in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

* Enhance riders’ awareness of Lake Tahoe’s sensitive environment.

* Develop understanding of design and engineering elements that go into creating enjoyable and sustainable trails.

* Create understanding of what is needed to develop a strong and effective mountain bike community.

* Facilitate networking among land managers and activists in the mountain bike community.

Conference outcomes:

* The creation of an informed mountain bike community that takes pride and ownership of the trails in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

* Encourage trailbuilders to partner with land managers on the planning, construction and maintenance of trails.

* Promote better understanding of the trail experiences riders desire.

* Foster long-term protection of the environment in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

* Ensure long-term protection and expansion of mountain biking opportunities.

In addition to informational sessions and presentations the conference will feature group rides, networking opportunities and planned social gatherings.

Crisis line volunteers needed at SLT Women's Center

South Lake Tahoe Women's Center is in need of volunteers to cover the 24-hour crisis line. Volunteers may select their hours and answer the line from their home.

Beginning Aug. 24th the Women's Center is offering a course designed to teach the fundamentals of working with victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. The course will provide participants with peer counseling skills, familiarity with local resources, crisis intervention techniques, and the opportunity to be a state certified sexual assault and domestic violence volunteer. It offers an opportunity to give back to the community and learn more about important social issues.

Once certified, Women's Center volunteers may participate in areas, including childcare, outreach, administrative duties and coverage of the 24-hour crisis line. The crisis line assists people experiencing issues as a result of family violence, sexual assault or child abuse, as well as offering referrals to other community resources.

Class will be Aug. 24-Oct. 13, 5:15-7:30pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

To sign up, contact Leanne or Sarah at (530) 544.2118.

Correct times for Relay for Life events

Dear Friends and Neighbors and Relayers,

The survivor invitations went out with the wrong times on them. The Relay for Life on Aug. 7 at Kahle Park opens at 4pm with the opening ceremonies, the survivor and then the caregiver laps and so on. The Survivor Dinner is at 5 until 6pm and the luminaria ceremony with a survivor speaker is at 9pm.

Please invite your friends and other survivors to attend the relay, especially the opening ceremonies and the luminaria lighting.

Hope to see you there.

Maryon Tilley, Relay for Life volunteer

Birding lecture at Sierra Nevada College

Come see what Saturday Mornings at SNC (formerly Senior Saturdays), the award-winning joint offering of Sierra Nevada College and Incline Village Parks & Recreation Senior Programs, are all about.

Share coffee with SNC’s faculty and other knowledgeable locals as they present bite-size offerings of intellectual material. An optional continental breakfast will be provided for $3.

Learn about the birds most likely to be encountered in the Tahoe region from Kirk Hardie, a co-executive director of the newly formed Tahoe Institute for Natural Science. The presentation will cover identification tips and natural history information for each species.

Kirk Hardie grew up in Sacramento and spent most winter weekends skiing in the Tahoe region. He has been an environmental educator in Idaho, Oregon, California, and Nevada, highlighting the beauty of birds in the natural world, among many other topics. He received his master of science degree in biology from UNR in 2009, where he developed a four-week high-school curriculum based on the ecology of the Great Basin.

The Tahoe Institute for Natural Science is a nonprofit organization seeking to advance the natural history, conservation, and ecosystem knowledge of the Tahoe region. Its long-term goal is to bring a world-class interpretive nature center and educational facility to the Tahoe area. Currently, the organization engages in multiple science, education, and outreach programs to promote greater appreciation, understanding, and stewardship of the natural resources of the Tahoe region. www.tins.org

Date: Aug. 14

Program: Birds of the Tahoe Region

Time: 10am–noon

Where: Prim Library, Sierra Nevada College, 999 Tahoe Blvd., Incline Village

Fee: $3 Optional Continental Breakfast

For details on course offerings, visit www.Inclineseniors.com or call (775) 832.1310.

Fields of endless wildflowers beckon hikers to Sierra trails

By Kathryn Reed

HOPE VALLEY – It's like a convention of wildflower enthusiasts along the trail to Winnemucca Lake. Everyone seems to have a camera. People bending over to inhale what scent these wonders of nature are casting off. A certain excitement fills the air.

Maybe the long winter has everyone giddy about spring arriving – even though on this particular Saturday the calendar says July 24. Even the weather and flowers seem to operate on Tahoe time.



Oliver Wong hikes through wildflowers near Winnemucca Lake. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Parking at the Carson ranger station in the Eldorado National

Forest on Highway 88 is an indication the trail is going to be crowded. I end up on the street and not paying the $5 fee because no slots are available.

Normally a congested trail is exasperating. But with my nephew in town for the weekend, the day of the hike was predetermined. The abundance of natural beauty is so intoxicating the other trail users can't bother me.

Splashes of rich purple lupine are everywhere, along with the bright yellow mule's ear.

This 1.8-mile trek to Winnemucca Lake in the Mokelumne Wilderness seems to take forever. I can't stop taking pictures.

People are circling Frog's Lake, some lingering long enough to swim – though it's predominately small children who don't know they can say no to cold water.

"It's a great area to look at stuff," says Janel Johnson, a botanist with the Nevada Native Plant Society, who is leading a wildflower hike that day. She is telling her followers about flowers I've never heard of – like penstemon, potentilla and green gentian.

"The rock outcroppings by Frog's Lake have a whole different set of flowers," Johnson says. She also remarked how the wildflowers are blooming about two weeks later than they did in 2009.

To this non-flower knowing hiker she explains the spindly pink flowers are actually wild onions.

Meandering on this trail that is full of adults, children and leashed dogs, are fields of Indian paintbrush and lupine. Wild irises poke above some of the other lush flowers. It's as though every color of the rainbow is represented in the various fields of flora.

A guy is walking up the trail with a snowboard in search of terrain to ride. A group of Cub Scouts is on a quest for outdoor related badges.

A dad points out miners' lettuce to his son and talks about a time when mule's ear would be boiled and consumed.

Finally at Winnemucca Lake we stop for a bite to eat – what we brought with us, not what we found along the trail.

Patches of snow dot Round Top, the mountain at the base of the lake. A few people are wading into the water. We don't stay long – a thunderhead is almost directly over us.

Luckily, we were out of the wilderness area before the clouds open up and only get pelted by rain and hail a bit in Meyers – such are the hazards of a topless Jeep.

To get to Lake Winnemucca: From South Lake Tahoe go over Luther Pass (Highway 89), in Hope Valley turn right onto Highway 88, go to the top of Carson Pass – parking area on your left. Pay $5 to park. Trail is to the right of the visitor center. It's an easy 1.8 miles one-way to Lake Winnemucca. You get to Frog's Lake first. Going farther you will hit Round Top Lake, Fourth of July Lake and Woods Lake. Part of the route is the Pacific Crest Trail.

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El Dorado County convicts man on molestation charges

An El Dorado County jury returned with a verdict of guilty on July 29 on all 11 counts against Howard Martin Harmless II.

Harmless had been charged with nine counts of child molestation and two counts of providing drugs to juveniles.

Harmless faces 25 years to life in prison when he is sentenced Sept. 2.