Low-cost immunizations for incoming kindergartners

El Dorado County Health Services Department, Public Health Division, is offering low cost back-to-school immunizations for children entering kindergarten. Health Services can provide all childhood vaccinations required for school entry, including those that protect against the following:

* Polio

* Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis/Whooping Cough (DTaP)

* Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)

* Varicella (Chicken Pox)

* Hepatitis B

* Hib B (for preschool children)

In addition to kindergarten students, adolescents and college students also need vaccinations, according to El Dorado County Immunization Coordinator Cathy Dunbar. “The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that preteens, adolescents and students heading off to college receive the meningococcal conjugate (MCV4) and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines, as well as be up-to-date on their MMR, Hep B and Tdap vaccines,” Dunbar said in a press release. These vaccines are available through the Health Services Department.

“This year, with California experiencing an epidemic of whooping cough, it is especially important that teens and young adults, as well as teachers and daycare providers, get the Tdap vaccine,” said Dunbar.

Individuals may schedule a vaccination appointment with the Health Services Department by calling (530) 621.6100 in

Placerville or (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe. A parent or legal guardian must be present for all childhood immunization appointments, and parents are advised to bring the child's immunization record so that the vaccinations can be documented.

LTCC to interview president candidates in August

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College is hoping one of the handful of people expected to be interviewed Aug. 11 for the job of interim president will be able to start by Sept. 1.



Susan Middleton, vice president of Academic Affairs and Student Services, has been the acting president since Paul Killpatrick left earlier this month. She plans to retire Aug. 31. She has told the board she would stay on longer if need be.

The college board is having a retreat Aug. 6 at 8:30am in the boardroom. Part of the session is to hash out what the five want in an interim president. It has not been decided how long that person would be at the helm of South Lake Tahoe's two-year institution. Some believe it would better to have a permanent person in place by January, others believe waiting to hire after the first of the year would be best. The board will likely make that decision in September.

About 18 people applied for the interim job. It's not known if any local candidates are in the mix.

The interviewees will go through a dual process, with the board members in one room interviewing someone and another candidate being questioned by a committee of classified-faculty-administrators. Both groups will grill each candidate.

The board will likely go into closed session that day to deliberate, assess what the other panel thought of the candidates and ideally come up with a finalist. Background checks would then begin, with a special meeting being called for the official vote and announcement.

A month-to-month contract will be offered the person. Usually it is people with past presidential experience who are looking for this type of contract work.

Interviews to replace Diane Rosner, who retired this summer as dean of Instruction and Social Sciences, will be Aug. 17. The person is expected to be hired on an interim basis.

K's Kitchen: Hot Spinach Tortilla



By Kathryn Reed

It seems like as the weather gets warmer, I want to eat less or not at all. The less part wouldn't hurt me, the not at all isn't the healthiest of choices.

There are just those days when all the “regulars” sound boring and opening a cookbook sounds way too involved.

When all of these thoughts and sentiments collide I tend to look in the fridge, freezer and cupboards to come up with something that might even qualify as nutritious. A consecutive day of tater tots was probably not going to do my body good.

This is how the recipe below came about. It’s quick and easy, too – definite added bonuses. Because it’s fast, it means not heating the house up for long on hot days. (I was already baking, so heating up the house further with the stove was irrelevant at that point.)

To make it a bit healthier, skip the cream cheese or even skip the tortilla. It would make an excellent side dish. It could also be used as a topping for rice or pasta. Eating it alone as a midday snack would work, too.

I like buying spinach in large quantities and then using it in different dishes. It’s great cooked or raw in a salad. The nutritional value of spinach is incredible.

The basil came from the backyard. Herbs are one of the easiest things to grow in Tahoe. I have basil, cilantro, spearmint, rosemary and dill all in a half wine barrel. It’s not too late to start your herb garden.

I had chive-onion cream cheese in the house, so that’s what I used. Any kind would be fine. Light cream will help with the fat-calorie in-take.

Hot Spinach Tortilla

Olive oil

1 red onion, chopped

5 cloves garlic, minced

½ lb. fresh spinach

Handful basil leaves, chopped

4 oz. roasted red peppers, chopped

4 tortillas

Cream cheese

Coat pan with olive oil. Once hot, add onion and garlic. Over medium-high heat sauté until onion is slightly opaque. Add handfuls of spinach. Stir. As spinach wilts, keep adding more handfuls until all of it is in the pan. When the spinach is mostly wilted, add red pepper and basil. Add some of the liquid from the peppers if need be. Stir more to meld flavors. Remove from heat.

Heat tortillas. Spread thin layer of cream cheese on tortilla. Add as much spinach mixture as you like. Fold like you are eating a burrito.

Friends of Hope Valley sue for access to land

To the community,

A lawsuit has been filed in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California on behalf of the Friends of Hope Valley in an effort to reassert the public's right to access Pleasant Valley in Alpine County. Past trail users are being sought to appear as witnesses in the case against private landowners who closed access to the Pleasant Valley trails in 1999.

Pleasant Valley is a beautiful meadow south of Lake Tahoe that for more than 100 years had served as a primary access point into Alpine County's high country, including the Pacific Crest Trail and the Mokelumne Wilderness Area. Access to Pleasant Valley was gated shut in 1999 by the Dressler family, private land owners who no longer wished to have hikers, anglers, and other recreationalists cross their land in order to reach the federal public lands beyond.

In the years that followed, Friends of Hope Valley worked to persuade the Dresslers to voluntarily reopen access to the Pleasant Valley trails for public use, but despite years of attempts to find a resolution, this gateway to public lands remains closed. With no other corrective recourse available, the FOHV has engaged San Francisco law firms Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP and Kerr & Wagstaffe LLP and has filed a lawsuit to reopen the trail.

Says Matthew Zinn of Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger, "This case represents a clear violation of the public's right to have access to trails where there is a long history of use by the public."

The public's right to access public trails, even where they pass through otherwise private land, is firmly established in California state law. Any land in California that was open to public access for five continuous years before 1972 cannot lawfully be closed to public access. There is ample evidence demonstrating many decades of public use of the trails, according to the Friends of Hope Valley.

"We know fisherman, hikers and native Americans have used this private property access corridor for over one hundred years to reach the high country, including the Pacific Crest Trail and the Mokelumne Wilderness Area," says Debbi Waldear, board member and president of Friends of Hope Valley. "We are calling on the area's residents and visitors to come forward and tell us about their Pleasant Valley trail use prior to the

1980s so the public can once again enjoy this area.”

Community members who used the Pleasant Valley trails at any time before the 1980s are asked to contact Friends of Hope Valley by emailing info@hopevalleyca.com or to call FOHV’s lawyer, Matthew Zinn of Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger LLP, at (415) 552.7272 as soon as possible. Potential witnesses will be interviewed by FOHV’s legal team, possibly deposed by the defendant’s lawyers, and may be asked to testify in court in Sacramento. The deadline to discover witnesses is approaching and is essential to building the case for the trail’s historic use.

For more information about the Friends of Hope Valley lawsuit, click here.

Severn Williams, Friends of Hope Valley

Pirate event at Zephyr Cove library

The Douglas County Public Library in Zephyr Cove is having a pirate party on Aug. 6 at 1:30pm.

Children can make a pirate treasure chest and ice-cream-in-a-can. Children should bring their own ice cream toppings such as chocolate sauce, cherries, and whipped cream. Bring small clear coffee can lids (13-oz. coffee cans) if you have them.

Safeway and the library will furnish other supplies.

For ages 3 and up; young children should be accompanied by an adult. Children must register by Aug. 5 to attend this program.

For more information visit douglas.lib.nv.us; to sign up for this event call (775) 588.6411.

Women’s history comes to life in Genoa

Nevada State Parks invites the public to Mormon Station State Historic Park at 10am July 31 to hear a free presentation on “Women’s Voices on the Overland Trail.”

The 45-minute presentation will feature stories from women’s diaries and reminiscences of early pioneers who traveled westward on the trail. These accounts, which pay special attention to the landscape, Native Americans and the danger and promise of the journey, provide a vivid account of pioneer life and illustrate how women pioneers often formed the backbone and inspiration for the long, arduous western journeys of 19th-century emigrants.

Doris Dwyer will give the presentation. Dwyer is a professor of history at Western Nevada College whose research focuses on women pioneers of the nineteenth century American West. She is also nationally known for her Chautauqua portrayals of remarkable women from this period. Her appearance is made possible by the Nevada Humanities Committee, the National Endowment for the Humanities and NV Energy.

Bring a blanket, lawn chairs and meet in the shaded stockade area of Mormon Station State Historic Park. After the presentation, enjoy a picnic lunch in the park and tour the log-cabin museum and see relics from early pioneers. A $1 entry fee applies. Children 12 and under are free.

Mormon Station State Historic Park is located in Genoa, a 20 minute drive from Carson City via Highway 395 and a 20 minute drive from South Lake Tahoe via Kingsbury Grade.

For more detailed directions, call the park at (775) 782.2590.

EDC grounds its buses; BlueGo sputters to stay viable

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County pulled its two buses out of the BlueGo fleet Wednesday, creating an unstable situation for on-call riders of the public transit system.

“Because everything happened late (Tuesday) I’m not sure about the on-call services or what is being offered to those folks,” county Supervisor Norma Santiago told *Lake Tahoe News* late Wednesday. Until July 22 she was the vice president of the South Tahoe Area Transportation Authority. She is still on its board. “There are some discussions going on that I’m not privy to.”

(STATA is a nonprofit Nevada-based umbrella agency that runs the transit system on the South Shore.)



No one is

riding El Dorado County-owned BlueGo buses. Photo/Kathryn Reed

On Wednesday afternoon one of the two buses was in the county's transportation yard in Meyers. Just after 5pm a BlueGo bus was in service in the Meyers area headed toward South Lake Tahoe on Highway 50.

The directive to park the vehicles came about because of liability issues involving the county not being named on the certificate of insurance, Santiago said.

Two closed session items involving BlueGo were on the Board of Supervisors' July 27 agenda, though no reportable action was taken. These pertained to lawsuits.

Eleven days ago the set route in Meyers was eliminated along with other changes in an attempt to put a Band-Aid on the ailing system.

Lake Tahoe News called BlueGo dispatch Wednesday asking about booking a ride for this morning for on-call service in Meyers. The dispatcher said it was possible, but there was limited availability.

Financial concerns

"Right now the county has no agreement with STATA," Santiago said.

On June 29, she made a motion as chairwoman of the Board of Supervisors to not fund an estimated $181,343 for July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2012, to provide for the operation and funding of BlueGo on-call services. The board agreed.

Stacy Dingman, a STATA board member and spokeswoman for the group, told *Lake Tahoe News* this week she knew nothing of El Dorado County's June vote even though the STATA board last met July 22.

Things are so bad at the Stateline agency that the B word – bankruptcy – has been broached.

"There have definitely been rumors about bankruptcy. The fiscal year began July 1. That is when new grants come in. Monies are coming in," Dingman said.

Mike McLaughin, attorney for STATA, said, "The board is considering all of their available options and it would be imprudent not to consider bankruptcy as an option. Settling the debt with MV is an option and other options are available."

State and federal dollars, which is what STATA relies on to keep the buses rolling, have strings attached. A basic requirement is to have annual audits and a semblance of financial stability.

STATA has neither. The audit for fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, is not done. And its financial solvency resembles scarlet red more than midnight black.

In an email from STATA accountant Rhonda Saigh to Dingman, which Dingman shared with *LTN*, it says, "The 08-09 audited financial statements have not yet been accepted by the board. That action is expected to be taken at the board meeting on Aug. 9. No public distribution or posting is appropriate prior to board acceptance. The audited financial statements are not required, but desired, to be posted on the website. To refresh your memory, the completion of the 08-09 audit was vastly delayed primarily because of the very, very late grant billings to NDOT. "

The Nevada Department of Transportation is so worried about

STATA's ability to operate that it sent STATA Chairwoman Nancy McDermid and Treasurer Dan Garrison an email July 12 saying it was threatening to cut off funding.

The letter from Derek Kirkland, transportation planner, says, "The biggest concern is that STATA is lacking cash flow and is relying solely on grant funding, which is not allowed. NDOT's grant funding is a reimbursable program and requires a 50 percent local match," Kirkland wrote. Later the letter says, "As I know you are very aware, STATA is in a very serious situation and risks shutting down service indefinitely."

Federal law mandates annual, timely audits be done in order to receive funding.

One of the issues for El Dorado County is the 2009 audit is not approved, when in fact it's the 2010 audit that should be under way. Audits are due to California by Dec. 31 each year.

"STATA has a contractual obligation to the county to provide us with an audited financial statement," county Auditor-Controller Joe Harn said. "(It's) unfortunate the audit was not completed sooner. It might have provided insight to the board of directors of STATA and to the county of El Dorado about what was happening financially to STATA."

Because STATA is a Nevada corporation it does not have to meet some of the stricter rules California has on the books. John Andoh, the transit administrator who left STATA earlier this year, did not have to file papers with the Fair Political Practices Commission in relation to MV Transportation – his former employer – who he recommended to the board be the transit operator. If it were a California entity, the contract STATA signed that was valued at more money than it had, would have been null and void.

Looking for answers

Santiago says there is plenty of blame to go around for why

STATA is in the quandary it's in. She admits the board should have asked more questions of Andoh and not relied on this one staff person to be so powerful.

"Hindsight is 20-20. We should have reigned in John a lot sooner," Santiago said. She said he misrepresented to MV what the board wanted and what STATA was capable of paying.

Andoh at one time tried to get El Dorado dollars passed to a dormant, essentially non-existent JPA called the Basin Transportation System that was established in the 1970s.

McLaughlin does not believe there has been any misappropriation of funds.

"I don't think anyone has cast any doubt that all the funds in the operation were used for capital acquisition and operations. But the system was set up to run with a certain budget and all those budgeted funds did not come to fruition," McLaughlin said.

Another lawsuit on the books

On July 27, the fourth lawsuit from MV Transportation, the transit operator for the South Shore system until June 20, was filed. This one in Douglas County names all of the member agencies of the South Tahoe Area Transportation Authority.

The entities named in the latest suit are: South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County, Douglas County, Harveys, Harrah's, MontBleu, Horizon, Lakeside, Heavenly, Ridge Tahoe, Tahoe Transportation District, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. TRPA is a non-voting member of STATA.

"The lawsuit filed (Tuesday) is pretty extensive. Everyone is scrambling," Santiago said.

The problem is STATA owes MV more than $2 million, though the sparring entities disagree on exact amount.

Bringing in TTD

To appease NDOT, and probably other funding agencies, STATA at its special July 22 meeting that was a joint board meeting with Tahoe Transportation District, agreed to have this agency handle the day-to-day operation. Transit Resource Center has a limited contract to run the actual vehicles.

NDOT officials were at last week's meeting. It had been the state agency's recommendation in the July 12 letter that TTD be brought in.

TTD will do this through Sept. 30. This agency, which has two staff members, is tasked with handling grant proposals and administering the request for proposal to find a long-term bus operator for STATA.

It's possible a longer contract could be issued or that TTD would take over the bus system and STATA would be dissolved. One thing that needs to be overcome is the TTD board is made up of public agencies, while STATA is a public-private enterprise.

Santiago envisions it being a rough road going forward for everyone involved.

"I think everybody is committed to making sure the BlueGo system continues to operate. It may operate on a smaller scale," McLaughlin said. He said talks have centered on having a transit system where the operations fit the confirmed dollars coming in. "The system might get a bit smaller. I don't think anyone anticipates the system going away."

Southwest cutting flights in Reno, Las Vegas



By Reno Gazette-Journal

Reno-Tahoe International Airport is losing six Southwest Airlines flights this fall as part of nationwide cutbacks totaling 106, the Las Vegas Sun reported Wednesday, though an airport spokesman said he hopes the Reno flights eventually will resume.

As part of a schedule change by Southwest, Reno is losing six flights with one round trip each eliminated to and from Boise, Idaho; Los Angeles; Oakland, Calif.; Phoenix; Portland, Ore.; and San Jose, Calif, the Sun reported.

“We expect the flights to return,” Reno airport spokesman Brian Kulpin said Wednesday night, describing the cuts as seasonal and not usual.

“That is what we have been told, and hopefully, that will be the case,” Kulpin said when asked about any assurances from Southwest.

Read the whole story

Squaw’s new CEO has history, Colorado roots to contend with



By Kara LaPoint, Reno Gazette-Journal

Squaw Valley USA introduced the world to Lake Tahoe when the then-tiny resort hosted the 1960 Winter Games.

Alex Cushing made those Games happen after starting Squaw Valley Development Company in 1949 and opening the ski resort. He would continue to develop the Squaw into one of America’s premier ski destinations.

When Alex passed away in 2006 at age 92, his widow, Nancy Wendt Cushing, stepped into his role overseeing what is now the largest resort at Lake Tahoe.

Squaw Valley Ski Corp.’s CEO announced last week she’ll be stepping down, and that means Andrew Wirth has some very big shoes to fill.

Read the whole story

Schwarzenegger wants more furlough days

By Shane Goldmacher, Los Angeles Times

Most state workers will again face unpaid furloughs again in August under an executive order imposed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, said a union official who was briefed on the plan by the administration.

Roughly 200,000 state workers would be subject to the mandatory days off, though the governor is exempting the union bargaining units that have negotiated rollbacks of future pensions with his administration.

Previous furloughs, implemented to help ease California's budget crisis, ended with the fiscal year that expired June 30. Courts have ruled that Schwarzenegger has the authority to impose the unpaid time off.

Read the whole story